

DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

COURSE OUTLINE – Fall 2022

AN2920 (A2): Fantastical Archaeology: Ancient Aliens to Atlantis – 3 (3-0-0) 45 Hours for 15 Weeks

Northwestern Polytechnic acknowledges that our campuses are located on Treaty 8 territory, the ancestral and present-day home to many diverse First Nations, Metis, and Inuit people. We are grateful to work, live, and learn on the traditional territory of Duncan's First Nation, Horse Lake First Nation, and Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation, who are the original caretakers of this land.

We acknowledge the history of this land and we are thankful for the opportunity to walk together in friendship, where we will encourage and promote positive change for present and future generations.

INSTRUCTOR: Shawn Morton, PhD **PHONE:** (780) 539-2830
OFFICE: C-402 **E-MAIL:** smorton@nwpolytech.ca
OFFICE HOURS: M/W 12:30-13:30 or by appointment

CALENDAR DESCRIPTION:

It is not always easy to separate fact from fiction in archaeology, and the human past has served as fertile ground for fraudsters, charlatans, and pseudoscientists of many stripes. Through the close examination of case studies, we will critically examine some of the most persistent (and popular) myths and mysteries concerned with the archaeological past. This course will demonstrate that a strong adherence to scientific investigation and hard evidence can uncover facts about prehistory that are as interesting as the myths.

PREREQUISITE(S)/COREQUISITE:

None.

REQUIRED TEXT/RESOURCE MATERIALS:

Feder, Kenneth L. (2017) *Frauds, Myths, and Mysteries: Science and Pseudoscience in Archaeology*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Von Däniken, Erich (1999) *Chariots of the Gods*. Berkley Books, New York.

DELIVERY MODE(S):

In person.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

This course critically examines unconventional claims about the human past. Archaeology and the human past are often manipulated to serve a variety of purposes ranging from simple entertainment to supporting nationalism, as well as furthering religious ideas and causes. We will explore topics such as cosmic intervention, Creationism, New Age philosophy, and touch on popular topics such as ancient aliens, lost giants, and Atlantis, as well as other frauds and mysteries in archaeology.

Moreover, this course fits within a liberal studies framework. As such it seeks to challenge students to gain a deeper understanding of the natural environment, the world's peoples, diversity of traditions, and legacies created by the dynamics and tensions that shape our world. A liberal studies course is also intended to provide a broad range of knowledge and to develop an awareness of different ethnic groups and historical contexts on the global stage. By doing so, the student can develop their own potential contributions to society from a well-informed base of information rather than one based upon limited understandings, misunderstandings, stereotypes, and/or misinformation. This course is supposed to challenge entrenched ideas you may hold and expand them to include other perspectives outside your current comfort zone. This is the essence of education.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Students will be able to:

- demonstrate, through class discussions and in written coursework, an ability to recognise and characterize a pseudoscientific claim, particularly about the human past involving archaeology.
- explain, through class discussions and in written coursework, the proper structure of scientific argumentation and how to avoid common logical fallacies in pseudoscientific thinking.
- apply, in class discussions and in written coursework, techniques for critical thinking and for sharpening their analytical skills to critically evaluate pseudoscientific claims.
- demonstrate, through class discussions and in written coursework, an understanding of the role and popularity of pseudoscientific claims in contemporary North American culture and the power archaeology must create national, religious, social, ethnic, and political narratives.
- discuss, in class and in written coursework, how seemingly “silly” pseudoarchaeological claims have harmful and sometimes violent effects on indigenous groups in the form of social/political/religious/ethnic marginalisation, economic exploitation, and “romanticising” an “exotic other”.

TRANSFERABILITY:

Please consult the Alberta Transfer Guide for more information. You may check to ensure the transferability of this course at the Alberta Transfer Guide main page <http://www.transferalberta.ca>.

**** Grade of D or D+ may not be acceptable for transfer to other post-secondary institutions. Students are cautioned that it is their responsibility to contact the receiving institutions to ensure transferability**

EVALUATIONS:

You will be graded on:	Total Assignments	Points Each	Total Points	% of Grade
Reading Quizzes	5	4 pts	20 pts	10%
Media Assignments	4	30 pts	120 pts	60%
Final Exam	1	60 pts	60 pts	30%

Total Points for Grade	-	-	200 pts	100%
Extra Credit	2	5 pts	10 pts	5%

Reading Quizzes (5 reading quizzes at 4 points each for 20 points total)

You will be given 5 reading quizzes covering your syllabus and chapters in our textbooks throughout the semester. Each quiz will consist of a small number of questions (multiple choice, matching, etc.) and are intended to encourage you to keep up with your readings. They are not worth a whole lot of points in the grand scheme of things but could mean the difference between one letter grade and the next; don't let them slip past you! **Reading Quizzes are to be completed on our myClass page, will open Mondays at 8 am of the week assigned, and close Sundays at 11:59 pm (see due dates on schedule).**

Media Assignments (4 media assignments at 30 points each for 120 points total)

Our understanding of the ancient world is improving at a remarkable rate. Every day, all over the world, archaeologists are unearthing the relics of our shared heritage and helping to provide context to our modern world. Unfortunately, we are competing at every turn with an exponential increase in our exposure to pseudo-archaeology. It can often be quite difficult to distinguish between the two. Over the course of the semester, you will be expected to write up four brief summaries (each approximately 500 words; about 1 page single-spaced) on "tales of archaeological discovery" covered by the media. Media assignments are organized as two related pairs.

Pt. 1. For the first assignment (Pt. 1) of a pair, I want you to find a story covered by the popular media. It is essential that you find a story that would fit the definition of "pseudo-archaeology" (see pg. xix in Feder for some hallmarks of pseudo-archaeology). Note that such stories may or may not be intentionally misleading. Summarize the story. Further, I want you to tell me what **you think** about the discoveries. How can you tell fact from fiction? Can you identify specific hallmarks of pseudoscience (e.g., false calls to authority, spurious correlations, etc.)? What are they? Are there any potential consequences posed by the misinformation contained in your story? **Ensure that you choose a story with sufficient detail to meet these guidelines.**

Pt. 2. For the second assignment (Pt. 2) of a pair, I want you to find a peer-reviewed academic journal article that is **DIRECTLY RELATED** to the story you chose for Pt. 1. After summarizing the article, can you tell fact from fiction? Does the academic paper successfully avoid the hallmarks of pseudoscience? If not, where do they slip? What evidence and argumentation *do* they use?

You must cite your article in a format that allows me to locate it (i.e., author, title, journal, webpage, link, etc.). Feel free to use any source, from televised media to traditional print and web pages for Pt. 1. Pt. 2 should be from a peer-reviewed academic journal. **Assignments must be turned in on our myClass page, will open Mondays at 8 am of the week assigned, and close Sundays at 11:59 pm (see due dates on schedule).**

Final Exam (60 points total)

You will have a scheduled final exam in this class; **HOWEVER**, your exam **WILL NOT** require you to be physically present on campus. Your exam is a **TAKE HOME**. It will build on the material covered throughout the course. Your final exam will be worth 60 points and consist of a single essay question and response that will be provided in advance and will be related to the book by von Däniken that we are reading this semester (*Chariots of the Gods*). **Your final is to be completed on our myClass page and will open on the Monday (at 8 am) of the last week of scheduled classes. The exam is due and will close by 11:59 pm on the date scheduled by the registrar. I will let you know when this information is available.**

Note: I do **NOT** provide study guides. Significant quantities of research have served to demonstrate that it is not in a student's best interest to be provisioned with a study guide by the instructor. You may not like it, but the reality is that production of your own study guide is an important studying

technique in its own right. Like eating vegetables, this is for your own good. That being said, you are encouraged to ask questions in class and to approach me in office hours for guidance. Although this isn't a course where you need to memorize a lot of information, you do need to be familiar with what we've covered and where you can find it. Use the tables of objectives included in each module to structure your study guide.

Extra Credit (up to 10 points)

Extra credit is as stated, extra points above and beyond your regular class assignments. These points are somewhat easy to acquire, but to receive any point you must do exactly as asked. Opportunities for extra credit (worth 5 points each) will be announced throughout the semester.

COURSE SCHEDULE/TENTATIVE TIMELINE:

Week	Date	Topic(s)	Reading(s)
1.1	Sep. 5		
1.2	Sep. 7	Introduction to course	Syllabus
Homework: Reading Quiz 1 - Due Sunday, Sep. 11, 11:59 PM			
2.1	Sep. 12	What is archaeology and how do we know what we know?	Feder - Ch. 1 & 2
2.2	Sep. 14		
3.1	Sep. 19	Anatomy of an archaeological hoax and an introduction to Erich von Däniken	Feder - Ch. 3 von Däniken - Forward & Intro
3.2	Sep. 21		
Homework: Reading Quiz 2 - Due Sunday, Sep. 25, 11:59 PM			
4.1	Sep. 26	Piltdown Man and other tales of early humans.	Feder - Ch. 4 von Däniken - Ch. 1 & 2
4.2	Sep. 28		
Homework: Media Assignment 1, Part 1 - Due Sunday, Oct. 2, 11:59 PM			
5.1	Oct. 3	The first Americans: Sorting fact from fiction.	Feder - Ch. 5 von Däniken - Ch. 3
5.2	Oct. 5		
Homework: Media Assignment 1, Part 2 - Due Sunday, Oct. 9, 11:59 PM			
6.1	Oct. 10		
6.1	Oct. 12		
7.1	Oct. 17	Vikings, Templars, Africans, and ancient Chinese in the Americas: Evidence?	Feder - Ch. 6 von Däniken - Ch. 4
7.2	Oct. 19		
Homework: Reading Quiz 3 - Due Sunday, Oct. 23, 11:59 PM			
8.1	Oct. 24	Reaching further afield: The apparent mystery of the moundbuilders.	Feder - Ch. 7 von Däniken - Ch. 5
8.2	Oct. 26		
9.1	Oct. 31	Everything you never wanted to know about Atlantis and other lost continents.	Feder - Ch. 8 von Däniken - Ch. 6
9.2	Nov. 2		
Homework: Reading Quiz 4 - Due Sunday, Nov. 6, 11:59 PM			
10.1	Nov. 7	Ancient Aliens: Flying millions of lightyears to show us how to stack rocks.	Feder - Ch. 9 von Däniken - Ch. 7
10.2	Nov. 9		
11.1	Nov. 14	Ancient ancient Egypt: Are there deeper secrets in Egypt than science is willing to admit?	Feder - Ch. 10 von Däniken - Ch. 8
11.2	Nov. 16		
Homework: Reading Quiz 5 - Due Sunday, Nov. 20, 11:59 PM			
12.1	Nov. 21	Psychics and archaeology: Why dig when you can feel the past?	Feder - Ch. 11 von Däniken - Ch. 9
12.2	Nov. 23		
Homework: Media Assignment 2, Part 1 - Due Sunday, Nov. 27, 11:59 PM			
13.1	Nov. 28	Creationism and Intelligent Design.	Feder - Ch. 12 von Däniken - Ch. 10
13.2	Nov. 30		
Homework: Media Assignment 2, Part 1 - Due Sunday, Dec. 4, 11:59 PM			
14.1	Dec. 5	When archaeologists are the perpetrators of fraud.	TBD von Däniken - Ch. 11 & 12
14.2	Dec. 7		
15.1	Dec. 12	Real mysteries of a veritable past. Why do we seem to prefer the fantasy?	Feder - Ch. 13
Final Exam - Date TBD			

GRADING CRITERIA:

Please note that most universities will not accept your course for transfer credit **IF** your grade is **less than C-**.

Alpha Grade	4-point Equivalent	Percentage Guidelines		Alpha Grade	4-point Equivalent	Percentage Guidelines
A+	4.0	90-100		C+	2.3	67-69
A	4.0	85-89		C	2.0	63-66
A-	3.7	80-84		C-	1.7	60-62
B+	3.3	77-79		D+	1.3	55-59
B	3.0	73-76		D	1.0	50-54
B-	2.7	70-72		F	0.0	00-49

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

Late Assignment/Make-up Policy: You are expected to follow the schedule as posted and **late assignments will not be accepted**, except with my permission. Contrary to a popular idiom, it is always better to ask for permission than forgiveness; if you know that you are going to miss a deadline, please let me know in advance.

Attendance and Participation: Attendance will not be taken, and no part of your grade is directly tied to attendance/participation. You are paying good money for this class and committing a significant amount of time to it. To get the most for your money and effort, **attendance is strongly encouraged**.

Classroom Climate Expectations: To create and maintain a safe and productive learning environment in the classroom, standards of behaviours are expected as follows:

1. **Listen** attentively and TAKE NOTES.
2. **Communicate** clearly and actively when asking questions or during discussions.
3. **Be respectful** when asking questions/discussing topics with EVERYONE. This does not mean that you need to agree with all the views/opinions expressed but note that there is a difference between being critical or engaging in a productive conversation and being confrontational or abusive.
4. **Refrain** from excessive talking or use of technology for NONACADEMIC PURPOSES. You are supposed to be in class, so BE IN CLASS.

If you choose to violate the above expectations, either once or repeatedly the following consequences will be enforced:

1. Verbal warning;
2. Meeting after class/in office hours, or;
3. Pursuing a report of non-academic misconduct under the Student Rights and Responsibilities policy.

STATEMENT ON PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING:

Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated and there will be penalties. For a more precise definition of plagiarism and its consequences, refer to the Student Conduct section of the Northwestern Polytechnic Calendar at <https://www.nwpolytech.ca/programs/calendar/> or the Student Rights and Responsibilities policy which can be found at <https://www.nwpolytech.ca/about/administration/policies/index.html>.

**Note: all Academic and Administrative policies are available on the same page.

Additional Information:

Note that you should not take your performance in this course as an indication of how much I like or respect you. No, that will depend on whether you laugh at my jokes (that was a joke). It goes without saying that post-secondary education is a process. You'll figure out what works for you. I'm here to help.