

ANTH-2031: ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD METHODS

Cuyahoga Community College

Viewing: ANTH-2031 : Archaeological Field Methods

Board of Trustees:

May 2026

Academic Term:

Fall 2026

Subject Code

ANTH - Anthropology

Course Number:

2031

Title:

Archaeological Field Methods

Catalog Description:

Overview of methods used in field archaeology as applied to actual archaeological sites. Covers techniques in surveying, mapping, excavation, artifact processing and data analysis.

Credit Hour(s):

3

Lecture Hour(s):

3

Requisites

Prerequisite and Corequisite

ANTH-2110 Archeology, and ANTH-203L Archaeological Field Methods Lab, or concurrent enrollment; or departmental approval: permission from Instructor.

Outcomes

Course Outcome(s):

Discuss the goals archaeological investigation.

Objective(s):

1. Interpret behaviors of people in the past based upon material remains.
2. Discuss the different scientific aspects of archaeological investigations, particularly with regards to excavation, data collection, data analysis, and building working hypotheses for explanation and interpretation.
3. Implement the goals of the fieldwork project, including data collection, analysis, and reporting

Course Outcome(s):

Examine the methods of archaeological investigation, including the scientific method, and evaluate the appropriate methods for a variety of archaeological contexts.

Objective(s):

1. Engage with hypothesis formation based upon data collection and analysis
2. Deduce the appropriate archaeological method for variable archaeological contexts and situations.
3. Research methods used in a variety of archaeological contexts.

Course Outcome(s):

Engage with relevant archaeological and geological theories for interpreting archaeological evidence.

Objective(s):

1. Explain the Law of Superposition and discuss how to employ it during ground testing and excavation.
 2. Discuss various dating methodologies and techniques typically used in archaeology (stratigraphy, typology, C-14 dating, dendrochronology and others)
 3. Explain the variable principles of preservation archaeological evidence
 4. Explain and utilize various theories for identifying, analyzing, and cataloguing archaeological artifacts
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Course Outcome(s):

Examine fieldwork methodologies and data collection and analysis.

Objective(s):

1. Examine basic aspects of archaeological survey, including sampling strategies, various methods for survey (surface survey, remote sensing, shovel testing, test unit excavation)
 2. Discuss basic aspects of archaeological excavation (setting datum points, setting a grid, excavation by arbitrary level or stratigraphic layer, documenting archaeological features)
 3. Examine basic aspects of relevant artifact analysis for the course, for example, lithics, ceramics, faunal materials, historical artifacts, or artifact handling and curation, when appropriate.
 4. Explain appropriate geoarchaeological analysis (soil samples and soil interpretation)
 5. Recognize that while archaeological methods are standardized, results will always vary
 6. Recognize the incomplete nature of archaeological evidence and interpretation
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Course Outcome(s):

Examine ethical and legal aspects of archaeological investigation and evaluate appropriate actions or restraint from action for various archaeological contexts.

Objective(s):

1. Evaluate fiscal, practical, and ethical and legal concerns of excavation.
 2. Apply ethical and legal knowledge to the excavation of a sample field site and analysis of associated artifacts.
 3. Explain the importance of making archaeological evidence accessible through appropriate report writing and submission
 4. Explain the importance of the question "Who owns the past?" and the implications for the control of knowledge upon variable communities.
 5. Explain how practical knowledge from archaeological investigations can impact people today.
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Methods of Evaluation:

1. Examinations on archaeological field investigations
2. Oral and/or written presentations of field experiences
3. Evaluation of field techniques
4. Participation in class and field discussions

Course Content Outline:

1. Goals of archaeological Investigation
 - a. What is archaeology?
 - i. Definition of archaeology
 - ii. Purpose of archaeology
 - iii. Specializations in archaeology
 - b. Various aspects of archaeological investigation
 - i. Research
 - ii. Fieldwork
 - iii. Labwork
 - iv. Analysis and interpretation
 - c. Research field site

- i. History
 - ii. Geology
 - iii. Geography
- 2. General methods of archaeological Investigation
 - a. Fieldwork
 - i. Survey
 - ii. Excavation
 - b. Lab work
 - i. Conservation and analysis
 - ii. Data collection
 - iii. Record keeping
 - c. Dating techniques
 - i. Relative dating techniques
 - ii. Absolute/numerical/calendrical dating
- 3. Examine general field and laboratory strategies and methodologies
 - a. Survey
 - i. Surface survey
 - ii. Shovel testing
 - iii. Test units
 - b. Excavation
 - i. Setting up a datum and grid
 - ii. Appropriate excavation tools
 - iii. Field site excavation expectations
 - iv. Field site excavation realities
 - c. Artifact analysis
 - i. Classes of artifact analysis
 - ii. Methods of analysis
 - iii. Record keeping
 - iv. Curation
 - d. Documentation
 - i. In the field
 - ii. In the lab
- 4. Ethical and legal requirements and responsibilities
 - a. Why excavate?/Is excavation necessary?
 - b. Should we excavate?
 - c. Ethics of archaeological Investigations
 - d. Who owns the past?
 - e. Relevant US laws

Religious Accommodation

Before reviewing the course schedule, students should carefully review the following religious accommodation policy and other required instructional policies:

Religious Accommodation:

Students seeking an accommodation for absences permitted under Ohio's Testing Your Faith Act must provide the instructor with written notice of the specific dates for which the student requires an accommodation and must do so not later than fourteen (14) days after the first day of instruction. Please submit requests for accommodations at this link: <https://portal2.tri-c.edu/ReligiousAccommodation/ReligiousAccommodationForm>. Students with questions about their religious accommodations under Ohio's Testing Your Faith Act may contact the College's Office of General Counsel and Legal Services by phone at 216.987.4856 or via email at legal@tri-c.edu.

Other Required Instructional Policies:

<https://www.tri-c.edu/student-resources/curriculum/documents/syllabus-part-b.pdf>

Weekly Schedule

	Topics
Week 1	Introduction to Archaeology
Week 2	Ethical Concerns for Excavation

Week 3	Legal Aspects of Excavation in the US and Ohio
Week 4	Introduction to Archaeological Methodology
Week 5	Introduction to Site Research
Week 6	Introduction to Survey and Excavation
Week 7	Introduction to Lab work
Week 8	Dating Techniques
Week 9	Practical applications of Survey
Week 10	Practical applications of Survey (continued)
Week 11	Practical Applications of Excavation
Week 12	Practical Applications of Excavation (continued)
Week 13	Practical Applications of Artifact Analysis
Week 14	Practical Applications of Artifact Analysis (continued)
Week 15	Practical Applications of Documentation
Week 16	Exam Week/Final Projects Due

The Course Schedule is subject to change due to pedagogical needs, instructor discretion, parts of term, and unexpected events.

Required/Recommended Readings

Required readings are assigned commensurate with the archaeological project.

Resources for the Instructor

Hester, T. R., Shafer, H. J. and Feder, K.L. (2016) *Field Methods in Archaeology*, Abington, Oxon: Routledge.

Price, Douglas, and Anne B. Gebauer. (2002) *Adventures in Fungawiland: A Computer Simulation in Archaeology*, McGraw-Hill Higher Education.

van den Dries, M. H., & Tomas, F. C. M. (2025) Archaeological Field School Training and Student Well-Being: A Case Study from The Netherlands. 8(8): 333. <https://doi.org/10.3390/heritage8080333>

Mark S. Warner, Katrina S. L. Eichner, and Renae J. Campbell. (2024) (16 October) *Rethinking Field School Delivery and Addressing Our Biases*, 12(4):351-358. doi:10.1017/aap.2024.20

Historical Archaeology.

American Antiquity,

Additional Resources for the Instructor

Selections from the following:

Griffin, James

1981 The Man Who Comes after; or, Careful How You Curate. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 376(1):7-15.

Heizer, Rober

2021 *A Guide to Archaeological Field Methods*. Hassel Street Press (Republished edition).

Horn, Jonathon

2005 *Historic Artifact Handbook*. Alpine Archaeological Consultants, Inc.: Montrose.

Indiana University

N.D. *Reading Topographic Maps*. Adapted from Guide by Boris Vasilev, Paradise Valley Community College, Phoenix, Arizona.

Ohio Historic Preservation Office

2022. *Ohio Archaeology Guidelines*. Ohio Historic Preservation Office: Columbus. Archaeology Guidelines - Ohio History Connection (<https://www.ohiohistory.org/preserving-ohio/federal-state-reviews/archaeology-guidelines/>)

Little, Barbara and Erika Seibert

2000 Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering Archaeological Properties. *National Register Bulletin 36*, U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service. National Register Bulletin 36 ([nps.gov](https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/upload/NRB36-Complete.pdf)) (<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/upload/NRB36-Complete.pdf>)

McPherron, Shannon P., and Harold L. Dibble

2002 *Using Computers in Archaeology: A Practical Guide*. McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.: Boston.

Olson, Eric

2019 The Shirey Meadow Survey: A Comparative Study of Shovel Testing and Pedestrian Survey. *Pennsylvania Archaeologist* 89(1):1-14.

Pope, M

2015 Twenty-Three Propositions for Stone Artefact Studies. *Lithics* 36:64-65.

Scott, Doug, Chris Espenshade, Patrick Severts, Sheldon Skaggs, Terry Powis, Chris Adams, and Charles Haecker

2012 Advances in Metal Detector Technology and Applications in Archaeology, in *Proceedings of the Advanced Metal Detecting for the Archaeologist Conference*, Terry Powis (ed.), pp. 33-54.

Spier, Robert

1970 *Surveying and Mapping: A Manual of Simplified Techniques*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.: New York.

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