Searching for Ice Age Americans

Instructor: Leslie Myers
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Classroom: University Hall Room 09
Class time: Tuesday/Thursday 12:30-1:50
Office Hours: T/Th 2:00-3:00

It is widely accepted the first Americans arrived here over 12,000 years ago, when the earth was in the waning grip of an Ice Age. But ascertaining who these colonists were, where they originated, exactly when and how they got here, and how they adapted to their new landscape, has proven challenging – and at times highly controversial.

The primary goals of this course are to develop an understanding of the peopling of the Americas, and to learn and critically assess how that understanding is being developed across multiple scientific disciplines including archaeology, glacial geology, linguistics, molecular biology, and physical anthropology. Upon successfully completing this course, students will be able to:

- Identify the major changes in North American climate and environment through the Ice Age;
- Explain current understanding of the origins, antiquity and adaptations of the first Americans;
- Demonstrate the ability to use interdisciplinary approaches for understanding complex issues.

**Evaluation**

Grades will be based on three short exams, class attendance and participation, and a short research paper, each worth 20% of the final grade.

*Class participation:* Most weeks, Tuesday will be an overview lecture of the topic at hand. Students will be assigned 1-2 articles to read for the week, providing more details about one aspect of that topic. Each student will be expected to join in a discussion, contributing information from the article that s/he read. (Most of these articles are short, but fairly technical—don’t worry, you’ll have plenty of help in understanding them until you get used to the “archaeo-speak”.) Your attendance and participation in these discussions will determine 20% of your grade.

*Research paper:* A short (7-10 pages) research paper is required at the end of the semester. The topic is up to you, as long as it is related to the course material. We will spend some time in class on September 27 discussing potential topics and expectations in more detail.

*Exams:* Short multiple choice and short answer exams will be given throughout the semester, testing small portions of information.

*S Schedule:* The following schedule is tentative and subject to change, but notice of any changes will be posted in writing and in plenty of time!
Part I: Understanding the Peopling Debate

Week 1
Thursday, Aug. 23: Course Introduction/Archaeological Primer
Readings: None

Week 2: The Landscape of Colonization
Tuesday, Aug. 28: Glaciers, climates, and environments of the Ice Age
Thursday, Aug. 30: The Younger Dryas—origins, consequences, and controversy
Readings—Please note that you are not expected to read all of these. Readings will be assigned in class.
• Lowell, T.V. et al. (2005) Testing the Lake Agassiz meltwater trigger for the Younger Dryas. EOS 86:365-373
• Firestone et al. (2007) Evidence for an extraterrestrial impact 12,900 years ago that contributed to the megafaunal extinctions and the Younger Dryas cooling. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences 104:16016-16021

Week 3: Establishing the Debate
Tuesday, Sept. 4: From Paleoliths to Paleoindians
Thursday, Sept. 6: Establishing “Clovis-First”
Readings

Week 4: Resolving the Pre-Clovis Controversy
Tuesday, Sept. 11: The pre-Clovis controversy and its resolution
Thursday, Sept. 13: The Battle of Monte Verde
Readings
**Week 5: The Search for Consensus**
Tuesday, Sept. 18: Recent Evidence from the Pre-Clovis (and non-Clovis) Crowd

*Readings*


Thursday, Sept. 20: Overflow, Summary, and Review

**Week 6**
Tuesday, Sept. 25: Part I Test
Thursday, Sept. 27: Discussion of research papers

**Part II: Examining the Evidence**

**Week 7: Linguistic Evidence**
Tuesday, Oct. 2: Reconstructing the Peopling of the Americas from Native Language
Thursday, Oct. 4: Fighting Words

*Readings*


**Week 8: Skeletal Evidence**
Tuesday, Oct. 9: Telltale Teeth and Bones
Thursday, Oct. 11: Cracking Heads

*Readings*

Week 9: Genetic Evidence
Tuesday, Oct. 16: Ancestral Genes and Native American Population History
Thursday, Oct. 18: Molecular Archaeology

Readings

Week 10
Tuesday, Oct. 23: Part II Test
Thursday, Oct. 25: No Class! Take a break.

Part III: Adapting to a New Continent
Week 11: Conceptualizing Peopling
Tuesday, Oct. 30: Entering New Landscapes: Challenges and Constraints
Thursday, Nov. 1: Modeling Population Movements

Readings

Week 12: Clovis
Tuesday, Nov. 6: The Archaeology of Clovis
Thursday, Nov. 8: Where Did They Come From? Clovis Origins

Readings
Week 13: After Clovis
Tuesday, Nov. 13: What Came Next? Later Paleoindians in North America
Thursday, Nov. 15: What Came Next? Later Paleoindians in South America

Readings: None

Week 14
Tuesday, Nov. 20: Murder in the Pleistocene? The Overkill Debate

Readings

Thursday, Nov. 22: No Class! Thanksgiving Holiday

Week 15
Tuesday, Nov. 27: Part III Test

Part IV: Peopling and the Modern World
Thursday, Nov. 29: When Past and Present Collide—How does the Peopling of the Americas impact modern life?

Week 16
Tuesday, Dec. 4: Who Owns the Past?

Readings

Thursday, Dec. 6: Final Exam Date, Papers Due at 2:00
Additional UTA Policies:

Student Support Services
The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal
equal opportunity legislation, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). All instructors at UT Arlington
are required by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities, so as not to
discriminate on the basis of that disability. Any student requiring an accommodation for this course must provide
the instructor with official documentation in the form of a letter certified by the staff in the Office for Students
with Disabilities, University Hall 102. Only those students who have officially documented a need for an
accommodation will have their request honored. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for
obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at www.uta.edu/disability or by calling the
Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

Academic Integrity
It is the philosophy of The University of Texas at Arlington that academic dishonesty is a completely unacceptable
mode of conduct and will not be tolerated in any form. All persons involved in academic dishonesty will be
disciplined in accordance with University regulations and procedures. Discipline may include suspension or
expulsion from the University. “Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion,
the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person,
taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to
commit such acts.” (Regents' Rules and Regulations, Series 50101, Section 2.2).

UT Arlington Honor Code: I pledge, on my honor, to uphold UT Arlington's tradition of academic integrity, a
tradition that values hard work and honest effort in the pursuit of academic excellence. I promise that I will submit
only work that I personally create or contribute to group collaborations, and I will appropriately reference any work
from other sources. I will follow the highest standards of integrity and uphold the spirit of the Honor Code.

Drop Policy
Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes through self-service in MyMav from
the beginning of the registration period through the late registration period. After the late registration period,
students must see their academic advisor to drop a class or withdraw. Undeclared students must see an advisor in
the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the term or
session. It is the student’s responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering.

Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance. Repayment of certain types of financial
aid administered through the University may be required as the result of dropping classes or withdrawing. For
more information, contact the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships (http://wweb.uta.edu/ses/fao).

Electronic Communication Policy
The University of Texas at Arlington has adopted the University “MavMail” address as the sole official means of
communication with students. MavMail is used to remind students of important deadlines, advertise events and
activities, and permit the University to conduct official transactions exclusively by electronic means. For example,
important information concerning registration, financial aid, payment of bills, and graduation are now sent to
students through the MavMail system. All students are assigned a MavMail account. Students are responsible for
checking their MavMail regularly. Information about activating and using MavMail is available at
http://www.uta.edu/oit/email/. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, and it remains
active even after they graduate from UT Arlington.