

Fremont Archaeology

**2019 Archaeology Field School
University of Nebraska-Lincoln**

Syllabus

Anth 490, Advanced Field Work

This course is an introduction to field work in archaeology with an emphasis on excavation but also including survey, artifact processing and cataloging, initial artifact analysis, and some experiential learning of how prehistoric technologies were made.

Learning Outcomes

1. Learn basic field techniques of site mapping, gridding, surface collection, exploratory coring, and hand excavation of test units, and features.
2. Learn basic techniques of surface survey to discover archaeological sites and how to document such finds.
3. Learn how to recognize, excavate, and document archaeological features, artifacts, and ecofacts.
4. Learn how to properly recover various samples for specialized analysis.
5. Learn how to identify prehistoric lithic, ceramic, bone and other artifacts in the field and discern the similarities and differences between various artifact types.
6. Learn how to effectively communicate details of the archaeological record as it relates to human material culture and context

Course Description

This course will introduce students to the basics of archaeological fieldwork, both excavation and survey. Survey involves searching areas of land to find sites, something that is most frequently done

by systematically walking the land surface and inspecting it closely for artifacts and features. Excavation involves digging in the ground at archaeological sites to expose features and to recover artifacts and other remains (ecofacts). Excavation is done initially in a limited way to determine how significant a site is (archaeological testing) and then more fully to learn details about the site and the people that lived there or that otherwise used the location.

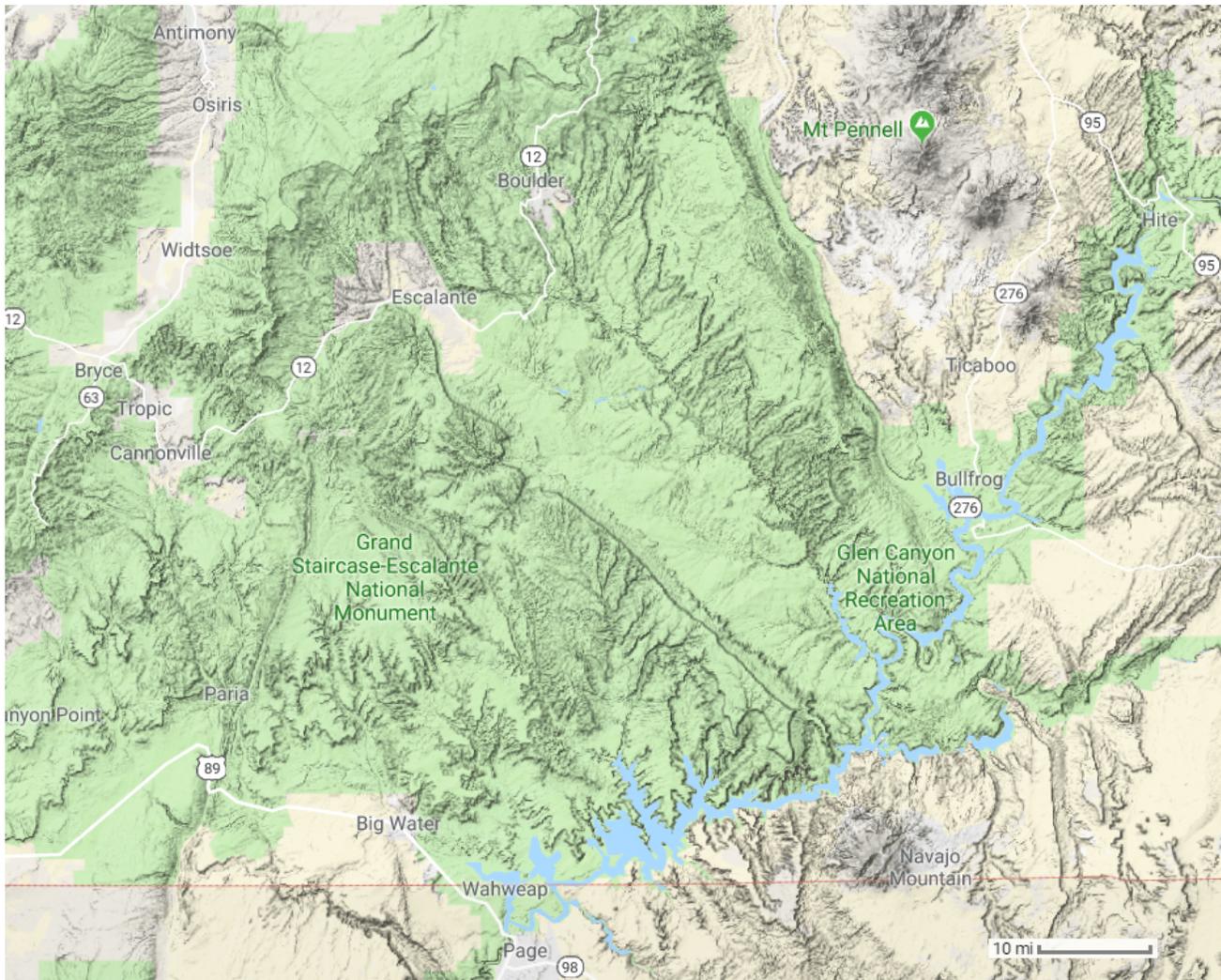
The main focus of fieldwork for this course will be the initial archaeological investigation of a previously unstudied Fremont site. The site is located on private land along upper Deer Creek near the modern town of Boulder, Utah. Based on limited surface evidence, the site appears to have functioned as a habitation, where people lived for at least a portion of the year. Based on surface artifacts, principally pottery vessel fragments, the site was likely occupied sometime within a several hundred year interval from about AD 700 to 1000. The “cultural” affiliation is also based upon the vessel fragments. These hypothesized functional, temporal and cultural affiliations for the site will be examined based on the field research planned for this summer that students will participate in.

The proposed field research slated for this site will involve a diverse set of field techniques that will expose students to some of the key methods that archaeologists use. These will include the following six preparatory and exploratory steps: 1) site mapping both by instrument and by drone; 2) laying out a metric grid system for horizontal provenience control; 3) establishing site elevation datums for vertical provenience control; 4) systematic surface collection of artifacts; 5) detailed surface mapping of any visible features; and 6) systematic subsurface coring (with perhaps some augering) to sample what lies below the surface in a relatively nondestructive fashion. Following these steps and based on a preliminary assessment of what has been learned from them, students will gain experience in the excavation of 1 x 1 m test units in select portions of the site to explore features or other anomalies documented by site mapping and coring. Depending on time, small horizontal excavation areas will be opened to more fully expose the nature and horizontal and vertical extent of specific features, especially if living structures are encountered. All excavation work will be conducted following standard archaeological protocols, documented digitally and on standard forms, and with all sediment passed through a minimum of 1/4” mesh screens and often 1/8” mesh screens. At a nearby field lab students will also learn about initial processing and cataloging of artifacts, get to run some trials at flotation processing and sorting, and experience preliminary artifact analysis.

While in the field during down time or off hours, students will have opportunities to learn about and try to their hand at flintknapping, pottery making, and other traditional crafts such as making cordage and sandals from yucca. Weather and work schedule permitting, visits will be made to other archaeological sites in the area for the purpose of comparison and learning about archaeology in the Four Corners region of the Southwest. A six day field trip is planned roughly midway during the fieldwork to visit archaeological sites and areas in SE Utah and NE Arizona.

Brief Background

The Fremont culture developed in Utah after the diffusion of maize from populations living further south on the Colorado Plateau. The Fremont shared many cultural traits with ancestral Puebloans to the south, but also had unique characteristics and lifeways. The Boulder area is close to a boundary of sorts with the ancestral Puebloans. This boundary initially coincided roughly with the Colorado River in Cataract and Glen Canyon down to what is today the Utah and Arizona state line. It then extended north-westward toward where the Paria River breaches an impressive geological feature known as the Cockscomb. Prior to roughly AD 1100 the portion of south-central Utah north and east of this frontier zone was Fremont territory and this ceramic using cultural expression appears to have developed in situ from preceramic foragers who had occupied the area for a long time.



Around AD 1100 or so the boundary dissolved or shifted north and this previously Fremont occupied area witnessed an influx of Puebloan populations with distinct architectural and pottery making traditions. This migrant population is well represented at the Coombs Site within the town of Boulder. This site was the focus of rather intensive excavations in the late 1950s with portions left exposed but covered for public display and interpretation, including a small museum known as “Anasazi State Park.” This large habitation is Puebloan in overall character but has some Fremont materials mixed in either from an earlier occupation, co-residence of distinct cultural groups, or interaction with nearby Fremont groups who continued to maintain a distinct cultural tradition. The planned excavations at the upper Deer Creek Fremont site might shed additional light on this issue as well as help to further understand Fremont adaptive strategies of settlement, subsistence, and technology.

Required Readings

There is no required textbook for this course. Students will receive a general field manual that covers most of the topics relevant to basic excavation and survey techniques. A few additional readings will be made available either as pdfs or hardcopies before or during the first day of the field school. These readings will mainly concern Fremont archaeology or Southwestern archaeology more generally. There will also be a reference library of key texts available for reading at the field camp.

If you want to augment your learning experience with a general field methods textbook I would recommend one of the following:

Field Methods in Archaeology, 7th Edition, 2009, by Thomas R. Hester and Harry J. Shafer.

or

The Archaeologist's Field Handbook, North American Edition, 2008, by Burke Heather, Claire Smith, and Larry J. Zimmerman.

Assessment, Evaluation and Grades

Participation is the primary opportunity for evaluation in this course. To excel, students must actively participate as responsible, self-motivated members of a research team. This means showing up for work on time, doing the work, going on field trips, taking part in discussions, and completing camp chores, which will include such mundane items as cooking and cleaning and keeping the pace organized and tidy.

Student performance in this class will be assessed in the following ways:

1. Understanding and knowledge of course materials will be evaluated through direct observation of student participation and performance in the completion of various field and other tasks and projects.

- Participation in daily field & laboratory work = 30% of final grade.
- Excavation & survey documentation on forms & maps (due on an ongoing basis) = 30% of final grade

2. Students will keep a Field Journal describing daily activities, field methods, and important contextual information. These journals become part of the formal project archive and will be evaluated based upon their adherence to professional archaeological standards.

Field journals = 30% of final grade.

3. Participation in daily camp maintenance and field life activities while maintaining a positive attitude and enthusiasm for learning = 10% of final grade



Is this OSHA approved excavation safety?



Field work has many surprises!

Since this is a team-based, hands-on learning experience, attendance is essential and assumed.

No final exam is given; the field journal is graded as your primary writing task along with field documentation provided on forms and in notes and drawings for tasks that you were involved with.

Grading Scale: A, 100-90; B, 89-80; C, 79-70; D, 69-60; F, less than 59

Accommodations

This field program is based in the beautiful community of Boulder, Utah nestled in Navajo Sandstone slickrock at the southeast foot of Boulder Mountain, the highest timbered plateau in North America. Snowmelt and precipitation on this plateau feed the several small perennial streams that drain this dissected canyon country, including Deer Creek along which the field camp is situated.



The field camp is semi-primitive but scenic and remote and should offer respite from busy urban life. Students and staff will be tent camping but with access to the wall tent pictured above that will serve as our home base. **You need to bring a camping tent, sleeping bag, and sleeping pad.** Your personal sleeping gear will also be important for travel to and from the field location and when we do our excursion to visit other archaeological places in the Four Corners.

The group tent has a small living area and kitchen and will be our main food preparation spot. We'll cook as a group using the food that will be purchased, so be ready for camp chores and dietary flexibility. Field anthropologists have always had to eat what a local society was consuming and this is the case here as well. All students will have opportunities to cook for the group thereby influences the group's consumption practices. Grocery stores are small, with limited selections, and located about 1 hour away. There is a small local convenience store in the village of Boulder but the options there are limited. We are only about 2 miles as the crow flies from this hamlet, but several miles by road from Boulder, much of which is quite rough (4WD), so our visits there will not be a daily affair. There is a small refrigerator in the tent, but it is just for group food not personal drinks.

Our camp also has a shower and bathroom facility. Be aware though that there is just one bathroom and at least 15 adults, so we will have to take turns using these facilities. Please be conscious and courteous to your fellow campmates. At least 1 or 2 solar showers will be provided and several shower locations established for people to use so that we don't overload the single formal facility. I recommend anyone who already has a solar shower or who feels that they must take a shower right away at the end of field work to bring their own.

The field camp is only about a 5 minute stroll from the site that we will be excavating. This makes it reasonable to return to the bathroom facility for certain business should the need arise. There will also be a small portable potty set up near the site for any strictly liquid discharges.

Boulder has a post office and internet access is available in a few locations (Anasazi State Park and the local coffee shop). It is possible that wifi might be available in the field tent though the bandwidth is certain to be limited, since it is a satellite connection.

The closest laundromat is in the town of Escalante some 40 minutes away with another even further away in the town of Bicknell (~1 hour). We will be making runs into these towns on occasion for food resupply and also laundry, but you should also come with cloths that are easily hand rinsed/washed should the need arise between laundry trips.

In case that someone is trying to reach you in an emergency (**TRUE** emergency) and can't get you directly on your phone or by email, they can call 435-335-7393. This is a phone line for Eric and Mary Feiler. Eric manages the land where we will be staying and he will be back and forth probably on a daily basis throughout the time that we will be working there. Our goal is to have an incident free and fun field experience but in emergency there are clinics in Escalante and Bicknell for minor injuries (stitches, broken limbs) and hospitals in the towns of Richfield and Panguitch about 2 hours away. Emergency helicopter evacuations can also be done to larger hospitals in Page and Flagstaff Arizona or Salt Lake City Utah.

Logistics and Schedule

A caravan of two 4x4 pickups and a passenger van will depart from Lincoln on the morning of May 20th after loading up student gear and last minute supplies. Student participants who are not already located in Lincoln should arrive at the Omaha or Lincoln airports on Sunday May 19th so that you will be ready to meet or get picked up in Lincoln on the morning of the 20th. Any students needing a return flight should plan it for June 28th since we will be arriving back in Lincoln on the 27th but probably late, such that a night flight might not be possible.

We will take three days traveling to the project area in Boulder with camping stops and some sightseeing along the way, including Capitol Reef National Monument. We should arrive in Boulder on the evening of May 22nd. Field work will be begin the next day. A normal day will start with breakfast from about 7 to 8 AM, fieldwork from 8 AM to 5 PM with a 1 hour lunch break at noon, free time till dinner at around 7 PM. On some evenings there might be talks or presentations after dinner.

There is a several day field trip planned part way along in the project for an excursion to visit other archaeological sites in the Four Corners, mainly in SE Utah but with a swing through NE Arizona on our return back to the field camp. The details of this are still being worked out but is likely to include areas such as Natural Bridges, Arch Canyon, Hovenweep, and Navajo National Monument.

Students with Disabilities: Students who have, or suspect that they may have, a disability should seek services through Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). Students must be registered with SSD and receive written authorization to obtain disability-related accommodations. If you need accommodation due to a disability, please visit SSD for guidance: 232 Canfield Administration Building P.O. Box 880401 Lincoln, NE 68588-0401 Phone: (402) 472-3787.