

**Pre-Proposal for Provost's Course Redesign Competition, 2009-2010**  
**Mary Van Buren, Department of Anthropology**

**1. Contact Information**

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**2. Course Number and Title:** ANTH 140; Introduction to Prehistory

**3. This course is in the AUCC:** Yes

**4. Course Enrollment:**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Fall</b>	<b>Spring</b>
2005-2006	241	117
2006-2007	208	187
2007-2008	205	243
2008-2009	215	?

**5. Identify courses for which this course**

Is a prerequisite: ANTH 400, 450, 451, 452, 453, 480

Is a prerequisite with a grade of C or better: None

Is a prerequisite with a grade of B or better: None

**6. Course Description and the problem(s) you hope to address:**

The official course description for ANTH 140 is as follows: Origins of human society from the Stone Age to urban civilization using architecture, art, tools, and other material remains.

This course enrolls an average of 400 students a year and meets the AUCC category 3D requirements. In addition, it is required of all Anthropology majors and is a prerequisite for most upper division archaeology courses. Typically, three sections are offered each year, two of which are taught by faculty and one by an adjunct. The course, which is taught in a lecture format, is organized into three parts: methods archaeologists use to learn about the past, a survey of prehistory, and a concluding section on the ethics and public uses of archaeology.

Students encounter two problems in ANTH 140, the first tied to course content, and the second more pedagogical in nature. First, many students struggle with the information about methods and also find it difficult to understand how they are related to the later

lectures on prehistory. Problem formulation, theoretical perspectives, sampling strategies, and dating techniques are particularly challenging. Second, the large size and lecture format cause students to be disengaged, an issue that is exacerbated by the fact that the majority are not majors and thus have no investment in anthropology as a source of professional identity. On the other hand, the small percentage of majors in the class feel isolated and do not have the means to form a learning cohort. The overall result is a sense that the course is a hoop that has to be jumped in order to meet AUCC requirements and less than stellar performance on exams (the average score on the multiple choice component of tests, for example, is about 63%).

## **7. Redesign rationale.**

My experience in teaching introductory archaeology in a variety of formats (first year seminars, small classes, and large survey courses) suggests that small group work and project-based assignments are effective ways of teaching archaeological methods and also enhance student engagement with the material. I have also found that archaeological methods – which are used to infer past behavior from “clues” in the archaeological record – are especially useful vehicles for teaching more broadly applicable critical thinking skills. My goal in redesigning ANTH 140 is to develop a series of exercises that could be used either as an integrated set or independently in order to enhance learning as well as student interaction. These exercises would focus on methods and the role that methods play in reconstructing ancient societies.

For instance, ten years ago I developed a project that involved dividing the class into research teams that were asked to devise a strategy for sampling an archaeological region depicted on a map. I would then provide each team with a map of the sites they had “discovered,” and they would have to devise a strategy for excavating them. Once that was accomplished, each group would be provided with excavation data from the sites they had selected for investigation, and they would ultimately have to present their interpretation of the prehistory of the region to the class, which was shaped, of course, by the strategies they had employed. Groups met both in and outside class and were provided with customized “data” depending on how they had chosen to approach the problem. Students were enthusiastic about this approach which gave them ample opportunity to explore and apply concepts as well as to create relationships with their peers. After trying it twice in large lecture classes, however, I gave up because the amount of time required to generate data and monitor logistics was simply overwhelming. This type of project, however, would be feasible in a large class once converted to a web-based format. It could also be integrated into classes taught by different instructors who, while organizing the course along similar lines, emphasize different aspects of the material.

Redesigning ANTH 140 in this manner would support the strategic goals of the Anthropology Department in two basic ways. First, it would employ innovative techniques in order to encourage familiarity with the research process and prepare students for actual hands-on experience, an existing strength of the department that we would like to enhance. Second, it would help attract and maintain majors by increasing student engagement and interaction. Majors could be grouped together in research teams for easier recognition by the instructor and GTAs and in order to encourage cohort building, while more students would be attracted to Anthropology by an engaging and interactive approach to the material. This is particularly important because the lack of exposure to anthropology in high school means that most students decide to major in Anthropology only after their experiences in introductory university courses.

**8. Contribution to Learning in Other Courses.**

ANTH 140 is required of all Anthropology majors and serves as a foundational course for upper division archaeology classes. The course provides an overview of prehistory so that students can understand the general context of specific societies, and it also teaches key concepts, with methods being of particular importance. Redesigning ANTH 140 to improve student understanding of methods as well as other general concepts will enhance learning in upper division courses in two ways. First, it will allow students in these classes to focus on more complex issues rather than having to spend time reviewing basic information that is covered in ANTH 140. Second, the focus on skill building and problem solving will provide a strong foundation for experiential learning – specifically participation in archaeological field school - that Anthropology majors typically do in their junior and senior years.

**9. Desired Outcomes.**

The goal of redesigning ANTH 140 is to increase student interest in and understanding of archaeological concepts, especially methodology and its relationship to the reconstruction of past societies. The best case scenario in terms of the course itself would be improved performance on exams, the attraction of a modest number of new majors, and a greater sense of professional identity and “belonging” among majors. More broadly, redesign would foster students’ ability to learn complex material in upper division courses, provide them with critical thinking skills that would allow them to effectively engage in experiential learning, and enhance research skills that are necessary for work in the Cultural Resource Management sector which is one of the primary employers of archaeology graduates.

**10. Team Members.**

Mary Van Buren (Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology) would be the project leader in charge of the overall course redesign, implementation, and assessment. Input would be sought from the two other archaeologists on the faculty regarding the types of exercises that would be most appropriate for addressing difficulties that students face and for integrating into existing syllabi.

David Andrew Kruse (M.A. student, Department of Anthropology) would be responsible for developing exercises and making them available through web-based media when appropriate. Andy is a first year graduate student whose overarching career goal is to integrate anthropology into the high school curriculum. Participation in this project would provide him with experience in curriculum development and form the basis for the professional paper that is required of Plan B Master’s students in the Department of Anthropology.

**11. Department Contributions.**

Cost Item	Recipient	Notes	Cost
Course Release:			
Summer Salary:			
Student Hourly:	to be determined		\$500
Materials:	software for web design		\$500
Other Costs:			

**12. Signatures.**

Project Leader: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Department Head: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

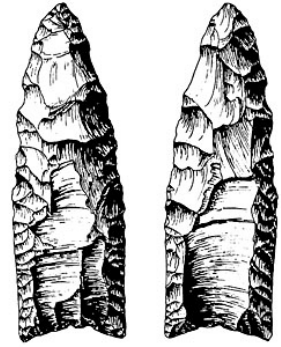
Dean: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**13. Current Course Syllabus.** Please attach a syllabus for the course.

**14. Letter of Support.** Please attach a letter of support from the department or program.



**ANTH 140**  
**Introduction to Prehistory**  
**Fall Semester, 2008**  
**12:30-1:45 TR; Clark A 202**



**Instructor:** Mary Van Buren  
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**Office hours:** Tuesday 11-12:00;  
Thursday 2-3:00, and by appointment.

**Teaching Assistant:** Erin Parsons  
**Office:** Clark B 228  
**Office hours:** Wed 11:00-12:00  
**E-mail:** eparsons@simla.colostate.edu  
**Teaching Assistant:** Larry Beidle  
**Office:** Clark B 228  
**Office hours:** Mon 5:00-6:00  
**E-mail:** lrbeidle@lamar.colostate.edu  
Larry will assist with the class until Oct 17

**Course Goals:** The purpose of this class is threefold: 1) to familiarize students with basic archaeological concepts; 2) to provide an overview of global prehistory; and 3) to introduce the methods by which archaeologists learn about the past.

**Course Requirements:** Students will be responsible for all course material, including information presented in lectures, readings, class discussions, and videos. Grades will be based on the following assignments:

**Exams.** Three exams will be administered during the course of the semester. **No make-up exams will be offered.** Exams will be worth 25% each, for a total of 75% of the course grade. They will consist of multiple choice questions and one short essay.

**Essay.** Each student will write a three page essay that describes a day or event in the life of a person from an archaeologically known culture. This essay, while imaginative, will be based on different kinds of sources available in the library, and will be worth 25% of the course grade. **Please note that papers will be graded down 5% for each day they are late.**

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is the representation of another person's work as your own. This includes cutting and pasting from web sources, failing to accurately cite articles, books, and web sources, and using all or part of other students' work. Please note that the penalty for all types of plagiarism is an "F" in the course.

**Reading:** The reading in this course consists of two books that are available for purchase in the bookstore, and three chapters on e-reserve at the library. All reading is required and should be completed by the date indicated on the syllabus.

## **Books:**

Feder, Kenneth

2006 *The Past in Perspective: An Introduction to Human Prehistory*, Fourth Edition. McGraw-Hill, Boston.

Parker, Mari, and Elvio Angeloni

2007 *Annual Editions: Archaeology*. Eighth edition. McGraw-Hill, Boston.

## **Articles and Chapters on E-Reserve:**

Ashmore, Wendy, and Robert Sharer

2006 *Discovering our Past: A Brief Introduction to Archaeology*, fourth edition. McGraw-Hill, New York.

Pollan, Michael

2006 *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. Penguin Press, New York.

Rathje, William, and Michael Schiffer

1982 *Archaeology*. Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, New York.

## **CLASS SCHEDULE**

### **PART I. HOW ARCHAEOLOGISTS LEARN ABOUT THE PAST**

Aug 26	Introduction to Archaeology
Aug 28	Archaeological Data and Research Designs Feder, Ch. 1, pp. 4-12; Ch. 2, pp. 32-38
Sept 2	Sampling and Survey Rathje and Schiffer, Ch. 7, pp. 155-173 (on e-reserve)
Sept 4	Excavation and Other Ways of Gathering Data Rathje and Schiffer, Ch. 7, pp. 174-203 (on e-reserve);
Sept 9	Classification and Analysis Feder, Ch. 2, pp. 44-59; Annual Editions #22 (Reber)
Sept 11	Dating Techniques Feder, Ch. 2, pp. 59-67; Annual Editions #19 (Preiser)
Sept 16	Reconstructing and Interpreting the Past

Ashmore and Sharer Ch. 3

Sept 18     **No Class**

## **PART II. PREHISTORY: HUMAN ANCESTORS AND EARLY FORAGING SOCIETIES**

Sept 23     Human Ancestors  
Feder, Ch. 3

Sept 25     Human Ancestors  
Feder, Ch. 4; Annual Editions #7 (Wong)

Sept 30     Our Neanderthal Kin  
Feder, Ch. 5, pp. 160-186

Oct 2       **Midterm #1**

Oct 7       The Emergence of Modern Humans  
Feder, Ch. 5, pp. 186-215; Annual Editions #38 (Hublin)

Oct 9       Upper Paleolithic Hunter-Gatherers  
Feder, Ch. 6; Annual Editions #13 (Brandt and Weedman)

Oct 14      The Peopling of the Americas  
Feder, Ch. 7, pp. 273-305; Annual Editions #8 (Roosevelt)

Oct 16      The Peopling of Australia  
Feder, Ch. 7, pp. 256-269

Oct 21      Holocene Hunter-Gatherers  
Feder, Ch. 8, pp. 308-327, 336-341

## **PART III. PREHISTORY: THE DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COMPLEX SOCIETIES**

Oct 23      Early Agriculture in Eurasia and Africa  
Feder, Ch. 9, pp. 344-383; Annual Editions #9 (Pringle)  
**Topic and references for essay due**

Oct 28      Early Agriculture in the Americas  
Feder, Ch. 9, pp. 383-405  
Pollan, Ch.1 (on e-reserve)

Oct 30      The Development of Social Complexity  
Feder, Ch. 10, pp. 408-409, 414-428, 443-447

Nov 4       Early States in Eurasia: Mesopotamia  
Feder, Ch. 11, pp. 450-467, 492-496

- Nov 6           **Midterm #2**
- Nov 11          Early States in Eurasia: Egypt  
Feder, Ch. 11, pp. 468-481; Annual Editions #23 (Friedman)
- Nov 13          Early States in Mesoamerica: The Maya  
Feder, Ch. 13, pp. 528-542, 551-557
- Nov 18          Early States in Mesoamerica: The Maya  
Annual Editions #16 (Diamond)
- Nov 20          Early States in Mesoamerica: The Maya  
**Essay due**
- Nov 25          Thanksgiving Break
- Nov 27          Thanksgiving Break
- Dec 2            Early States in Mesoamerica: The Aztec  
Feder, Ch. 13, pp. 548-551
- Dec 4            Early States in the Andes: The Inka  
Feder, Ch. 14, pp. 562-564, 573-586

**PART IV: THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORD AS CULTURAL RESOURCE**

- Dec 9            Who Owns the Past?  
Annual Editions #34 (Silberman), and #35 (Arnold)
- Dec 11          The Destruction and Protection of Archaeological Resources  
Annual Editions #32 (Atwood)

**Dec 16, 11:20-1:20, Final Exam (Clark A202)**