



Field Methods in Subarctic Archaeology & Ethnography

Instructor: Norman A. Easton, M.A.

Classes: May 29 – July 17 (22)

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Course Description

Anthropology 225 offers an introduction to archaeological and ethnographic field methods as currently practiced in Yukon—that is, as an integrated program of documentation of local culture-history with a strong community presence in the research activities.

In this approach, archaeological survey and excavation is closely articulated and connected with related ethnographic enquiry. That enquiry includes oral history and place-names documentation, kinship and social relations, subsistence and other land-use patterns, traditional technology, and contemporary adaptations of indigenous aboriginal society.

The structure of the investigation is fundamentally community-based, with strong involvement of the local First Nation administration, elders, and youth of the community. Cultural sensitivity to community conditions and values is an essential attribute of all participants.

Fieldwork in 2013 will be within the traditional territories of the Upper Tanana and Northern Tutchone people of the White River First Nation of Beaver Creek, Yukon, and Northway Tribal Council, Alaska. It will include continued archaeological investigations of the Little John site and regional survey. With cultural dates ranging from 14,000 years ago to the present, excellent bone preservation, and a Wisconsin interstadial (c. 43,000 years old) stratum, the Little John site presents a comprehensive record of the environment and cultural adaptations to southeast Beringia. Additional archaeological survey in the region, collaboration with ongoing Alaskan projects, continued documentation of Upper Tanana place names and history, and participant observation in contemporary village life will provide students with an unparalleled opportunity to develop their skills in the four fields of Anthropology.

Course graduates are regularly recruited for hire for fieldwork by regional and national CRM firms in Alaska, Yukon, and elsewhere.

Course Transfer

Current Transfer based on six credits:

UBC Anth 2nd year (6)

UVIC Anth 200L (1.5)

UAS In progress

UNBC Anth 300L (3) or Anth 301L(3)

SFU Arch (6)

UAF Anth Elec. (6)

UR Anth 201 & Anth 331 (6)

Formal transfer arrangements have been made with these universities. Other institutions regularly accept ANTH 225 for transfer.

Note: Anth 225 can be combined with Anth 226 - Field Analysis of Archaeological and Anthropological Data for a cumulative 9 credits, allowing students to maintain full-time student status. Transfer agreements for Anth 226 are currently being negotiated.

You should note, however, that getting the course accepted for transfer to your home university is the responsibility of the student, though our faculty are willing to guide and assist you. If you are thinking of adding this course to your program elsewhere, please speak to a student advisor at your home institution. You will likely need a "Letter of Permission."

If you are not currently enrolled in a college or university program but have some post-secondary education, you may still be able to take the course. Check with the instructor about this. Keep the course outline, notes and tests from the course. If you undertake such studies in the future, having this information will make assessing the course for transfer credit much easier.

Course Prerequisites

One of the goals of this course is to expose students to the real world of practicing Anthropology in the contemporary north in order to determine if they would like to pursue further study in the discipline, thus eligibility for registration at Yukon College is the only formal prerequisite. It is recommended, but not necessary, that students also have taken introductory courses in Anthropology and Archaeology. Senior students are also welcome, since there will be a range of learning opportunities from basic to advanced (graduate-level) research participation.

Course Format (2013)

The course will involve a set of introductory classes in Whitehorse at the Yukon College's Ayamdigut campus, starting **June 3rd**, along with additional logistical preparations for the field. This will be followed by 6 weeks of field activities in the Yukon - Alaska borderlands, during which students will be expected to fulfill various field assignments, 8 hours per day, 6 days a week. The course formally ends on return to Whitehorse **July 22nd** – students registered in ANTH 226 will continue their studies in Whitehorse until July 29th. See the 2013 Schedule of Activities below for further details.

Attendance

Regular attendance and participation in both the class work and field component is mandatory. There is an 11:00 pm curfew while in the field, unless otherwise permitted. In addition, participants are expected to exhibit cultural sensitivity to local mores and values and participate in community events. A failure to respect local residents can be cause for dismissal from the field and the course.

Assignments

Students will be responsible for maintaining field notes and records as appropriate to the tasks assigned. This will include an individual ethnographic observations notebook, excavation unit notebooks, field survey notebooks, artifact, faunal, photograph, and features catalogues, stratigraphic profiles, and sample logs. This work will be regularly assessed to professional standards.

Each student will prepare a summary account of their experience, outlining lessons learned and focusing on the relationship between theory and method. An extensive field library is available for students to choose particular foci, such as geomorphology, fauna, lithics, etc. The summary will be prepared in an essay format of at least 2500 words and will constitute the major analytical writing assignment.

Students will also be encouraged to regularly post short descriptions of the highlights of their week's experience on the field school webpage. They will provide our sponsors, your relatives and friends, and others interested in our field research a regular update of our discoveries and progress.

Examinations

A mid-term exam and a final exam will each consist of short-answer and essay questions. The mid-term will focus on student's knowledge of general Yukon and local prehistory and ethnography as gained from assigned readings and course lectures /seminars. The final will examine student's knowledge of field methods in theory and practice, and an essay on a special topic of focused study chosen in consultation with the instructor.

Evaluations

The final grade of any student will be calculated as a percentile equivalent of the cumulative marks awarded according to the following:

Appropriate Community Behaviour	Pass/Fail
Attendance and Participation	60
Field Notes	50
Summary Essay	50
Mid-term Exam	40
Final Exam	<u>100</u>
Total Marks	300

Note: Well-kept field records are absolutely critical because they will be the only survivors of the destruction-by-excavation of archaeological resources.

Failure to adequately record and transcribe field notes or inappropriate community behaviour will result in failure of the course, regardless of achievements in other assignments and examinations.

Required Texts

Section 1.

The following required texts will be provided as downloadable PDFs inclusive of your registration fees:

- Easton, N. A., ed. (2009). *Anthropology 225 - Selected Readings, 2013*. Whitehorse: Yukon College.
- Easton, N. A. (2005). *An Ethnohistory of the Chisana River Basin*. Report to the US Park Service. Whitehorse: Northern Research Institute.
- McKennan, Robert A. (1959). *The Upper Tanana Indians*. Yale University, Publications in Anthropology, No. 55. New Haven: Dept. of Anthropology, Yale University.
- Johns, Bessie. *Upper Tanana language Lessons*. Yukon Native Language Centre (text and tape / sound files)
- An extensive reference library on field procedures, analytical methods, and subarctic archaeology and ethnology will also be available to students in the field.

Section 2.

Students must also purchase an Archaeological Fieldwork guidebook; there is any number of these on the market, such as:

- Fladmark, Knut R. (1988). *A Guide to Basic Archaeological Field Procedures*. Dept. of Archaeology, Simon Fraser University, Publication No. 4. Burnaby: SFU.
- Kipfer, Barbara Ann. (2007). *The Archaeologist's Fieldwork Companion*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Course Syllabus

GENERAL OUTLINE OF ACTIVITIES - 2013

The course **begins June 3rd in Whitehorse**. The first week is comprised of introductory lectures to archaeology and training in a variety of field skills, including safety, orienteering, and survey skills with map and compass and electronic total stations, and a day off to explore Whitehorse. Fieldwork proper will begin **June 10th**, with three days working with the College's Heritage Diploma students at a site in or near Whitehorse. We will depart for the Little John field camp north of Beaver Creek on **June 13th or 14th**. From this point on students will be involved in intensive on-site field experience in archaeological survey and excavation, environmental descriptions, oral history and place names research, and ethnographic documentation. Field excursions to additional archaeological and historic sites in the region will be undertaken; provided permissions (village and state) are obtained, we will also travel into Alaska in order to visit several communities and other archaeological excavations. Five days of assisting excavations sponsored by the Tanana Chiefs Conference on the Yukon River south of Eagle Alaska will comprise the student's final practical examination, **July 14th to 18th**. We will travel to Dawson City Yukon and the Dawson City Music Festival **July 19th thru 21st**. Students are formally dismissed from the course on arrival in Whitehorse on **July 22nd**. **ANTH 225 participants should not plan to leave Whitehorse prior to the afternoon of July 23rd**.

Students also registered in ANTH 226 will continue their course work at Ayamdigut Campus in Whitehorse from July 23rd thru July 29th.

The general format for field work will involve completion of personal morning preparations (toiletries, breakfast, and cleanup) for **Morning Muster at 8:30 am sharp**. Breakfast is prepared for service from 7:30 am to 8 am. Preview and assignment of the day's activities follows. The

fieldwork generally runs until 5:00 pm, unless siesta is taken or we are on a field excursion for survey or site visits, with a lunch and health breaks. An **evening muster of all participants at 7:00 pm** will review the day's work and identify issues or problems that need to be addressed to allow supervisors to prepare the following day's work plan. **Regular Evening Assignments** involving cataloguing of artifacts and other related duties will rotate through the field crew. Evenings allow time for reading, fishing, swimming, fieldnotes, and socializing. There is a **regular camp curfew of 11:00 PM** each night (retire to tents, quiet time), unless specifically extended by the instructor.

Students will be assigned to work in teams of 2 or 3 members, with team makeup shifting through the course. Groups of teams will be under the supervision of a Crew Chief, selected from and rotating through the participants, who will, in turn, report to the Instructor and/or Chief Field Research Assistant. Teams will also rotate through responsibility for meal preparation and cleanup under a mutually agreed upon schedule. All camp members will be responsible for the maintenance of a clean, orderly, and safe camp. Student performance in camp life will be assessed as part of the Attendance and Participation mark.

2013 SPECIFIC ITINERARY OF SCHEDULED EVENTS

SPECIAL NOTES 2013

1. Students should arrive in Whitehorse **no later than the evening of June 2nd** and plan to **depart Whitehorse no earlier than July 23rd**. Alternative travel plans (arrival / departure from Anchorage, Alaska, for example) should be discussed with the instructor well in advance to allow for appropriate planning to take place. The field program ends with a tour / travel via the Top of the World Highway to Dawson City July 19th – 21st and return to Whitehorse on July 22nd.

Monday 3 June

Course Introduction:

- 10:00 AM – Muster, Whitehorse, ARCOM-N HQ - 510 Wood Street
- Seminar: The Archaeology of the Subarctic and the Little John Site
- Goals of the 2013 field research program
- Whitehorse communal food purchase (students share accommodation in Whitehorse)
- Yukon College Paperwork
- Yukon College: Introduction to the Boreal Forest Trail Hike with Daypacks
- Yukon Archaeology and Ethnography - Beringia Museum, Atlatl Contest
- Evening Muster - First Logistics Meeting – Personal Equipment Assessment

Tuesday 4 June

- 9:00 AM – Muster
- Seminar: Geomorphology of High Latitude Archaeology
- Second Logistics Meeting - Equipment Planning and Purchases
- Yukon post-contact History - MacBride Museum followed by personal shopping
- Evening – Second Logistics Meeting – Meal Planning

Wednesday 5 June

- 9:00 AM – Muster
- Seminar: Introduction to Lithic Technologies
- 10:30 AM – 3:00 PM – Safety Training, Fish Lake Hike with Daypacks
- Kwanlin Dun Cultural Center

Thursday 6 June

- 9:00 AM Muster
- 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM - Practical Seminar – Principles of Mapping and Survey

Friday 7 June

- 9:00 AM Muster
- 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM: Practical Seminar - Total Station Operation
- Evening – Summer Night Life of Whitehorse

Saturday 8 June

- Equipment and Dry Goods Purchase
- Soiree: Evening B-B-Q hosted by the Students for local professional colleagues and student researchers

Sunday 9 June

- Day Off - Explore Whitehorse and Environs, personal purchases

Monday 10 June – Wednesday 12 June

- 7:30 AM – Muster
- Excavations at Canyon City in collaboration with Dr. Victoria Castillo and Heritage Diploma Program

Thursday 13 June

- Final Purchases of Fresh Foods and Departure
- Departure for the field ASAP; possible overnight camp en route, and several stops along the way at locations of paleogeographical, archaeological, and historic significance.
- PM - Orientation to Beaver Creek village, pick up camp dog; Little John initial camp set-up

Friday 14 June

- 7:00 - 8:00 AM – Breakfast prepared by Senior Staff
- 8:30 AM SHARP - Morning muster
- Safety regulations, human and other-than-human visitor protocols
- Completion of Camp setup
- Introduction to 2013 archaeological excavation, establishment of initial units
- Evening excursion to the International Border for Group Photos and Mount Dave to view Scottie Creek valley with an introduction to *Dineh* Place Names of the Area.

Lectures:

- AM - The *Dineh* Meaning of Respect, Human and Non-Human Persons in the Bush, and Appropriate Behaviour as Guests on this Land
- PM – *Dineh* Place Names and Cultural Geography

Saturday 15 June

- 7:00 - 8:00 AM - Breakfast
- 8:30 AM SHARP - Morning muster and day's assignments
- Fieldwork Begins in Earnest

Lectures:

- AM - Practicalities of Archaeological Excavation
- PM - Keeping Accurate Records: Forms, Note-taking, Transcriptions, Insights

Sunday 16 June

Day off. You will have an opportunity to go into Beaver Creek to shower, do laundry, and explore the village.

Monday 17 June

- 7:00 - 8:00 AM - Breakfast
- 8:30 AM SHARP - Morning assembly and day's assignments
- Practicalities of Ethnographic Participant Observation (1): Establishing Rapport, Listening, Recalling, Fieldnotes

Monday 17 June - 18 July

Fieldwork Experience

During this time period we will be engaged in daily fieldwork encompassing archaeological excavation at Little John and other local known sites, archaeological survey for new sites, ethnographic observation and recording while participating in local life (fish camp, baseball games, Canada Day, geographic place names workshop, moose butchering, community gardening, life history interviews, and other activities as they emerge).

We will have local Elders and Cultural Experts at camp on a regular basis who will observe your behavior, instruct you on various aspects of local aboriginal culture, and share with you the oral history of the region. Other community members will also visit us regularly. The project also employs a number of local youth whose assignments and capacities may differ from yours. You are expected to treat all community members with the respect and deference appropriate to being guests in their homeland, learn from their instructions, and record your experience in your ethnographic notes.

There may also be a number of shorter-term participants under our Research Intern and High School Experiential program. We also anticipate visitors under our Art and Archaeology outreach program in late June or early July.

In addition, several off-site field days will be scheduled once in the field. These will include:

Field Excursion to Upper Tanana valley archaeological sites (Gerstle River, Mead, Broken Mammoth, and perhaps others as time and access allows). This timing of this trip is dependent on weather and plans of collaborating archaeologists in Alaska.

Field Survey, Snag Village Site, may be undertaken if the access road allows. We hope to undertake additional survey at two more localities that will be chosen in consultation with the WRFN and scheduled dependent on weather and availability of guides.

Monday 1 July

Canada Day Parade and Festivities in Beaver Creek - participant observation in an annual village ritual.

Saturday 13 July

Little John Community Tea.

This annual event is an opportunity for program participants to host a day-long public interpretation and thank-you for members of the local community and regional media. We provide site tours, food, and hospitality to our local hosts in appreciation of their generous sharing of their land and lives with us.

Friday 12 July

10 AM - Final Examination.

Sunday 14 July

Travel to Eagle, Alaska and Tanana Chief Conference excavation site.

Thursday 18 July

Depart for Dawson City.

Friday 19 July – Sunday 21 July

Travel to Dawson City via Top of the World Highway; establish camp, after which you are on time off to enjoy the Dawson City Music Festival as a volunteer or paid participant and explore the area as you wish.

Monday 22 July

Return to Whitehorse, with stops at Interpretive Centers along the way; course dismissal on arrival.

In-Field Lecture Program

You will also receive regular evening lectures or practical instruction on a variety of additional topics supported by available readings and at times delivered by visiting guest lecturers chosen from the following:

- Guest: Ruth Johnny, Certified Athapaskan Language Instructor - Contemporary Athapaskan Orthography: Hearing and Writing in Upper Tanana
- Early Prehistory of the Western Subarctic: Northern Cordilleran and Paleo-Arctic Traditions
- The Middle and Later Prehistory of the Western Subarctic: Northern Archaic and Proto-Historic Athapaskan Traditions
- Traditional Western Subarctic Culture: Athapaskan Social Organization
- Principles of Archaeological Survey: Searching for Signs of Prehistory
- Practicalities of Archaeological Field Analysis (1): Cataloguing and Basic Metrics of Artifacts, Logging Samples, Photographs, and Profiles
- Practicalities of Archaeological Field Analysis (2): Recording Stratigraphy, Mapping Distributions, Predicting Site Location
- Practicalities of Archaeological Field Analysis (3): Interpreting Stratigraphy and the Distribution of Artifacts and Features
- Ethnographic Enquiry of the Past: Mythology and Oral History
- Ethnography of the Present: Structured Interviews and Observation of Social Organization
- Understanding Cultural and Linguistic Categories: Folk Taxonomies and Ethno-science
- The Social Organization of Field Schools: Living and Working Together in the Bush
- History and Culture of the White River First Nation
- History and Material Culture of the Chisana Gold Rush
- Paleo-environmental Data and Analysis
- Geomorphology and the Changing Landscape
- Wet-site and Underwater Archaeology
- Pleistocene Fauna of the Scottie Creek Valley
- The Excavation of Permafrost
- Place-Names of the White River First Nations and their relationship to Archaeology
- Social Organization and Kinship of Athapaskan Foragers
- The Effect of the International Border on Aboriginal Identity and Relations
- Traditional Fishing Methods of the White River First Nation
- Respect and Proper Relations between Humans and Animals

- The Yukon Land Claim and the White River First Nation
- Artifact Preservation and Post-excavation Conservation, Museum Presentation, and Interpretation

Students' Requirements

Students must be prepared and willing to live and work in a field camp (i.e., tenting), share camp chores and maintenance (e.g., cooking, clean-up, stores), and engage in strenuous outdoor activities (e.g., hiking, digging, carrying heavy loads).

Students must have a valid passport.

Recent changes to Canada – US border crossing regulations by the US Department of Homeland Security require that **all students must have a valid passport** in order to participate in planned course activities in Alaska.

Students must inform the instructor of any regular medication they take and should have a copy of a doctor's prescription for any regulated drugs.

If there is any reason why their entry to the United States would be prohibited, students are obliged to inform the instructor of this fact. Such cases will be welcome in the field school, although they will not be participants in any excursions into Alaska.

Field work always involves an element of danger due to its remote and wilderness location. **All participants will be required to sign waiver forms and inform the instructor of any illness, ailment, or condition that might present a risk in the field.** While we strive to meet everyone's needs, some conditions or preferences cannot be accommodated in the projected field conditions. **The instructor reserves the right to refuse participation in exceptional circumstances.**

Further information (personal gear list, weather conditions, etc.) can be found on the course website at: <http://dl1.yukoncollege.yk.ca/anth225>

Arrival / Departure Information

Field Methods in Subarctic Archaeology and Ethnography will begin June 3rd at 10:00 AM, in Whitehorse. College staff will be available before our departure to assist anyone with administrative needs. We will be returning to Whitehorse 22nd of July; you should plan to leave Yukon no earlier than the afternoon of the 23rd of July.

Students arriving from outside the Yukon

Arrangements can be made to meet in-coming planes. Please advise the Liberal Arts office (867-668-8770) at Yukon College of your travel plans should you need such assistance.

Students Accommodation in Whitehorse

Students are responsible for their own food and accommodation in Whitehorse through to departure for the field. A large suite at a local Bed and Breakfast with cooking facilities is available as shared accommodation (a great way to start to get to know your fellow students) across the street from the Instructors residence, which serves as our primary field staging arena.