



UNC

FFyH

SECRETARIA DE POSTGRADO
DOCTORADO EN CIENCIAS ANTROPOLÓGICAS
Facultad de Filosofía y Humanidades
Universidad Nacional de Córdoba – Argentina

Arqueología Como Acción Política

Seminario Graduado – Programa Doctorado en Antropología
Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, Argentina
Noviembre 11 a 15 de 2013

Randall H. McGuire
Distinguished Professor of Anthropology
Binghamton University, NY, EEUU
<http://bingweb.binghamton.edu/~rmcguire/index.html>

¿Arqueología Para Quién?
Rebeca Panameño y Enrique Nalda

This graduate seminar will explore how archaeologists can do politically engaged research. The question “is archaeology political” has only one answer - it is. Thus, we need to ask “how is archaeology political” and “how does doing archaeology fit in a praxis of archaeology”? The course will reflect on how to adapt the modern practice of archaeology to those who do it, want it, and are affected by it.

In a political sense, the discipline of archaeology is at once trivial and significant. Paradoxically, the significance of archaeology for political action springs from its triviality. Archaeology by and large does not directly engage in the key political struggles of the modern world. Archaeologists do not in any noteworthy way direct armies, shape economies, write laws, imprison people or release people from bondage. Clearly archaeology is a weak instrument for overt political action. There is a sense in which archaeologists should be comforted by the triviality of our discipline for direct political action. We do not violate the civil rights of people if we wrongly reconstruct social hierarchy in the British Bronze Age. No one starves if we underestimate the productivity of Mayan raised field agriculture by 25%. Nonetheless, the past is a locus of political struggle and this struggle can have significant costs and consequences. Violence springing from the destruction of the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya, India has killed thousands of people, and the Indian courts have directed archaeologists to excavate on the site to find an ancient Hindu temple to Rama. Political struggles over the past are first and foremost ideological especially when their political nature is covert, hidden or obscured. The obvious triviality of archaeology for overt political action makes it an effective and significant weapon in ideological struggles about the past. As my colleague Jordi Estévez de la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona has said: “Trabajo en una fábrica de ideología”.



UNC

FFyH

SECRETARIA DE POSTGRADO
DOCTORADO EN CIENCIAS ANTROPOLOGICAS
Facultad de Filosofía y Humanidades
Universidad Nacional de Córdoba – Argentina

Politics is fundamentally about how groups advance their interests within and between societies. If we accept that archaeology is political, then we must ask what interests we should support and what interests we should oppose. Because politics necessarily involves passions and interests, political practice has real consequences. These consequences are often pernicious. People lose their land or their jobs, people starve, people die, and people are imprisoned. Archaeologists have good reason to be wary of politics and their discipline. It is easy to find examples of archaeological knowledge being fabricated to fulfill a political agenda or interpretations that were predetermined by the prejudice of the researcher. The idea, however, that we can straightforwardly eliminate “political bias” or just ignore the political content of our knowledge production is facile. Archaeologists make knowledge in social and political contexts and our knowledge will always be in some part a product of that context. Or, it can be trivial. This course will argue that all archaeologists must engage to some extent in a critique of how they create knowledge, for whom, why and to what uses that knowledge might be put.

The idea of a praxis of archaeology originates in a radical, humanistic, Marxist approach to archaeology. It follows from Marx and Engels’ dictum that the goal of scholarship is not to just interpret the world, but to change it. This theory defines society as a network of interrelated difference. People experience these differences in their daily lives and through this lived experience they recognize that others in society share the same interests as they do. This shared consciousness entails the potential for social agency that can transform the social relations that created it. A dialectical Marxism is not the only approach to archaeology that could contribute to the transformation of society, nor should it be. Classical Marxists, Processualists, Post-Processualists, Critical Theorists, Indigenous Archaeologists and Feminists have all advocated such a program. Their efforts provide a foundation and a critical dialogue that informs and enriches our efforts.

Praxis refers to the uniquely human ability to knowingly and creatively make and change both the world and us. The simple, unadorned, definition of praxis is theoretically informed action. Praxis implies a process of gaining knowledge of the world, critiquing the world, and taking action in the world. A dialectical, relational, theory of praxis eschews the polar oppositions that have characterized contemporary theoretical debate in archaeology. It rejects an instrumentalist approach that seeks to engineer society. It also rejects critical approaches that strip the scholar of any authority to take and support transformative action. A dialectical praxis of archaeology begins with a relational theory of knowledge that offers an alternative to the objective and relative epistemologies that create these poles. The real question facing a praxis of archaeology is not whether archaeological knowledge should be objective or subjective, but rather how scholars may relate the subjectivities of knowing and the realities of the world in our construction of archaeological knowledge. In a relational approach, the evaluation of knowledge involves a four-part dialectic between the four C’s: coherencia, correspondencia, contexto y consecuencias.



UNC

FFyH

SECRETARIA DE POSTGRADO
DOCTORADO EN CIENCIAS ANTROPOLOGICAS
Facultad de Filosofía y Humanidades
Universidad Nacional de Córdoba – Argentina

The vast majority of archaeological practice has been and should remain concerned with the acquisition of archaeological knowledge and the critique of this knowledge. However, once scholars recognize that the production of archaeological knowledge has political implications, it is appropriate for some archaeologists to develop an explicit, comprehensive praxis of knowledge creation, critique and action to transform the world. This seminar examines the place of political action in archaeology today and attempts to put conceptual tools in the hands of archaeologists who want to engage in political action.

Seminar Format:

The class will meet each day for 4 hours each day from Noviembre 11 to Noviembre 15, 2013. The format of the class will consist of a combination of lectures and discussion. In the first half of each class we will discuss theoretical and methodological issues. I will begin the second half of each class by presenting a case from my own research to focus discussion on the doing of archaeology. Regular, informed discussion is expected of all students in a seminar, and you should come to each session prepared to talk about any and all of the readings. My experience has always been that the students make or break a seminar. We will be meeting each day to engage in a dialogue on the issues raised for that day. To this end, it is absolutely imperative that you come to class prepared. This means that you must do the readings, but more importantly, you must **THINK** about the readings before you come to class. I will try to give you an idea of the issues and questions before each session to help you do the readings.

Course Requirements:

I expect every student in the class to attend and participate in each class session. With only five class meetings a student will miss a significant portion of the seminar with an absence. Class participation will count for 25% of your grade for the seminar.

Each student will be expected to develop a brief research proposal for a politically engaged archaeological project. The project may be prehistoric, historical or contemporary in nature but must in some broad sense be archaeological. The proposal should:

1. Be logically, theoretically and politically **coherent**.
2. Discuss a research problem or issue and place it in a broader **context**. You will demonstrate both why this research problem/issue is significant (as archaeology and as a political issue) and what political interests are served by this problem or issue.
3. Define a specific research question and/or goal that the proposed work will address and why it is important to the broader problem or issue.
4. Specify what community and/or social group you will collaborate with in this project and discuss how you will establish this collaboration.



UNC

FFyH

SECRETARIA DE POSTGRADO
DOCTORADO EN CIENCIAS ANTROPOLOGICAS
Facultad de Filosofía y Humanidades
Universidad Nacional de Córdoba – Argentina

5. Describe the methods you will use to address the research question and/or goal and how they will allow you to evaluate the **correspondence** of your observations to the question or issue that you address.
6. Identify what archaeological and political **consequences** do you expect to result from this project.

In my evaluation of your proposal I will be looking for:

1. Originality
2. How well you use archaeology and the study of material culture in your project.
3. The efficacy of your project as both research and political action.
4. The practicality of your project.

On the last day of class you will do a brief (10 minute) presentation of your project to the class. You will submit to me a written version of your project, no more than 5 pages single spaced, in Spanish or English, as a pdf file attached to an e-mail message by ??????. Your presentation will account for 25% of your grade and your written proposal as 50%

Course Schedule and Readings:

Antes de Noviembre 11. LEA:

McGuire, Randall H.

2008 *Archaeology as Political Action*. University of California Press, Berkeley. **Capítulo 1**.
<http://www.ucpress.edu/content/pages/10636/10636.ch01.pdf>

Visite: <http://bingweb.binghamton.edu/~rmcguire/index.html>

Lunes, Noviembre 11, Teoría y Colonialismo Doble en México.

Panameño, Rebeca y Enrique Nalda

1979 *Arqueología: ¿Para Quién?* *Nueva Antropología*. 3(12):111-124.

McGuire, Randall H. y Rodrigo Navarrete

1999 *Entre Motocicletas y Fusiles: Las Arqueologías Radicales Anglosajona e Latinoamericana*. *Boletín de Antropología Americana*. 34:89-110.

McGuire, Randall H.

2012 *Utilizar la Arqueología Social Para Hablar al Perro*. In *La Arqueología Social Latinoamericana: De la Teoría a la Praxis*. Ed by Henry Tantaleán and Miguel Aguilar, pp.485-501, Universidad de Las Andes, Bogotá, Columbia.



UNC

FFyH

SECRETARIA DE POSTGRADO
DOCTORADO EN CIENCIAS ANTROPOLOGICAS
Facultad de Filosofía y Humanidades
Universidad Nacional de Córdoba – Argentina

Martes, Noviembre 12, Método y la Guerra de la Cuenca Carbonífera de Colorado:

McGuire, Randall H.

1996 La Arqueología Como Acción Política en Los Estados Unidos. I Congreso Iberoamericano de Arqueología Social, La Rábida, España, 17 al 21 de Junio.

Shanks, Michael, and Randall H. McGuire

1996 The Craft of Archaeology. *American Antiquity* 61(1):75-88.

Miércoles, Noviembre 13, Colaboración y Yaqui Repatriación:

Atalay, Sonya

2006 Indigenous Archaeology as Decolonizing Practice. *American Indian Quarterly* 30(3/4). 280-310.

Video - <http://bingweb.binghamton.edu/~rmcguire/Indigenous.html>

Jueves, Noviembre 14, Arqueología Contemporánea y La Línea:

González-Ruibal, Alfredo

2008 Time to Destroy: An Archaeology of Supermodernity. *Current Anthropology* 49(2):247-279.

Visite: <http://ruinmemories.org/>

Viernes, Noviembre 15, Terminando y Presentaciones