THINKING WITH THINGS: EVIDENTIAL REASONING IN ARCHAEOLOGY
PHIL 469 - 001: Topics in Philosophy of Science
https://canvas.ubc.ca/courses/15045/
ANTH 495B - 001: Advanced Studies in Anthropology
https://canvas.ubc.ca/courses/11988

Instructor: Professor Alison Wylie   Office hours: TBA; BUCH E-276
Class meetings: Tuesdays 5:00-8:00, BUCH D313   Contact: alison.wylie@ubc.ca

Seminar Description

This topics seminar focuses on philosophical issues raised by current archaeological debate about the nature and appropriate uses of material evidence: what counts as evidence, and what are best practices for reasoning with evidence in archaeological contexts?

To set the stage we begin by reading selections from *Evidential Reasoning in Archaeology* (Chapman and Wylie, 2015) alongside some classic archaeological statements about the limitations and the potential of trace evidence. The ambitious claims of the New Archaeologists will be juxtaposed with key logical empiricist texts that influenced them, and post-processual critiques will be paired with examples of "contextualist" philosophies of science that emphasize the theory-laden, purpose-specific nature of evidential claims.

We then consider accounts of evidential reasoning in archaeology that resist the oppositional structure of this processual:post-processual debate. We will read a selection of essays drawn from in *Material Evidence: Learning from Archaeological Practice* (ed. Chapman & Wylie 2015) alongside recent philosophical work on conceptions of "data" and on evidential reasoning in the historical sciences: Leonelli's "relational" account of scientific data (2015), *Rock Bone and Ruin* (Currie 2018) and *Making Prehistory: Historical Science and the Scientific Realism Debate* (Turner 2007).

Taken together this combination of philosophical and archaeological readings will bring into focus several different ways of conceptualizing the nature and role of evidence in an historical science like archaeology. The approach we'll take is resolutely case-based, and the central aim of this seminar is to build a framework for thinking critically and constructively about evidential reasoning in practice.

Requirements
This is a reading-intensive seminar. The requirements include weekly reading responses and in-class presentations on texts assigned for the weekly seminar meetings; a short "concept work" paper in the first section of the course and a thesis-driven final essay. For this last students are encouraged to developed a case-based analysis of evidential reasoning in their areas of primary research interest.

Course texts
- *Material Evidence: Learning from Archaeological Practice,* ed. Chapman and Wylie (Routledge, 2015).
- *Evidential Reasoning in Archaeology*, Chapman and Wylie (Bloomsbury 2016).
- All other readings will be available through UBC Library Reserves and the Canvas course website.

Prerequisites
Those listed online are not requirements, but at least one advanced course in history and/or philosophy of science or in archaeological theory is strongly recommended. Contact the instructor if you have any questions about whether your background is appropriate for this seminar.

    Graduate students are most welcome. If you prefer to take this course for 500-level (PHIL) credit contact the instructor to arrange graduate-level requirements and to complete the necessary form. This request must be approved before registration closes.

Learning objectives

My central goals for this seminar are that you should come away with the following:

- Content knowledge of positions on the nature and use of evidence that have been especially influential in philosophical and archaeological debates about evidence;
- Skills of conceptual analysis relevant for disembedding assumptions about the nature of evidence and norms of evidential reasoning that are often left unstated in archaeological debate;
- Insights about how these positions and assumptions figure in your field of interest and an appraisal of their relevance to your own research program.

A full syllabus, with a schedule of weekly readings and details of graded assignments, will be available on the Canvas course website.

Details of course policies and guidelines will also be posted on Canvas, but here are the UBC guidelines relating to academic integrity.

Academic Integrity

UBC campus-wide policy recognizes "academic honesty" as crucial to the functioning of the university and makes it the responsibility of students to inform themselves of the relevant standards for honest and responsible conduct as members of an academic community. This policy as well as guidelines and procedures related to it are set out in the Academic Calendar:

http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,286,0,0

Plagiarism

One form of academic honesty that is especially important in your role as a student is to ensure that what you turn in for all course assignments is your own original work. The UBC policy on plagiarism is as follows:

Plagiarism, which is intellectual theft, occurs where an individual submits or presents the oral or written work of another person as his or her own. Scholarship quite properly rests upon examining and referring to the thoughts and writings of others. However, when another person's words (i.e. phrases, sentences, or paragraphs), ideas, or entire works are used, the author must be acknowledged in the text, in footnotes, in endnotes, or in another accepted form of academic citation. Where direct quotations are made, they must be clearly delineated (for example, within quotation marks or separately indented). Failure to provide proper attribution is plagiarism because it represents someone else's work as one's own. Plagiarism should not occur in submitted drafts or final works. A student who seeks assistance from a tutor or other scholastic aids must ensure that the work submitted is the student's own. Students are responsible for ensuring that any work submitted does not constitute plagiarism. Students who are in any doubt as to what constitutes plagiarism should consult their instructor before handing in any assignments.

For the details, see the UBC campus-wide policy on Academic Misconduct, where this statement about plagiarism is posted:

http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/Vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,54,111,959

For advice on avoiding plagiarism, citing sources, and respecting copyright, see the Academic Integrity webpage on the UBC Learning Commons: http://learningcommons.ubc.ca/academic-integrity/