

New course!

**ANTH 403
Current Issues in Archaeology**

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Winter 2015
Tue 2:30 - 5:00pm
LEA 917
Credits: 3 credits

Course description:

Archaeology today is more than anything the study of material culture rather than of static things to be placed into a classificatory order or "frozen in time" in a museum showcase. Questions of how people in the past handled objects and used material culture to establish social relations or political ties are increasingly important research foci in archaeology. This course considers a variety of aspects of material culture, attempting to read things in context: Objects are part and parcel of the social world and archaeologists have unique methods for analyzing them in order to understand the practices of past social groups. Looking at current issues and trends in studies of archaeological material culture, we focus in particular on the dynamic links between social life and object lives. Considering that objects can be limiting as well as enabling for human practice, we ask not only how objects are made and used but also how objects gain "power" in the context of social life? What kind of identities are attached to different sets of material culture? How do objects acquire agency, and how is value assigned to material culture in a given society?

This course examines central concepts that play a role in archaeological studies of material culture, in particular notions of practice and agency; embodiment, technology, and skill; social identity (gender and class); and social organization. In addition, students will be given the chance to pursue their individual research interests in a seminar paper. The prerequisite for this course is some background in archaeology; ideally students should have successfully completed *ANTH 201* or *ANTH 210*. Students who are uncertain about whether they have adequate background may contact me.