



Jordan Pratt and Thomas Stafford, Jr. discussing trench stratigraphy.

Field Studies in Archaeology: Rimrock Draw Rockshelter (35HA3855) ANTH 408/508 Syllabus



A Western Stemmed point found in 2018.

June 26 – August 4, 2023

University of Oregon Museum of Natural and Cultural History,
and Burns District Bureau of Land Management
Class meets Monday-Friday 7:45AM – 4:30 PM

Instructor: Patrick O’Grady, University of Oregon
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Email: pogrady@uoregon.edu
Credits: 8

Course Description:

This course offers a six-week comprehensive immersion in archaeological practices and site interpretation. Field Studies in Archaeology is an intensive introductory course on archaeological field techniques during which students will learn site discovery procedures (Phase 1) and techniques for test and data recovery excavations (Phases 2 and 3). Students will conduct pedestrian surveys, establish a site grid, set excavation units, and conduct systematic excavations. Students will also learn techniques for recording observations and identifying and collecting specimens. During the introductory week, students will learn about the ethnographic lifeways of the indigenous people of southeastern Oregon, explore the diverse ecological settings of the Harney Basin, and tour Paleoamerican sites pertinent to our research at Rimrock Draw Rockshelter. The second week will be devoted to training in pedestrian field survey, exploratory probing, and test excavation techniques. Four full weeks will be devoted to excavation at the site. In the laboratory (as time permits), students may learn techniques for processing, analyzing, and curating materials collected from the field and synthesizing laboratory and field notes into narratives.

The Field Project:

The field project represents a collaborative effort between the Bureau of Land Management: Burns District, the Department of Anthropology, and the Museum of Natural and Cultural History. The primary focus involves the archaeological investigation of Rimrock Draw Rockshelter (RDR). The site is located on the northwest periphery of Harney Basin near the community of Riley. Western Stemmed Tradition points are the most common diagnostic artifact found at the site, indicating site occupations occurred prior to 7,500 BP. Recent AMS ¹⁴C dates on Pleistocene fossils associated with stone tools indicate site use began approximately ten thousand years before that, making Rimrock Draw one of the oldest sites in the Americas. We take great pride in training the next generation of archaeologists at this highly significant and challenging site, and your involvement in this “Fieldwork in Archaeology” course contributes tremendously to our progress toward understanding the site. In 2023, we will excavate in a highly productive location at the site which produced the artifact shown above.

Upon completion of this course (and Bachelor’s degree requirements), students will be competitive for BLM or other federal agency employment at the GS 5-7 level and well prepared for an advanced stage of academic endeavor.

Course Logistics:

The class will meet at 7:45 AM Monday-Friday and work will continue through 4:30 PM. Breaks will occur for note-keeping at 10AM and 2 PM, with ½ hour for lunch at 12. We will be camped in a juniper grove near the site. There will be two days scheduled for artifact cataloguing and a couple of field trips here and there (please refer to the course schedule for these events). Keep in mind that the course schedule is somewhat tentative and will depend on weather conditions and general field progress.

- Work will cease on Fridays at 4 PM.
- Students are welcome to stay in camp during weekends.
- At least one van will be traveling to Eugene Friday afternoon and back to camp Sunday evening.

Grading/Expectations:

This course is designed to provide students with a “hands-on” introduction to archaeological fieldwork. Fieldwork and laboratory analysis will be conducted in a collaborative manner. All tasks will involve cooperation with one another and a commitment to the project itself. Final grades will be assessed from the following criteria:

1. Steady progress through the course of the class
2. Field notes and observations recorded in a field notebook (each student will receive a notebook, which will be collected at the end of the term to be curated along with the artifacts from the project).
3. Active participation in all activities

Things you should know:

- Time is precious – every second counts in a field project and 8 hour days will be standard operating procedure. Some days may run longer.
- Weather conditions can vary dramatically. Expect hot and be prepared for cold, too.
- Sunblock and multiple water containers are a must.
- Please bring sturdy shoes/boots.
- Trowel excavation will occur at RDR, but shovels may be employed in certain kinds of test excavations. Be prepared for strenuous physical activity that includes hiking, digging, and lifting.
- Refer to the U of O field school website for camping, personal gear, and field tool suggestions.
- Your tuition covers the class, food, and transportation, so don't feel like you have to bring your own food or drive your own car. It would be better if you didn't store food in your tent because it attracts critters.
- You will divide into cooking crews with each dinner crew responsible for one meal each week. Each crew will prepare a weekly supply list and groceries will be purchased on the way back to camp on Sunday.
- RDR is an important site and people are curious about our findings. There will be a steady stream of researchers, visitors, and volunteers to the site throughout the term.
- Non-prescription drugs, alcohol, and firearms are not permitted in camp. Students are expected to have read the UO Student Code of Conduct prior to arrival on site. <http://policies.uoregon.edu/vol-3-administration-student-affairs/ch-1-conduct/student-conduct-code>

Readings:

The required text offers an excellent review of topics related to the archaeology of Oregon. Although you are not required to purchase the Beck and Jones, and Waters volumes, I highly recommend them to students interested in pursuing an education in the field of archaeology. All three are pertinent to our effort this summer.

Required:

Aikens, C. Melvin, Thomas J. Connolly, and Dennis L. Jenkins;
2012 Oregon Archaeology. Oregon State University Press.

Suggested:

Beck, Charlotte, and George T. Jones
2009 The Archaeology of the Eastern Nevada Paleoarchaic: Part 1, The Sunshine Locality. University of Utah Anthropological Papers No. 126, Salt Lake City.

Waters, Michael R.
1997 Principles of Geoarchaeology: A North American Perspective. University of Arizona Press.

See “Harney Archaeological Research Project” on Facebook for more photos and information.

