



DEPARTMENT OF ARTS AND EDUCATION

COURSE OUTLINE – Fall 2021

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

Grande Prairie Regional College respectfully acknowledges that we are located on Treaty 8 territory, the traditional homeland and gathering place for many diverse Indigenous peoples. We are honoured to be on the ancestral lands of the Cree, Dene/Beaver and Métis, whose histories, languages, and cultures continue to influence our vibrant community. We are grateful to have the opportunity to work, learn, and live on this land.

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Shawn Morton **PHONE:** (780) 539-2830
OFFICE: C402 **E-MAIL:** smorton@gprc.ab.ca
OFFICE HOURS: M/W 13:00-14:00 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.

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. By definition, 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:

1. 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.
2. Students will be able to explain, through class discussions and in written coursework, the proper structure of scientific argumentation and how to avoid common logical fallacies in pseudoscientific thinking.
3. Students will apply, in class discussions and in written coursework, techniques for critical thinking and for sharpening their analytical skills to critically evaluate pseudoscientific claims.
4. Students will be able to 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.
5. Students will examine and be able to 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	20 pts	80 pts	30%
Creating a Myth Pt. 1	1	40 pts	40 pts	30%
Final Exam – Creating a Myth Pt. 2	1	60 pts	60 pts	30%
Total Points for Grade	-	-	200 pts	-

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 textbook 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 and 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 20 points each for 80 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 pseudo-archaeological discovery" covered by the media. Further, I want you to tell me what **you think** about the discoveries. How can you tell fact from fiction? Can you identify the hallmarks of pseudoscience (e.g., false calls to authority, spurious correlations, etc.)? 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.** You must cite your article in a format that allows me to locate it (i.e., author, title, webpage, link, etc.). Feel free to use any source, from televised media to traditional print and web pages. **Assignments must be turned in on our myClass page and will open Mondays at 8 am of the week assigned and close Sundays at 11:59 pm (see due dates on schedule).**

Creating A Myth (40 points total)

Know thine enemy! This semester, we will be diving into a rich history of myths and pseudo-science. What better way to learn what to look for in the wild, untamed world of popular media than to try and make a convincing myth of your own? This assignment will consist of two parts (keep reading)

Part 1 – Every Good Myth Has a Kernel of Truth

For the first part of the assignment, you are to write a short paper about a legitimate archaeological find/site/people. Perhaps you are interested in ancient cart tracks on Malta? Maybe the terracotta warriors of China's first emperor strike your fancy? Are you coo coo for paleolithic cave art? Using scholarly sources (peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, etc.), write up a short article such as you might read in the popular media. Keep it clean and honest. Nothing but the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help your grade. Articles should be between 1000 – 1500 words (2-3 pages, single-spaced). Be sure to cite your sources in-text following APA/Chicago guidelines and to include a separate "References Cited" section (not included in word count). **Assignments must be turned in on our myClass page and will open Monday at 8 am of the week assigned and close Sunday at 11:59 pm (see due date 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 at the college. Your final exam is actually Part 2 of your "Creating a Myth" assignment and will be worth 60 points.

Part 2 – Myth it Up!

For the final (the second part of the assignment), you will be taking the well-researched, accurate, and interesting popular article that you wrote for Part 1 and “myth it up”. By this point, you should have a good idea what goes into a convincing myth. It must be engaging. Mysterious. It must make false calls to authority and engage in spurious correlation. The best myths go just beyond the edge of what scientific methods can prove/disprove. Check out the “Pseudoscience Cheat Sheet” at the start of your text.

You are to take your popular article from Part 1 and re-write it into a convincing myth. Your updated article should be between 1000 – 1500 words (2-3 pages, single-spaced). You should also be citing sources in-text following APA/Chicago guidelines and to include a separate “References Cited” section (not included in word count). Make sure to keep all the legitimate sources, but don’t hesitate to investigate some of the darker/weirder corners of the internet to supplement these.

But wait! There’s more. Once you are done mything up your carefully researched paper, I want you to explain what tricks you used from the Cheat Sheet. Using the comment tool in your word processor, to identify these tricks. Save your work as a pdf (make sure that comments are still visible). **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. Your instructor will let you know when this information is available.**

Extra Credit (up to 20 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. One sure fire way to receive extra credit is by **coming to my office hours for a chat** (worth 10 points, one time). Other opportunities will be announced throughout the semester.

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	67-69.9
A	4.0	85-89.9	C	2.0	63-66.9
A-	3.7	80-84.9	C-	1.7	60-62.9
B+	3.3	77-79.9	D+	1.3	55-59.9
B	3.0	73-76.9	D	1.0	50-54.9
B-	2.7	70-72.9	F	0.0	00-49.9

COURSE SCHEDULE/TENTATIVE TIMELINE:

Week	Date	Topic(s)	Reading(s)
1	Sep. 1	Introduction to course.	Syllabus
Homework:		Reading Quiz 1 - Due Sunday, Sep. 5, 11:59 pm	
2.1	Sep. 6	Labour Day - No Classes	
2.2	Sep. 8	What is archaeology? What is pseudo-archaeology?	Ch. 1
3.1	Sep. 13	Epistemology: How do we know what we know? Getting it right, matters.	Ch. 2
3.2	Sep. 15	Anatomy of an archaeological hoax.	Ch. 3
Homework:		Reading Quiz 2 - Due Sunday, Sep. 19, 11:59 pm	
4.1	Sep. 20	Piltdown Man and other tales of early humans.	Ch. 4
4.2	Sep. 22		
Homework:		Media Assignment 1 - Due Sunday, Sep. 26, 11:59 pm	
5.1	Sep. 27	The first Americans: Sorting fact from fiction.	Ch. 5
5.2	Sep. 29		
6.1	Oct. 4	Vikings, Templars, Africans, and ancient Chinese in the Americas: Evidence?	Ch. 6
6.2	Oct. 6		
7.1	Oct. 11	Thanksgiving - No Classes	
7.2	Oct. 13	Fall Break - No Classes	
Homework:		Reading Quiz 3 - Due Sunday, Oct. 17, 11:59 pm	
8.1	Oct. 18	Reaching further afield: The apparent mystery of the moundbuilders.	Ch. 7
8.2	Oct. 20		
Homework:		Media Assignment 2 - Due Sunday, Oct. 24, 11:59 pm	
9.1	Oct. 25	Everything you never wanted to know about Atlantis and other lost continents.	Ch. 8
9.2	Oct. 27		
Homework:		Reading Quiz 4 - Due Sunday, Oct. 31, 11:59 pm	
10.1	Nov. 1	Ancient Aliens: Flying millions of lightyears to show us how to stack rocks.	Ch. 9
10.2	Nov. 3		
Homework:		Creating a Myth - Pt. 1 - Due Sunday, Nov. 7, 11:59 pm	
11.1	Nov. 8	Ancient ancient Egypt: Are there deeper secrets in Egypt than science is willing to admit?	Ch. 10
11.2	Nov. 10		
Homework:		Reading Quiz 5 - Due Sunday, Nov. 14, 11:59 pm	
12.1	Nov. 15	Psychics and archaeology: Why dig when you can feel the past?	Ch. 11
12.2	Nov. 17		
Homework:		Media Assignment 3 - Due Sunday, Nov. 21, 11:59 pm	
13.1	Nov. 22	Creationism and Intelligent Design.	Ch. 12
13.2	Nov. 24		
14.1	Nov. 29	When archaeologists are the perpetrators of fraud.	TBD
14.2	Dec. 1		
Homework:		Media Assignment 4 - Due Sunday, Dec. 5, 11:59 pm	
15.1	Dec. 6	Real mysteries of a veritable past. Why do we seem to prefer the fantasy?	Ch. 13
Final Exam - Creating a Myth - Pt. 2 - Due Date TBD			

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

You are responsible for all assigned readings, all posted/presented lecture materials, videos, assignments, and any relevant class discussions. If you do not understand information from the lecture or the textbook, you are expected to ask me or your fellow classmates questions to help you understand the material better. Content covered in lecture periods are largely independent of the textbook, some of the information provided in them may be directly from the book, but in many instances, there will be extra information to assist in your learning and to provide you with up-to-date information or alternative interpretations. You may be tested on all information presented in this course.

Late Assignment/Make-up Policy: **Late assignments/exams will not be accepted**, except under very unusual circumstances with instructor permission.

A note about etiquette: College is a time for you to learn professional standards for email correspondence. In the real world if you send an email to a colleague or employer and it is inappropriate or unprofessional you may not receive the results you intended. With this in mind, please be respectful and courteous when corresponding with me and I will treat you in kind.

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 College Calendar at <http://www.gprc.ab.ca/programs/calendar/> or the College Policy on Student Misconduct: Plagiarism and Cheating at <https://www.gprc.ab.ca/about/administration/policies>

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