

Eight Great Archaeological Sites

ARCHLGY 21Q, CLASSART 21Q

A Sophomore Seminar

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<http://mshanks.com> - for an introduction to current thinking in archaeology, heritage, and design

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Summary

Archaeologists work on what is left of the past. They do this in teams that bring different research skills and interests to bear upon the material remains left behind by communities of people - artifacts and sites. This makes of archaeology a unique interdisciplinary and collaborative field that ranges from genetics to folklore, from geophysical fieldwork to literary analysis, from excavation management to statistical modeling. It is this range of interest in the material immediacy of the past that helps make archaeology so appealing. And this appeal makes archaeology a great vehicle for exploring transferable skills in research and authoring.

Archaeologists combine their researches into catalogs, handbooks of different types of finds, art histories, historical narratives, anthropological theories, museum exhibitions and academic papers, as well as more popular media like TV programs. One of the legacies of the centuries old antiquarian interest in the past is a focus on landscape and the places people have lived. Archaeologists produce site reports and many different kinds of representation of ancient sites and their remains - written accounts, images, plans and diagrams of particular sites, their location, history, architecture, the things found through archaeological excavation, the daily lives of the inhabitants, their culture and views of themselves. Such site reports have become one of the modern foundations of our understanding of history while also connecting with a much broader interest in travel and sense of place to be found in travel writing and journalism, for example.

This course will introduce archaeology as such an interdisciplinary and collaborative field through this defining practice and medium of the site report. It will involve an encounter with eight great archaeological sites in Europe and the Old World: Stonehenge, Gavrinis in prehistoric France, Tel El Amarna on the Nile, Housesteads at the northern edge of the Roman Empire, Dunstanburgh Castle in the UK, Knossos in the Aegean, Olympia in Greece, and one other site, chosen in consultation with the class. Through selections from different kinds of publications, plans and photographs, the class will explore the diversity of media and genres used in representing place, looking at each site in turn through its excavation, its features and finds, the arguments over its interpretation, and its place in our

understanding of the archaeological history of Europe. The assignment is to collaboratively author a report on a ninth site chosen by the class.

Aims - representing place

Together these ancient sites introduce the many dimensions of archaeological thought. This is one aim of the course - to be a taster of archaeological research and thinking. The sites also raise some key questions about our anthropological understanding of ancient societies - they were far stranger than we might imagine; directly encountering the distant past in its material remains is a very effective way of encountering cultural and social diversity.

Researching and writing about place is the focus for a second set of aims of the course - to explore and practice the interdisciplinary research and collaborative authoring that lies behind something like an archaeological site report.

Sophomores following the class can therefore expect to:

- acquire knowledge of interdisciplinary and collaborative research like archaeology;
- understand and demonstrate the range of reference of the concept of place and sense of place - to gain some understanding of archaeology in the context of historiography, historical and cultural geography and approaches to topography;
- comprehend and explain different approaches to the (archaeological) representation of place;
- synthesize coherently different kinds of representation of place in the production of a collaboratively authored document and presentation;
- deliver a diversity of treatments that communicate the richness of features of a place.

Assignment - specific objectives

The main assignment of the class is to form one or two teams, critically reflect upon archaeological site reporting, decide upon a suitable division of labor, research and author individual contributions, coordinate these in a collaboratively produced and presented account of a place - a site report, and to monitor and critically reflect upon the exercise.

Assignment – process

The assignment will be broken down into the following stages:

One

Preparatory work on interdisciplinary research and writing about place - lectures, reading, discussion of three archaeological sites and site reports, brainstorming notions of "site", "place", "landscape".

Identification of points of difference between collaborative and individual research and authoring.

Two

Establish one or two teams.

Review possible sites and regions to be researched.

Three

Collaborative authoring environment introduced - a wiki. Create home pages.

The assignment will use a collaborative authoring environment known as a wiki. This is a type of content management system and social software that enables teams to work together to build and deliver a digital document. Using a standard web browser, team members can create web pages, add content, format, post comments, edit and link. Everything is editable by all team members unless locked by the author. Changes and edits can be tracked. All saved versions are kept by the system, so nothing is ever lost, even if deleted in an edit. Above all, no programming skills are needed to author and format the most complex of documents. Formatting is done through just a few simple markup commands. If desired, documents produced in standard word processors can be cut and pasted into the wiki.

A wiki is an ideal environment for such an assignment as this because it is a fast and easy way of writing, reviewing and editing a collaborative team production. Post content, receive team feedback in the way of comments posted on your page, review and edit your own work, review that of other team members, comment and edit their work, link it to your own, add to your own contribution in the light of theirs, review the whole and provide summaries, signposts and menus The wiki logs all activity so the team can see where they are coming from and going to - displaying the wiki on a screen for the group to view as a whole is an ideal way of discussing progress and making fast decisions about future work and direction.

Michael has ten years experience of successfully using such software in project-based learning and in research projects involving several hundred undergraduates, graduates and colleagues. This class will use the wiki in a more formal way to author, review and revise, but the principles of use remain the same as in these less structured applications. There are some guidelines for best use of such social software that have emerged through Michael's experience of running wikis in class and research projects, as well as in research into the use of such authoring environments - the most important are summarized in a set of learning tools available on the wiki and in Michael's lab. Several examples of classes and projects are available as well as an overall evaluation of good practice in collaborative research and authoring.

The introduction of the wiki will use the creation of individual class member home pages as illustrative exercise.

Four

Group brainstorming of possible approaches to target regions and site based upon preliminary research reconnaissance.

The assignment does not have to be an orthodox archaeological site report. Archaeological site reporting is to be treated as a frame within which to critically consider how we might write about and represent places in general. Reference may therefore be made to any relevant genre such as travel

writing, gazetteers, memoirs, biographies, folklore - all of which have influenced and been influenced by archaeological themes. Readings for the eight sites explored in the class have been chosen to illustrate the diversity of media forms and genres typically found in the representation of place, archaeological or otherwise. Assessment of the different features will accompany a critique of digital site reporting and “web sites”.

Five

Plan the collaborative report(s) - considering audience, purpose, message, medium, time-frame (five weeks).

Propose the project(s) in an oral presentation of 40 minutes and share feedback from team members and from faculty.

Six

Present the project plan in a written and illustrated proposal of about 45 pages or 15k words composed in the wiki.

Seven

Delegate/share out research and writing. Assign specific tasks. Decide on individual papers/works/contributions that will combine in the site report. Report these on the wiki in prepared "process" pages.

Wikis are ideal environments for monitoring the dynamic process of research and writing because they can easily contain integrated "to do lists" and "announcements" pages, and individual pages can display temporary comments about process, work to do, etc. Wikis also explicitly track and save all edits for review (logged according to user) - this enables easy management of research and writing.

Eight

Implement and monitor the process of research, writing, and preparation/rehearsal of the final presentation. This will involve:

- constant joint review and revision in simply using the wiki, as described under Stage Three;
- maintenance of "process" pages, as described under Stage Seven;
- group, individual and faculty review of the logs made by the wiki of all activity and edits recorded according to user;
- feedback shared in class;
- individual diary review of work done, connecting individual contribution to the group effort - published on the wiki on individual student home pages (created in Stage Three);
- informal feedback/evaluation sessions with class members volunteering “I wish ...” and “I like ...” statements;
- review and feedback given by faculty: this will comprise comments posted directly on the wiki pages (using the dedicated comment box); feedback delivered in class; sessions in class to discuss project progress and chaired by faculty.

NB Iteration is important in collaborative work – best practice is to write and review each others' work from as early as possible.

Nine

The process of researching and writing the site report will be supported by presentation in lecture and class discussion of the rest of the "eight great archaeological sites". Regular reference will be made to the progress of research in the wiki.

Ten

Oral presentation/performance of the site report(s). In the case of a single team effort, this to last 40 minutes, with media support (images, text etc), followed by another 40 minute session of feedback and discussion. See below for detailed breakdown.

Eleven

Presentation, at the end of exam week and after final revisions, of the final report of about 150 pages or 50k words total (in the case of a single team effort), comprising individually authored papers of about 3000 words/ten pages per student.

The final presentation is to include statements from class members recorded on their home pages about how they have found the experience of collaborative research and authoring (about 300 words).

Twelve

Celebratory feedback in a follow up meeting the next quarter - ie we have a party!

Assignment breakdown

Proposal. 16k words and 40 minutes of presentation total - about 3 pages or 1000 words per student, plus 2.5 minutes of presentation - 15%

Contribution to process of research, authoring, review and edit. Activity logged by wiki and individual reports/diaries presented in home pages - 25%

Oral presentation of final report. 40 minutes with another 40 minutes of feedback and discussion - 5 minutes per student - 15%

Final report (including individual home page diaries and evaluations @ 300 words or one page) - 150 pages, 50k words, comprising contributions of c10 pages/3000 words per student - 45%

Total words/pages delivered per student by end of class – 4000 words/13 pages.

Total live presentation – 7.5 minutes/750 words.

Assignment - significance

The assignment focuses upon teamwork in an interdisciplinary milieu with the objective of presenting an engaging experience of a place. The use of a digital medium such as a wiki makes explicit/transparent all the key issues of such a set of transferable skills:

- constituting a team;
- gaining detailed knowledge of a topic through collaborative effort;
- developing a formal architecture for the report;
- implementing the project - setting, monitoring and achieving targets;
- assessing along the way individual contributions through team feedback and making necessary adjustments to plans and targets;
- considering appropriate and effective writing and presentation style across distinct but coordinated media - this is especially thrown into focus by the use of a collaborative multimedia authoring medium such as the wiki;
- coordinating individual research and writing of papers with the architecture of the group report;
- formal oral presentation of the project;
- bringing the project to conclusion in the form of written report.

Assignment - assessment criteria

An overall aim of the site report is a simple one – enrichment and enchantment. The two teams are encouraged to treat their sites as sites of the imagination – the medieval castle as much about notions of the gothic and romantic as a source of information about life in feudal England, a prehistoric monument as much a stimulus to reflect upon the nature of mysticism as a subject of contemporary archaeological fieldwork. A rationale for this approach is that archaeology is as much about relationships with the past as the past itself. This approach also opens up the assignments to experiment across the creative humanities and arts - opportunities for students to explore a wider range of research and authoring skills.

Other criteria used in assessment include - range of research, authority in manipulating information, sensitivity to criticism, intellectual coherence, writing style, fluency of oral presentations, synoptic efficiency of oral presentations, degree of skill of use of rhetorical techniques in oral presentations, effectiveness of audio-visual support (if appropriate) in presentations, effectiveness and coherence of structure of the final report.

Contributions to the final report may well vary and certainly not every student need be presenting in the same manner. Part of the process of designing a report is the division of roles/tasks and may involve different kinds of delivery, facilitation, coordinated response to others.

Self assessment - collaborative work

The most accurate form of assessment of the success of a group effort would be to compare a collaborative project with the same undertaken by an individual. Instead this class will ask individual members to assess the success of the assignment according to the following questions:

- in what ways did the group effort open up lines of research that would not otherwise have been explored?
- in what ways did the group effort change the structure of the research and report?
- what did each individual group member learn from other group members?
- were there any emergent features of the research and report - ie indications that the whole became more than the sum of the parts?

These evaluations should be made on individual home pages. They will be taken into account in the final grading, as indicated above.

Units of Credit

The class is primarily designed as a Five Unit course. This requires fifteen hours of work per week of quarter. Activities include attending class (three hours per week); reading and prep, review of material on the web site regarding the eight archaeological sites; research for assignment project site; writing and preparing project components (text and any audiovisual materials) throughout the quarter; review of team members work on the class wiki; meetings with team members to plan and deliver assignment; rehearsal time for presentation of project proposal and final delivery.

Students with Documented Disabilities

Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is made. Students should contact the OAE as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (phone: 723-1066, URL: <http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/oa>).

Schedule

After introductory sessions about the history of archaeology and a sketch of European prehistory and ancient history, the course will run through the eight sites, with appropriate time given over to the management of the assignment. All sites will be introduced using illustrated talks available also online in the wiki. Supporting materials are selected to represent a diversity of ways of representing place. All are available in the class lab and library, plus many other readings.

Week 1

Archaeology, research, digital authoring and presentation

Introduction 1 – Archaeology in Europe - a short history

Week 2

Introduction 2 - A short archaeology of Europe. To set the scene with a basic framework of dates, periods, ideas etc.

Stonehenge

Stones in a prehistoric landscape. Mystery, mysticism and an archaeological answer to the meaning of Stonehenge. Mother goddesses and druids. Romantic landscapes and a sense of the English countryside. An anthropological perspective on prehistoric architecture.

Chippindale, C. 1994. *Stonehenge Complete*, Second edition. London: Thames and Hudson. A fine history of the reception of the monument.

Chippindale, C., P. Devereux, P. Fowler, R. Jones, and T. Sebastian. 1990. *Who Own's Stonehenge?* London: Batsford. A very diverse selection of opinions about the significance of the monument.

Bender, B. 1998. *Stonehenge: Making Space*. Oxford: Berg. Humanistic approaches to understanding Stonehenge.

This week the wiki will be introduced - Stage 3 of the syllabus.

Week 3

Gavrinis

Megalith in prehistoric Brittany. The megalithic phenomenon in northern and Atlantic Europe. Landscape sculpture among the first farmers of western Europe – sites of feasting and dark dealings with the bones of the dead. Phenomenology.

Bradley, R. 1998. *The Significance of Monuments: On the Shaping of Human Experience in Neolithic and Bronze Age Europe*. London: Routledge. An introduction to this earliest of built environments, anthropologically nuanced.

Brainstorm notions of site and place - Stage 4 of the syllabus.

Begin project planning - Stage 5 of the syllabus.

Week 4

El Amarna

City of heretical Pharaoh Akhenaten. An extraordinarily alien example of urban planning.

Pendlebury, J.D.S. et al 1951f. Akhetaten. Excavation Report. London: Egypt Exploration Society. A classic archaeological report. Available in the lab.

Kemp, B. 1989. Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a civilization. New York: Routledge. Barry Kemp is the latest to excavate and survey the site and he writes about it with an extraordinary dryness.

<http://amarnaproject.com> Web site of the latest survey conducted by Cambridge University and the Amarna Trust.

Week 5

Knossos

Labyrinthine 'palace' of the Aegean bronze age. Sir Arthur Evans and his art deco vision of a lost civilization. The workings of his golden culture. A tour round the 'palace'. New light on the enigmas of the Aegean bronze age. The archaeological imagination.

MacGillivray, J. A. 2000. Minotaur: Arthur Evans and the Archaeology of the Minoan Myth. New York: Hill and Wang. A biography of Evans.

Farnoux, A. 1996. Knossos. New York: Harry Abrams. A beautifully illustrated and short read.

Evans, A. 1921-1936. The Palace of Minos at Knossos. Oxford: Oxford University Press. An extraordinary and encyclopedic example of the working of the archaeological imagination.

Oral presentations of project plan - Stage 5 of the syllabus.

Week 6

Presentation of the text (wiki) version of the plan - Stage 6 of the syllabus.

Project planning and discussions - Stage 7 of the syllabus.

Week 7

Housesteads Roman town

Bleak outpost on Hadrian's Wall, at the northern margins of empire. Spectacular traces of a monumental undertaking at the height of Roman power combined with archaeological insight into daily life in Roman Britain.

Birley, R. 1952. Housesteads Roman Fort. London: HMSO for the Ministry of Public Buildings and Monuments. An "old style" guide to the archaeological site.

Week 8

Dunstanburgh Castle

Feudal lords and the archaeology of medieval England. Ruins in a picturesque landscape and the medieval castle in northern England revealed through modern excavation. The feudal lord and the life of the hunt. Psychogeography.

English Heritage. 2006. Dunstanburgh Castle. London: HMSO for English Heritage. A report on the latest landscape survey of the site.

Week 9

Site 7 - chosen in consultation with the class.

Week 10

Olympia

Sanctuary of Zeus and wonder of the ancient world. The remains of a monumental temple in an Arcadia dreamed by academics in a new German republic at the end of the nineteenth century.

Stoneman, Richard. 2011. Land of Lost Gods: the Search for Classical Greece. London: Tauris Parke. More "high cultural" reception of the archaeological past.

Week 11

Oral presentation of site report - Stage 10 of the syllabus.

Delivery (digital) of site report, individual papers and personal diaries - Stage 11 of the syllabus.

Resources

The class is held in Michael's lab in the Archaeology Center - it is available 24/7 for team meetings and any kind of project work. The lab contains a library of all readings listed on the web site and many other works about site reporting, human and cultural geography, anthropology, new media, and the archaeological imagination.

The wiki includes help systems of various kinds, from basic editing to designing online presentations.

Also recommended is: Ross-Larson, Bruce. 2002. Writing for the Information Age. New York: Norton.