AR702: CONTEMPORARY THEORY IN ARCHAEOLOGY

Class meets Mondays 9 am – 12:00 pm, STO 243

Instructor: Prof. Mary Beaudry  beaudry@bu.edu  Voicemail: 8-1650  Semester II, 2009–2010  
Rm. STO 345C, 675 Comm. Ave.  Office Hrs.: TR 2–3 pm, W 3–4 pm, & by appt.

Course Objectives

In this course we explore aspects of contemporary theory in archaeology arising from post-modernist critiques of recent archaeological practice. As noted, our approach will be exploratory in nature; we will examine new material, some of it controversial because it challenges not just the status quo but recent developments as well. Our goal is to develop and to refine our own perspectives on contemporary archaeological thought and practice through engaging in constructive critique of the readings.

Texts (available for purchase at the Boston University Bookstore):


Readings indicated on the syllabus by an asterisk (*) will be available on the course web site or downloadable from the Web or through Boston University Mugar Library’s electronic subscription service via the URLs provided.

Course Format and Requirements

The class will be conducted in a seminar format; a portion of our weekly class meetings will be devoted to discussion of the week’s readings. All students are expected to attend all classes and to participate in class discussion; to this end, a student will be designated as discussion leader for each session. Students must come to class having done all of the assigned reading and be prepared to discuss it.

All students enrolled in the course are expected to prepare a final paper of from 20–25 pages in length. Please note that all paper topics must be approved by the instructor on or before February 22, 2010. Papers are due no later than 5 p.m. on May 3, 2010. I will not accept late papers. There is also a final examination, cumulative in content, take-home in format. Grades for the course will be based upon the following: class attendance and participation & discussion: 30%; paper: 35%; final examination, 35%.

You should be aware of GRS policy regarding and dates for adding, dropping, and withdrawing from classes; see http://www.bu.edu/reg/dates/idates-spring10.html.
Academic Integrity:

Please take the time to familiarize yourself with the University’s policy about what constitutes plagiarism (http://www.bu.edu/grs/academics/resources/adp.html). I will refer cases of suspected academic misconduct to the Dean’s Office.

Course Web Site

All class participants have access to the course materials through the course web site; here you will find course documents such as the syllabus, announcements about the course, copies of or access to course readings, links to WWW sites you will visit as part of your course assignments, and a communications center from which you can communicate with other members of the class. Here is where you will find copies of any reading assignments that are not in your textbooks for the course. I'll also be posting course announcements to the Web site. Please plan to visit the site regularly.

You can access the AR702 web site by clicking on the class number/name as posted in your schedule on the Student Link portion of the Boston University web pages, or you can point your browser to http://blackboard.bu.edu, then click on the link to the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. You will be prompted to login; to do so, enter your BU login name (the portion of your email address that comes before the @). When prompted to enter a password, type in your regular password. Once you are “in” you can change your password and other details of your account, arrange to have your course email forwarded to another address, and so on. (If you've used the system before, it will have stored any changes you made to your personal details.) Follow the on-line instructions.

Meeting Topics and Reading Assignments

(Subject to changes & additions)

Jan 25  Introduction to the Course

Archaeology from the outside: an art historian’s view
Wallace, *Digging the Dirt*

Feb 1  Archaeology and popular culture

Holtorf, *From Stonehenge to Las Vegas*

Feb 8  A big tent?


TUESDAY Feb 16  A critical look at contemporary fieldwork

*Symonds, James, 2010, Yes we can! But so what? Some thoughts on contemporary archaeology.. Archaeolog: <http://traumwerk.stanford.edu/archaeolog/2010/01/yes_we_can_but_so_what_some_ob.html>

Feb 22  Theoretical strands, part 1: Feminist theory in archaeology


Mar 1  Theoretical strands, part 2: Structure and agency

Mar 15  Theoretical strands, part 3: Practice theory


Mar 22  Theoretical strands, part 4: Materiality, consumption, object biographies


Mar 29  Themes in contemporary archaeology: Archaeology and politics

Apr 5  Themes in contemporary archaeology: Time/Place

Lucas, The Archaeology of Time


Place: Essays in Part III of A Companion to Social Archaeology

Apr 12  Themes in contemporary archaeology: Embodiment & sexuality


THURSDAY Apr 22  Archaeology of experience/experience of archaeology


Apr 26  Theory and Practice: a review

Jones, Andrew, Archaeological Theory and Scientific Practice (Cambridge University Press, 2002), Chapters 1–3

Discussion article on theory & practice from Archaeological Dialogues 13(2), December 2006 (http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayIssue?jid=ARD&volumeld=13&issueld=02)