AR3062  Archaeology of Hunter-Gatherer Lifeways

Academic Year: 2009-2010

Semester: 2

Time and location: Thursdays 1400-1600 SB0.01 (Lectures/seminars)

First meeting: 28th Jan 2010

Module coordinator: Huw Barton

e-mail: hjb15@leicester.ac.uk

Room: 104

Office hours: See office door

Your individual appointments (e.g. tutorials, seminars):

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document prepared by: Huw Barton, 22nd January 2010
AR3062  Archaeology of Hunter-Gatherer Life ways

Weighting: 20 credits
Coordinator: Huw Barton

Module outline: The aim of this course is to engage students with the practicalities, difficulties and potentials of interpreting human behaviour from the archaeological record. Wherever possible we will work with practical applications of the ideas under discussion in each week. Readings are likely to consist of some theory and related case studies. The course will expose students, through film and readings to cultures from around the globe including North America; Australia; Papua New Guinea and Southeast Asia. The course will also invite students to engage in cross-cultural comparisons of hunter-gatherer societies to develop a broader understanding of the variation of hunter-gatherer life ways.

Aims: The aim of the module is to study in-depth a variety of approaches to the study and interpretation of hunter-gatherer life-ways from the archaeological record.

Intended learning outcomes:
- Demonstrate a firm understanding of key issues in hunter-gatherer research in archaeology
- Apply insights derived from primary source research
- Debate issues in the study of hunter-gatherers
- Demonstrate critical analysis and writing
- Demonstrate in both written work and group seminars a critical understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the difficulties and potentials of interpreting human behaviour from the archaeological record
- Research a well-defined topic and communicate the results effectively

Method(s) of teaching: A two hour session with a lecture followed by group discussion.

Method of assessment:
- Oral presentation 10%
- Essay 40% (max. 3,000 words)
- Exam (2hrs) 50%: Summer time
# Weekly Schedule

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Course</th>
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<td>14</td>
<td><strong>Introduction: Concepts and Practice</strong></td>
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<td>15</td>
<td><strong>Desert People (film)</strong></td>
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<td>16</td>
<td><strong>Settlement and mobility</strong></td>
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<td>17</td>
<td><strong>Mini Conference: Oral presentations (10%)</strong></td>
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<td>18</td>
<td><strong>Axes and Are (film): complexity from simplicity</strong></td>
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<td>19</td>
<td><strong>Reading Week</strong></td>
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<td>20</td>
<td><strong>Always forager-farmers?</strong></td>
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<td>21</td>
<td><strong>Human behavioural ecology</strong></td>
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<td><strong>The use of analogy</strong></td>
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<td>23</td>
<td><strong>The politics of hunters and gatherers</strong></td>
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Essay Due 15<sup>th</sup> March 2010 (4 pm)
Essay topics

Please choose one topic for a 3,000 word essay, which counts for 50% of the overall mark for the module. You MUST discuss your essay topic in advance, including the appropriate reading or reading of sources not listed. The essay deadline is 15<sup>th</sup> March 2010 (4pm).

1) How can we interpret patterns of prehistoric settlement and/or mobility from the archaeological record?

2) Can a study of Technological Organisation help us to understand the human past?

3) Can a behavioural archaeology exist without ethnography?

4) What lessons can be applied to the European Palaeolithic from studying the archaeology of Australia and Melanesia?
## Detailed Teaching Schedule and Weekly Readings

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Discussion questions</th>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>28th January</td>
<td>Introduction: Concepts and Practice</td>
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<td><strong>Discussion questions.</strong></td>
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<td>• What is the role of ethnography in the study of past human behaviour?</td>
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<td>• Should we be routinely collecting this data today?</td>
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<td><strong>Discussion questions:</strong></td>
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<td>• At what scale do these approaches operate?</td>
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<td>• Can human populations be expressed as abstract systems?</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>17th February</td>
<td>Mini Conference: oral presentations (10%)</td>
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Axes and Are (film): complexity from simplicity
This lecture is supported by Peter White’s excellent 1960s film of stone tool use in the interior Highlands of Papua New Guinea. In this session students will be encouraged to think about the interplay between behavioural complexity and technological complexity.

Readings:

Discussion questions:
- What issues does this film raise for the study of behavioural complexity?
- What use are stone tools?

Hunters and gatherers or procurers?
In this session we will look at challenges to the conceptual framework of the traditional category of hunter-gatherer.

Readings:

Discussion questions:
- How could we better define ‘hunter-gatherers’ as a category?
- What implications do these views have on our interpretation of hunter-gatherer archaeology?

Human behavioural ecology
This session will introduce the theoretical and methodological concepts of human behavioural ecology.

Readings:


**Discussion questions:**
- How effective is this way of looking at human behaviour?
- Can it help us understand patterning in the archaeological record?

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**Week 22 25th March**

**The use of analogy**

In this session students will be asked to comment on the use of analogy in archaeology.

**Readings:**


**Discussion questions:**
- Does ethnography help or hinder our views of the past?
- How do we best utilise this information?

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**Week 23 6th May**

**The politics of hunters and gatherers.**

In this last session students will be asked to discuss the political issues surrounding hunters and gatherers in the modern world. Do they have a place in our future or is this a way of life fast disappearing that belongs in the past?
Extended Reading List

In order to do research on this course you will have to get used to taking an interdisciplinary approach to your studies and get used to using different sources for both evidence, interpretative ideas and ways of working.

Some of the references are not in the university library but I can give you copies of these. I will support this course via Blackboard.

General


The library actually has a good range of general hunter-gatherer titles...so go browse.

Other perspectives...


Settlement, mobility, and technological organisation.


**Ethnography (just type in hunter-gatherer in the library catalogue for a much longer list than this one!)**


