

Revised 8/29/2011

PRINCIPLES OF ARCHAEOLOGY  
ANTH 6301  
SUNDAY EISELT  
TUESDAY 2:00 PM TO 4:50 PM  
HEROY BUILDING ROOM 436  
FALL 2011

## **Course Organization and Requirements**

### Rationale

In studying the scientific practice of archaeology, scholars typically distinguish between four key concepts; theory, method, principles, and systematics. *Theory* pertains to the structures of concepts, statements, or models that are intended to make a specified set of phenomena understandable. *Method* is the process through which hypotheses must pass when being examined for their respective truth claims. *Principles* constitute the determining factors of scientific knowledge – the sets of conditions of properties belonging to data or certain ways of viewing or experiencing reality. *Systematics* refers to how these principles are put into effect through the creation, classification, and organization of observations.

Archaeological theory and method are covered in other classes within the SMU program. Here we focus upon the principles and systematics of our discipline -- how archaeologists use middle-range research and analogical reasoning to turn observations on artifacts into archaeological data. Our focus is on the nature of archaeological evidence and the dimensions artifact variation; including time, space, and form and how these phenomena are reconstructed from objects recovered through excavation and survey.

### Structure

The course meets every Tuesday from 2:00 pm to 4:50 pm. All readings for the week are due on this day. The first half of the class is dedicated to discussion of readings and follows a seminar format. The second half of the class is devoted to writing and follows a workshop format. Please bring your laptop to class every day. If you do not have a laptop, one will be provided to you during class.

### General Aims

This class introduces students to the principles of archaeological reasoning, empirical observation, and effective (verbal and written) communication.

### Aims for Writing Awareness

- Enhance familiarity and comfort with the writing process
- Prompt students to think creatively
- Sharpen critical thinking skills
- Teach students to tailor their prose for particular audiences and situations, and to use compelling reasons and evidence to support arguments
- Help students develop editing techniques that will make their prose more stylish and accessible

### Learning Outcomes

You will have succeeded in this course when you are able to:

- Demonstrate that you know the foundational approaches by which archaeologists interpret data to reconstruct behavioral and cultural processes through comprehensive reading of all assigned articles and project materials.
- Show that you understand the history and complexity of analogical reasoning in archaeological thought through effective discussion in class.
- Integrate the knowledge of scientific concepts in middle range research through efficient and clear writing.
- Develop self-conscious awareness of strengths and weaknesses in communicating archaeology through successful completion of class exercises and projects.

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## Grading

Grades will be based on your level of excellence on:

1. Weekly exercises and writing assignments (30%)
2. Final Class Project (40%)
3. Class participation and preparedness to discuss readings (30%)

## Materials

Assigned articles and chapters are provided (or will be made available) for copy and/or as PDF files.

## In-Class Writing Projects

As mentioned above, the second half of each class is dedicated to writing awareness, which will include discussions, work on the course project (see below) and in-class writing and critique assignments that contribute to your overall grade.

## References and Citations

Students must abide by professional ethics and procedures with their use of citations and quotations following the American Antiquity Style Guide (<http://www.saa.org/AbouttheSociety/Publications/StyleGuide/tabid/984/Default.aspx>). Any unattributed use of published material constitutes plagiarism, and students will be held responsible for such transgressions with a failing grade for that assignment.

## University Policies

*Disability Accommodations:* Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first contact Ms. Rebecca Marin, Coordinator, Services for Students with Disabilities (214-768-4557) to verify the disability and establish eligibility for accommodations. They should then schedule an appointment with the professor to make appropriate arrangements. (See University Policy No. 2.4)

*Religious Observance:* Religiously observant students wishing to be absent on holidays that require missing class should notify their professors in writing at the beginning of the semester, and should discuss with them, in advance, acceptable ways of making up any work missed because of the absence. (See University Policy No. 1.9)

*Excused Absences for University Extracurricular Activities:* Students participating in an officially sanctioned, scheduled University extracurricular activity should be given the opportunity to make up class assignments or other graded assignments missed as a result of their participation. It is the responsibility of the student to make arrangements with the instructor prior to any missed scheduled examination or other mixed assignment for making up the work. (See University Undergraduate Catalogue)

*Plagiarism:* Plagiarism is the misrepresentation of the work of another as your own and is a serious infraction of the University Honor Code. Instances of plagiarism or any other cheating will be reported to the University Honor Council, and will at the very least result in failure of this course. University policy on plagiarism may be found at: [http://www.smu.edu/studentlife/PCL\\_05\\_HC.asp](http://www.smu.edu/studentlife/PCL_05_HC.asp) and in the Student Handbook at: [http://www.smu.edu/studentlife/PDF/SMU\\_Student\\_Handbook\\_06-07.pdf](http://www.smu.edu/studentlife/PDF/SMU_Student_Handbook_06-07.pdf)

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**Weekly Schedule of Assignments and Readings**

**August 2011**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topics, Readings</b>	<b>Writing Archaeology Readings and Projects</b>
<b>Aug-23</b>	Introduction to the Course	Review aims and goals of writing archaeology
<b>Aug-30</b>	The Archaeological Record 1. Spaulding 1960 2. Patrik 1985 3. Sullivan 2008 4. Stein 2008 5. Lyman 2011	Writing Archaeology 1. Muskingum Reading Strategies 2. Kintigh 2005 Writing Strategies 3. Connah (Ch. 1) 4. Williams (Ch. 1) 5. Pan (Ch. 1, 2)  <b>Select Literature Review Project</b>
<b>Sept-6</b>	Formation Processes 1. Schiffer 1972 2. Schiffer 1983 3. Schiffer 1985 4. Pick One for presentation in class a. Goodman-Elgar 2008 b. Beck 2006 c. Hutson 2007 d. Malinsky-Bullera et al. 2011	Writing Archaeology 1. Connah (Ch. 2) 2. Williams (Ch. 2) 3. Pan (Ch. 3) 4. Hodder 1989
<b>Sept-13</b>	Ethnographic Analogy 1. Ascher 1961 2. Binford 1967 3. Wobst 1978 4. Charlton 1981 5. Wylie 1985	Writing Archaeology 1. Connah (Ch. 2) 2. Williams (Ch. 2) 3. Pan (Ch. 6)  <b>Present and submit literature review bibliography</b>
<b>Sept-20</b>	Middle Range Research 1. Binford 1977 2. Raab and Goodyear 1984 3. Koso 1981 4. Arnold 2003 5. Meltzer 2011	Writing Archaeology 1. Connah (Ch. 4) 2. Williams (Ch. 4) 3. Pan (Ch. 7)  <b>Present and submit first 10 abstracts</b>
<b>Sept-27</b>	Quantification 1. Aldenderfer 2005 2. Ammerman 1992 3. Thomas 1978 4. Matson 1980 5. Thomas 1980 6. Whallon 1987 7. Cowgill 2005	Writing Archaeology 1. Connah (Ch. 5) 2. Williams (Ch. 5) 3. Pan (Ch. 8, 9)

**October 2011**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topics, Readings and Projects</b>	<b>Writing Archaeology</b>
<b>Oct-4</b>	Time: Seriation and Stratigraphy 1. Mills and Vega-Centeno 2005 2. Dunnell 1970 3. Marquardt 1978 4. Smith and Niemann 2007	Writing Archaeology 1. Connah (Ch. 6) 2. Williams (Ch. 6)  <b>Present and submit literature review Version 1</b>
<b>Oct-11</b>	Fall Break – No Class	
<b>Oct-18</b>	No Class – Eiselt on Research Trip	<i>Work on literature review project</i>

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<b>Oct-25</b>	Space: Inter- and Intra-Site Analyses <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Binford 1978</li> <li>2. O'Connell, Hawkes, and Blurton-Jones (1991)</li> <li>3. Whallon 1984</li> <li>4. Dunnell and Dancey 1983</li> <li>5. Kantner 2005</li> <li>6. Fish 1999</li> </ol>	Writing Archaeology <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Connah (Ch. 7)</li> <li>2. Williams (Ch. 7)</li> <li>3. Pan (Ch. 12)</li> </ol> <p><b>Submit literature review <u>revised</u> Version 1</b></p>
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**November 2011**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topics, Readings and Projects</b>	<b>Writing Archaeology</b>
<b>Nov-1</b>	Form: Artifact Variability and the Concept of Types <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sabloff and Smith 1969</li> <li>2. Read 1974</li> <li>3. Thomas 1972</li> <li>4. Whallon 1972</li> <li>5. Dunnell 1986</li> <li>6. Cowgill 1990</li> <li>7. Marwick 2008</li> </ol>	Writing Archaeology <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Connah (Ch. 8)</li> <li>2. Williams (Ch. 8)</li> </ol> <p><b>Present and submit second 10 abstracts</b></p>
<b>Nov-8</b>	Form: Style and Function <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Dunnell 1978</li> <li>2. Wobst 1977</li> <li>3. Meltzer 1981</li> <li>4. Weissner 1983</li> <li>5. Sackett 1985</li> <li>6. Weissner 1985</li> <li>7. Cunningham 2003</li> </ol>	Writing Archaeology <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Connah (Ch. 9)</li> <li>2. Williams (Ch. 9)</li> <li>3. Pan (Ch. 13, 14)</li> </ol>
<b>Nov-15</b>	New Approaches <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Duff 1996</li> <li>2. Eerkens and Bettinger 2001</li> <li>3. Larsen 2011</li> <li>4. Kowalewski 1997</li> <li>5. Stark 1999</li> <li>6. Ortner 2000</li> </ol>	Writing Archaeology <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Connah (Ch. 10)</li> <li>2. Chippindale 2005</li> </ol>
<b>Nov-22</b>	No Class – Work on Projects	
<b>Nov-29</b>	Last Day of Class – Projects Due	<b>Present and submit final revised literature review</b>

**Course Bibliography**

**1. The Archaeological Record**

Spaulding, Albert C. (1960). The Dimensions of Archaeology. In *Essays in the Science of Culture*, edited by G. Dole and R. Carneiro, pp. 437-456. T.Y. Crowell and Co., New York.

Patrik, Linda (1985). Is There an Archaeological Record? *Advances in Archaeological Method and Theory*, 8:27-62.

Sullivan Alan P. (2008). An Archaeological View of the Archaeological Record. In *Archaeological Concepts for the Study of the Cultural Past*, edited by A. Sullivan, pp. 7-24. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press.

Stein Julie P. (2008). Exploring the Historical Foundations and Interpretive Potential of Provenience. In *Archaeological Concepts for the Study of the Cultural Past*, edited by A. Sullivan, pp. 108-124. University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City.

Lyman, Lee (2011). A Historical Sketch on the Concepts of Archaeological Association, Context, and Provenience. *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 18(3): On-line Apr 2011.

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## 2. Formation Processes

Schiffer, Michael B. (1972). Archaeological Context and Systemic Context. *American Antiquity* 37:156-165.

Schiffer, Michael B. (1983). Toward the Identification of Formation Processes. *American Antiquity* 48(4):675-706.

Schiffer, Michael B. (1985). Is There a "Pompeii Premise" in Archaeology? *Journal of Anthropological Research* 41(1):18-41.

### **Pick One for Presentation in Class**

Goodman-Elgar, Melissa (2008). The Devolution of Mudbrick: Ethnoarchaeology of Abandoned Earthen Dwellings in the Bolivian Andes. *Journal of Archaeological Science* 35(12)

Beck, Margaret E. (2006). Midden Ceramic Assemblage Formation: A Case Study from Kalinga, Philippines. *American Antiquity* 71:27-52.

Hutson, Scott R., et al. (2007). Beyond the Buildings: Formation Processes of Ancient Maya Houselots and Methods for the Study of Non-architectural Space. *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 26(3):442-473.

Ariel Malinsky-Bullera, Eralla Hoversa, and Ofer Marderb (2011). Making Time: "Living Floors", "Palimpsests" and Site Formation Processes – A Perspective from the Open-air Lower Paleolithic Site of Revadim Quarry, Israel. *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 30(2):89-101.

## 3. Ethnographic Analogy

Ascher, Robert (1961). Analogy in Archaeological Interpretation. *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* Vol. 17(4):pp. 317-325.

Binford, L. R. (1967). Smudge Pits and Hide Smoking: The Use of Analogy in Archaeological Reasoning. *American Antiquity* 32(1):1-12.

Wobst, H. M. (1978). The Archeo-ethnography of Hunter-Gatherers or the Tyranny of the Ethnographic Record in Archaeology. *American Antiquity* 43:303-309.

Charlton, Thomas H. (1981). Archaeology, Ethnohistory, and Ethnology: Interpretive Interfaces. *Advances in Archaeological Method and Theory* 4:129-176.

Wylie, Allison (1985). The Reaction Against Analogy. *Advances in Archaeological Method and Theory* 8:63-111.

## 4. Middle Range Research

Binford, L.R. (editor) (1977). General Introduction. In *For Theory Building in Archaeology*. Academic Press, New York.

Raab, L. M. and Goodyear, A. C. (1984). Middle-Range Theory in Archaeology. A Critical Review of Origins and Applications. *American Antiquity* 49:255-268.

Koso, Peter (1991). Method in Archaeology: Middle Range Theory as Hermeneutics. *American Antiquity* 56(4):621-627.

Arnold, Phillip J. (2003). Back to Basics: The Middle Range Program as Pragmatic Archaeology. In *Essential Tensions in Archaeological Method and Theory*, edited by Todd VanPool and Christine VanPool, pp. 55-66. University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City

Meltzer, David (2011). Lewis Roberts Binford: November 21, 1931 – April 11, 2011. *National Academy of Sciences Biographical Memoir* pp. 1-20.

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### **5. Quantification: The Place of Statistics in Archaeology**

Aldenderfer (2005). Statistics for Archaeology. In *Handbook of Archaeological Methods*, edited by Herbert D.G. Maschner and Christopher Chippindale, pp 501-553. Altamira Press, Lanham.

Ammerman, Albert J. (1992). Taking Stock of Quantitative Archaeology. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 21:231-255

Thomas, David Hurst (1978). The Awful Truth About Statistics in Archaeology. *American Antiquity* 43(2):231-244.

Matson, R. G. (1980). The Proper Place of Multivariate Techniques in Archaeology. *American Antiquity* 45(2):340-344

Thomas, David Hurst (1980). The Gruesome Truth About Statistics in Archaeology. *American Antiquity* 45(2):344-345.

Whallon, Robert (1987). Simple Statistics. In *Quantitative Research in Archaeology: Progress and Prospects*, edited by Mark Aldenderfer, pp. 135-150. Sage. Newberry Park, CA.

Cowgill, George (2005). Things to Remember About Statistics (Whatever Else You Forget). *SAA Archaeological Record*, September.

### **5. Time: Seriation and Stratigraphy**

Mills, Barbara and Rafael Vega-Centeno (2005). Sequence and Stratigraphy. In *Handbook of Archaeological Methods, Vol. 1*, edited by D. G. Maschner and Christopher Chippindale, pp. 176-215. Altamira Press, New York.

Dunnell, Robert C. (1970) Seriation Method and Its Evaluation. *American Antiquity* 35:305-319.

Marquardt, William (1978) Advances in Archaeological Seriation. *Advances in Archaeological Method and Theory* 1: 257-314 (SKIM-READ).

Smith, Karen Y. and Fraser Niemann (2007). Frequency Seriation, Correspondence Analysis, and Woodland Period Ceramic Assemblage Variation in the Deep South. *Southeastern Archaeology* 26(1):47-72.

### **7. Space: Inter- and Intra-Site Analyses**

Binford, Lewis (1978). Dimensional Analysis of Behavior and Site Structure: Learning from an Eskimo Hunting Stand. *American Antiquity* 43(3):330-361.

O'Connell, James, Kristen Hawkes, Nicolas Blurton Jones (1991). Distribution of Refuse Activities at Hadza Residential Base Camps. In *The Interpretation of Archaeological Spatial Patterning*, edited by Ellen M. Kroll and T. Douglas Price, pp. 61-76.

Whallon, Robert (1984). Unconstrained Clustering for the Analysis of Spatial Distributions in Archaeology. In *Intrasite Spatial Analysis in Archaeology*, edited by Harold J. Hietala. Cambridge University Press, New York.

Dunnell, Robert (1983). The Siteless Survey: A Regional Scale Data Collection Strategy. *Advances in Archaeological Method and Theory* 6:267-287.

Kantner, John (2005). Regional Analysis in Archaeology. In *Handbook of Archaeological Methods, Vol. 2*, edited by D. G. Maschner and Christopher Chippindale, pp. 1179-1224. Altamira Press, New York.

Fish, Suzanne (1999). The Settlement Pattern Concept from an Americanist Perspective. In *Settlement Pattern Studies in the Americas: Fifty Years Since Virú*, edited by Brian Billman and Gary Feinman, pp. 203-213. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington D.C.

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#### **8. Form: Artifact Variability and the Concept of Types**

Sabloff, Jeremy and Robert E. Smith (1969). The Importance of Both Analytic and Taxonomic Classification in the Type-Variety System. *American Antiquity* 34(3):278-285.

Read, Dwight (1974). Some Comments on Typologies in Archaeology and an Outline of a Methodology. *American Antiquity* 39(2):216-242.

Thomas, David Hurst (1972). The Use and Abuse of Numerical Taxonomy in Archaeology. *Archaeology and Physical Anthropology in Oceania* 7(1):31-49.

Whallon, Robert J. (1972) A New Approach to Pottery Typology. *American Antiquity* 37:13-33.

Dunnell, Robert (1986). Methodological Issues in Americanist Artifact Classification. *Advances in Archaeological Method and Theory* 49:149-207.

Cowgill, George (1990) Artifact Classification and Archaeological Purposes. In *Mathematics and Information Science in Archaeology: A Flexible Framework*, edited by Albertus Voorrips (1990), pp. 61-78.

Marwick, Ben (2008). Beyond Typologies: The Reduction Thesis and its Implications for Lithic Assemblages in Southeast Asia. *Indo-Pacific Prehistory Association Bulletin* 28: 108-116.

#### **9. Form: Style and Function**

Dunnell, Robert (1978). Style and Function: A Fundamental Dichotomy. *American Antiquity* 43(2):192-202.

Wobst, H. M. (1977). Stylistic Behavior and Information Exchange. *University of Michigan Anthropological Papers* 61:307-342.

Meltzer David (1981). A Study of Style and Function in a Class of Tools. *Journal of Field Archaeology* 8(3):313-326

Sackett, James R. (1977). The Meaning of Style in Archaeology: A General Model. *American Antiquity* 42(3):369-380.

Weissner, Polly (1983). Style and Social Information on Kalahari San Projectile Points. *American Antiquity* 48(2):253-276.

Sackett, James R. (1985). Style and Ethnicity in the Kalahari: A Reply to Weissner. *American Antiquity* 50(1):154-159.

Weissner, Polly (1985). Style or Isochrestic Variation? A Reply to Sackett. *American Antiquity* 50(1):160-166.

Cunningham, Jerimy (2003). Rethinking Style in Archaeology. In *Essential Tensions in Archaeological Method and Theory*, edited by Todd VanPool and Christine VanPool, pp. 23-40. University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City

#### **10. New Approaches (A Sample)**

Duff, Andrew I. (1996). Ceramic Micro-Seriation: Types or Attributes? *American Antiquity* Vol. 61(1), pp. 89-101

Eerkens, Jelner W. and Robert L. Bettinger (2001). Techniques for Assessing Standardization in Artifact Assemblages: Can We Scale Material Variability? *American Antiquity*, 66(3):493-504.

Larsen, Anna W. (2011). Evolution of Polynesian Bark Cloth and Factors Influencing Culture Change. *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 30(116-134).

Kowalewski, Stephan A. (1997). A Spatial Method for Integrating Data of Different Types. *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 4(3/4):287-306.

Stark, Miriam (1999). Social Dimensions of Technical Choice in Kalinga Ceramic Traditions. In, *Material Meanings: Critical Approaches to the Interpretation of Material Culture*, edited by E. Chilton, pp. 24-43.

Ortner, Scott (2000). Conceptual Metaphor in the Archaeological Record: Methods and an Example from the American Southwest. *American Antiquity* 65(4):613-645.

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## Writing Archaeology

- Muskingum University, Ohio. Reading Strategies in Anthropology
- Kintigh, Keith (2005). Writing Archaeology: Analyses and Archaeological Argumentation. *SAA Archaeological Record*, September.
- Connah, Graham (2010). *Writing About Archaeology*. Cambridge University Press.
- Williams, Joseph M. (2009). *Style: The Basics of Clarity and Grace*. **Third Edition**. Pearson Education Incorporated, New York.
- Pan, Ling (2008). *Preparing Literature Reviews: Qualitative and quantitative Approaches*. (Third Edition). Pyrczak Publishing. Glendale, CA.
- Hodder, Ian (1989). Writing Archaeology: site Reports in Context. *Antiquity* 63:268-74.
- Chippindale, Christopher (2005). Colleagues, Talking, Writing, Publishing. In *Handbook of Archaeological Methods*, edited by Herbert D.G. Maschner and Christopher Chippindale, pp 1339-1371. Altamira Press, Lanham.

## The Literature Review Project

### Goals

Create a critical and synthetic literature review pertaining to how archaeologists have approached the reconstruction of a given human behavior (e.g. political, economic, social) or behavioral process (e.g. abandonment, accumulation, demographic change). The literature review will be constructed in several steps throughout the semester and will involve participant feedback, peer review, and discussion. See schedule above for due dates.

### Steps

- Generate a bibliography of 20-30 references for discussion in class.
- Select 10 references from this bibliography. Create review sheets and abstracts summarizing key aspects of the research and organizing the research findings. Examples will be provided. Discuss and gain feedback in class.
- Develop your theme for the review (discuss and gain feedback in class).
- Write a **summary style literature review** of the 10 references not to exceed 6,000 words following the strategies suggested below. This will be **Version 1** of your literature review. Submit Version 1 for peer review and discussion in class.
- Revise and resubmit Version 1 for grade based on peer review criteria (criteria will be provided).
- Select an additional 10 references from the bibliography. Create review sheets and abstracts summarizing key aspects of the research and organizing the research findings (discuss and gain feedback in class).
- Integrate these 10 references into Version 1 and revise to create a **synthetic and critical review** not to exceed 5,000 words. This will be **Version 2** of your literature review. Submit Version 2 for peer review and discussion in class.
- Revise and resubmit Version 2 for grade based on peer review criteria.

**The final version of the literature review should be of publishable quality and will include a title, an abstract, 5 key words, and bibliography**

### Subject Guidelines

Potential subjects should focus on a behavior or behavioral process that archaeologists reconstruct through integration of archaeological, ethnographic, ethnohistorical, or experimental studies. The review should focus – not on methods, theories, or practitioners – but on the tools and approaches of middle-range research. Although literature reviews may include key debates, keep in mind that coverage must be objective and comprehensive. Students are encouraged to refine topics and develop themes by comparing and contrasting approaches in two or more areas.

### Examples

- Mesoamerican and Southwest Studies in Craft Specialization: Cross-border Dialogs
- The Archaeology of Skill: New Directions in Experimental and Ethnoarchaeological Research
- Characterizing Migration: Chemistry in the Study of Colonization.

### Some Sample Topics

Demography	Craft Specialization	Cultural Boundaries	Identity/Ethnicity
Collapse	Migration/Colonization	Technologies of Style	Learning Frameworks
Accumulation	Social Complexity	Skill	Trade
Abandonment	Gender	Violence	Interaction

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**Please read the following excerpt for discussion during our first class session. What makes this good writing? How does the author use tempo and voice to create a narrative style?**

*In a collection of his essays, "In a Narrow Grave," [Larry] McNurtry wrote about the weird process of watching his book "Horseman, Pass By" being turned into the movie "Hud." He arrived in the Texas Panhandle a week or two after filming had started, and he was particularly anxious to learn how the buzzard scene had gone. In that scene, Paul Newman was supposed to ride up and discover a dead cow, look up at the tree branch lined with buzzards and, in his distress over the loss of the cow, fire his gun at one of the buzzards. At that moment, all of the other buzzards were supposed to fly away into the blue Panhandle sky.*

*But when Mr. McNurtry asked people how the buzzard scene had gone, all he got, he said, were "stricken looks." The first problem, it turned out, had to do with the quality of the available local buzzards – who proved to be an excessively scruffy group. So more appealing, more photogenic buzzards had to be flown in from some distance and at considerable expense.*

*But then came the second problem: how to keep the buzzards sitting on the tree branch until it was time for their cue to fly. That seemed easy. Wire their feet to the branch, and then, after Paul Newman fires his shot, pull the wire, releasing their feet, thus allowing them to take off.*

*But, as Mr. McNurtry said in an important and memorable phrase, the film makers had not reckoned with the "mentality of buzzards." With their feet wired, the buzzards did not have enough mobility to fly. But they did have enough mobility to pitch forward.*

*So that's what they did: with their feet wired, they tried to fly, pitched forward and hung upside down from the dead branch, with their wings flapping.*

*I had the good fortune a couple of years ago to meet a woman who had been an extra for this movie, and she added a detail that Mr. McNurtry left out of his essay: namely, the buzzard circulatory system does not work upside down, and so, after a moment or two of flapping, the buzzards passed out.*

*Twelve buzzards hanging upside down from a tree branch: this was not what Hollywood wanted from the West, but that's what Hollywood had produced.*

*AND then we get to the second stage of buzzard psychology. After six or seven episodes of pitching forward, passing out, being revived, being replaced on the branch and pitching forward again, the buzzards gave up. Now, when you pulled the wire and released their feet, they sat there, saying in clear, nonverbal terms: "We tried that before. It did not work. We are not going to try it again." Now the film makers had to fly in a high-powered animal trainer to restore buzzard self-esteem. It was all a big mess; Larry McNurtry got a wonderful story out of it; and we, in turn, get the best possible parable of the workings of habit and timidity.*

*How does the parable apply? In any and all disciplines, you go to graduate school to have your feet wired to the branch. There is nothing inherently wrong with that: scholars should have some common ground, share some background assumptions, hold some similar habits of mind. This gives you, quite literally, your footing. And yet, in the process of getting your feet wired, you have some awkward moments, and the intellectual equivalent of pitching forward and hanging upside down. That experience – especially if you do it in a public place like a graduate seminar – provides no pleasure. One or two rounds of that humiliation, and the world begins to seem like a very treacherous place. Under those circumstances, it does indeed seem to be the choice of wisdom to sit quietly on the branch, to sit without even the thought of flying, since even the thought might be enough to tilt the balance and set off another round of flapping, fainting, and embarrassment.*

*Yet when scholars get out of graduate school and get Ph.D.'s and, even more important, when scholars get tenure, the wire is truly pulled. Their feet are free. They can fly wherever and whenever they like. Yet by then the second stage of buzzard psychology has taken hold, and they refuse to fly. The wire is pulled and yet the buzzards sit there, hunched and grumpy. If they teach in a university with a graduate program, they actively instruct young buzzards in the necessity of keeping their youthful feet on the branch.*

*This is a very well-established pattern, and it is the ruination of scholarly activity in the modern world.*

Patricia Limerick (1993). *Dancing With Professors: The Trouble with Academic Prose*. *New York Times Book Review*, Vol. 31 (October 31): p. 3