Scientific Inquiry: Society and Culture  
Anthropology 2006  
PARANORMAL ARCHAEOLOGY

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Course Objectives
This course fulfills part of the Common Curriculum's "Ways of Knowing: Scientific Inquiry: Society and Culture" requirement. In these courses, students will

- describe basic principles of human functioning and conduct in social and cultural contexts;
- describe and explain how social scientific methods are used to understand these underlying principles.

Paranormal Archaeology explores the virtues and limitations of the scientific method for understanding human society and culture. To accomplish this goal it uses selected mysteries and puzzles from the human past that have intrigued, over many years, professional scientists and the general public alike. We will explore a wide variety of topics having anthropological relevance—Bigfoot, the Big Stone Heads of Easter Island, the Great Pyramids of Egypt, the Great Earthen Burial Mounds of North America, and other phenomena—in an effort to sort out hard facts, pure fantasies, and genuine mysteries. The course examines where the more outrageous explanations of mysterious phenomena come from, and investigates why such explanations are of continuing popularity in modern society.

Upon completion of this course students will

- Be able to distinguish scientific and non-scientific approaches to understanding human society and culture;
- Be able to describe variation in the ways of behaving and believing that characterized human groups in the different times and places considered;
- Be able to identify the social and cultural forces that influence how and why scientists and citizens come to believe certain things about human history, and the broader social consequences of those beliefs.

Course Requirements
1. Class attendance, active discussion of course material, and completion of several unannounced, in-class writing assignments (25%).
2. Midterm exam (35%).
3. Final exam (45%).

Required Readings
There are numerous required readings for this course. These readings are available on the course Portfolio site: http://portfolio.du.edu/paranarch. You are expected to have the readings read and fully digested for the days they are due to be discussed. I reserve the right to delete or add readings depending on circumstances.
COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: Introduction; Science and Epistemology
Mar 24  Introduction and Rationale for the Course; Overview of Topics and Issues. Taking the Measure of Belief Systems at DU.

Mar 26  Epistemology, Paradigms, and the Nature of Science.

Week 2: Politics of the Past
Mar 31  The Social and Cultural Context of Archaeology.
  Archaeology as Propaganda.
  READING:

Apr 2  Plato and the Atlantis “Myth”
  READING:

Week 3: Sunken Continents
Apr 7  NO CLASS. View National Geographic Finding Atlantis film.

Apr 9  Locating Atlantis.
  READING:
  ▪ Kuhne, R. 2004 A Location for Atlantis? Antiquity 78:300.

Week 4: National Geographic and the Spirit of Exploration
Apr 14  Archaeology and National Geographic.
  READING:

Apr 16  Visitor: Wade Davis, Explorer-in-Residence at National Geographic.
  READING:
WEEK 5: Human Evolutionary Hoaxes and Puzzles
Apr 21  The Great Piltdown Hoax: Whodunnit?
READING:

Apr 23  Does a Big-footed, Human-like Animal Roam the Earth?
READING:

DISTRIBUTE MIDTERM EXAM

WEEK 6: Extraterrestrial Biological Entities and the Origins of Civilization
Apr 28  Extraterrestrials and the Evolution of Culture on Earth.
READING:

Apr 30  Did Aliens Visit Ancient Sumer? The Sitchin Chronicles.
READING:

May 2  MIDTERM EXAM IS DUE (to my mailbox or by email to dsaitta@du.edu)

WEEK 7: How Mysterious are Other Great Constructions of the Old World?
May 5  Big Heads of the South Pacific.
READING:

May 7  Heaven, Earth, and Pyramids.

WEEK 8: Lost Tribes and Ancient Mysteries of North America
May 12  Diffusion from Atlantis and Elsewhere
READING:

May 14  Ancient North America in the Scientific and Popular Imagination.
READING:

**WEEK 9: Some Big Questions**

May 19  Is There Life Elsewhere in the Universe?
READING:

May 21  How Should We Deal with Alternative Archaeologies?
READING:

**WEEK 10: Fact and Fiction in Cult Archaeology**

May 26  Memorial Day: No Class

May 28  What’s Fact and What’s Fiction in the Study of Ancient Cultures? Why are Cult Beliefs So Popular? Why Won’t Some Go Away?
READING:

**WEEK 11**

June 2  FINAL EXAM IS DUE.