Syllabus for NMC471H1S
Ethics and Archaeology
Wednesdays 1pm-3pm Bancroft 415
Instructor: Anne Porter
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YOU MUST READ THE SYLLABUS CAREFULLY. IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO KEEP TRACK OF ALL REQUIREMENTS, DUE DATES AND ASSIGNMENTS

Course Description
This class confronts on a personal level the ethical choices that archaeologists frequently experience during their careers. Each week you will engage with a hypothetical scenario. You will be asked to take a critical look at your own instinctive responses to those scenarios. Moreover, since few ethical issues are black and white, even when there is consensus as to the “right” approach, you will be asked to take sometimes uncomfortable positions.

Course Goals
To understand the ethical issues within archaeology, explore the moral complexity of intellectual frameworks and academic practice, and to learn to think about unintended consequences.

Assessment
There is no exam and no research paper or essay for this course. Instead, each week you will give a fifteen-minute presentation on the issues involved for that week’s topic as the foundation for discussion. Students will be divided into opposing sides, with one student designated discussion adjudicator for each session. Essentially, students will be running the class, so it will only be as successful as you each make it.

Assessment will be based on preparation, argumentation, and insight. In addition, there will be a brief written report due at specified intervals. The report will present data relevant to that week’s discussion. Please see the weekly schedule for report topics.

5 reports @ 4% each = 20%
10 discussions @ 8 % each = 80 %

All reports must be submitted in hard copy and must be single-sided, double-spaced and 12 pt font.

Failure to complete all components of the assessment may result in a failing grade.

Failure to properly reference any written work or to acknowledge source material is considered plagiarism and will result in a failing grade.
Classroom Policies

STUDENTS MAY NOT OPEN THEIR COMPUTERS IN CLASS UNLESS EXPRESSLY PERMITTED BY INSTRUCTOR. No phones or any other digital media are permitted. Class may not be recorded unless by prior arrangement with instructor. Wikipedia is not considered an acceptable source under any situation (so don’t bother consulting it). If students persist in inappropriate use of electronic media, they will be asked to leave the class. Behavior that distracts other students will not be permitted. Students are expected to discuss all topics openly and civilly.

**MARCH 13th IS LAST DAY TO DROP CLASS**

Readings

It is important that you think through these issues for yourself, rather than summarize the perspectives of others. For this reason, the readings that accompany each discussion will be given to you AFTER the class on the topic. Nevertheless the readings are required. Therefore some time will be taken from the discussion of the next class to go over the readings of the last class.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism consists of passing off someone else’s work as your own. This may be done in a variety of ways, including, but not limited to: wholesale copying of another person’s writing; getting someone else to write your work for you; quoting someone’s words directly within your own writing but failing to place the quote in quotation marks and/or failing to provide a reference; failing to provide a reference for someone else’s words that you paraphrase; failing to acknowledge information or ideas that have come from someone else. Plagiarism is a serious offence and will be reported. It will be then treated according to school policies and may result in expulsion. Please see the appropriate web page for the school’s plagiarism policy.

Attendance

Every time you miss a class you are losing 8 %. It night not seem much, but it will almost certainly make the difference in final grades.

**WEEKLY SCHEDULE**

Starting with Week Two, each class will be conducted according to the following format: 15 minute presentations with debate between participants taking place afterwards. Then, when discussion is completed, there will be a review of the previous week’s readings. Particular attention will be paid to how those readings change the perspectives of the previous week’s discussion.
**Week One (Jan 11):** What are ethics and why do we need them? Who decides what is ethical and what not?

**Week Two (Jan 18):** Digging under a Dictatorship

You have designed a great research project in an area central to your field. You have been told you will be granted an excavation permit from the government of that country, and you know they are very hard to come by. It’s a fabulous opportunity. Only problem – that government is accused of war crimes. People tell you not to go. But you believe that science transcends politics. You also believe that your project will benefit humanity, and specifically, the people of your host country. But are you kidding yourself? Isn’t this really about your own aims and ambitions? Don’t you in actuality become complicit in the actions of that government whatever your motivation?

Report 1: Compile data on Canadian and US archaeological projects, or project participants, in countries with negative human rights records.

**Week Three (Jan 25):** Living among the Ruins

At last you are in-country, setting up the project. Your site is miles from anywhere, but there is a small village close by. You consider the options – do you build a dig-house on site? Do you set up a camp, with everyone spending the summer in pup tents? Do you live in the village, and if so, how? Then you think about your labor force. Site supervisors and specialists are all organized for the first season, but who does most of the actual digging? And who does the heavy work? Again, you have a few options – locals, foreign volunteers, supervisors themselves. Whatever you decide, you will be interacting with locals, mostly farmers who have little formal education and a very very different way of life to you, and the people you will be bringing with you. Work through the ethical pros and cons of each situation, and describe how you will approach living in a foreign environment.

**Week Four (Feb 1):** Collaboration or condescension?

As is not uncommon, there has been a sudden change of policy on behalf of the department of antiquities. All projects must now be equal partners with host country personnel. You are horrified, and for lots of reasons. One, you are used to being in sole control and having to share the decision-making process seems like a colossal waste of time. Two, you think the local archaeologists are just not as good as you – but of course you would never say that out loud. Instead you mutter something about lack of education opportunities and experience. You are really worried that they are going to mess up whatever part of the site you let them have – not to mention you have heard all sorts of horror stories from other joint ventures about what goes on once you have left the country. What do you do?
Week Five (Feb 8): What Price a Permit?

Things are going well, your site has turned out to be very important (more by good luck than good management), you are on your way to a brilliant career. You set aside the tense international relations between your host country and your own country and just get on with it. Then one day, a representative of the government comes demanding that you and your team take part in a demonstration supporting the government. You know that they want the world to see Canadians and Europeans on their side. The message isn’t subtle – your permit is threatened if you do not go. If you lose the permit, it is likely that the site will be severely damaged as looters will move in. At the very least, you know there will be continual reprisals for refusing, such as endless delays for permissions, team members kicked out of the country, intense scrutiny by the secret police, all of which will impede results, and poor results not means less funding. Do you participate in the demonstration?

Week Six (Feb 15): Good Money / Bad Money

You have had five years of Federal government funding, and you know that its coming to an end. This means you have to get private funding or you are done, so you start to work the philanthropic scene. One global company sees an opportunity to break into the market of your host country, from which they have been precluded by political issues and agrees to subsidize you. Great! But what do you know about that company? How deeply do you research their labor practices, their market strategies, the attitudes of the corporate leaders to race, gender, and sexual orientation? At the same time, your development office sets up a meeting at a very expensive restaurant with a well-known supporter of your department. This one’s in the bag – only problem, he will give you what you want in exchange for a few mere trinkets from your site that he will keep secret. Obviously you are not going to, and you can’t get out of there fast enough. But when you report in to your development office, they shrug it off, and you see this guy’s name as a major benefactor on the next fund-raising list. What should you do?

Report 2: research the ethical reputation of two of the following international corporations Nestle, L’Oreal, Nike, Walmart, Volkswagon.

Week Seven (Feb 22): READING WEEK

Week Eight (Mar 1): Rejectionism vs Engagement

Luckily, another billionaire is pretty interested in your project. Do you ask yourself why? Or does your excitement at the prospect at last of using all those very expensive technologies that will make your project cutting edge, take precedence? You find out soon enough that your donor has long had a deep passion for archaeology which ended up manifesting in collecting through reputable dealers like Sotherby’s, because your colleagues are screaming in the media about how evil collectors are, listing them by name. It is made known to you that if you accept his money in
any way you will never work in this town again. Well, that seems pretty simple. Obviously you won’t have anything to do with this donor. Yet when you met, three things were apparent. One, he might donate his entire fortune to archaeology if you play your cards right – and we’re talking billions. Such an opportunity to enrich the field is never going to come again, so wouldn’t it be immoral to pass it by? Isn’t it better to get some good out of bad money? At the same time, deep, deep down, you have a niggling feeling that that money would be better off going somewhere else where it could really benefit humanity. Two, the donor is pretty bemused by all this, since he feels he never knowingly did anything wrong, and he is pushing back against all the vitriol by refusing to give in. Three, how is he different to the robber barons of yore? The Carnegies, Mellons and so on of the 19th-20th centuries and we are all pretty happy to take their money. Mightn’t it be better to engage with this donor so that you have the opportunity to gently persuade him to the desired view? 

Report 3: research the origins of two of the great fortunes of past and present: Carnegie, Mellon, Rockefeller, Rogers, Gates. How did they make their money? At whose expense? Are things really different today or is it all PR? 

Week Nine (Mar 8): Publish AND Perish?

No brainer, we shouldn’t publish anything looted or sold, right? Well…you now face the biggest moral quandary of your professional career. A woman has approached you about a collection of cylinder seals and tablets that came up on the black market. She bought the collection because she is pretty sure that it comes from the missing city of Akkad. Imagine how important that is – the only known material from that site with the potential to help us locate it. You can’t pass the buck on this, because she has said she’ll only talk to you. If you don’t publish it, it will disappear into a private collection in Russia, and no one will ever know anything about this stuff. Sure, no one wants to encourage collecting because it provides the motivation for looting. But what happens to all those stolen things, more particularly, all that information, if they are not published? Can we afford to lose it for the sake of – what? The sanctity of the archaeological over the sanctity of the epigraphic? In the concrete, given reality, it comes down to who gets to lose which materials. So what is the solution?

Week Ten (Mar 15): So what about museums then?

I mean, if you want to talk ethics, the history of museums is the embodiment of colonialism, cultural appropriation, elitism and even deception. Yet they are taken for granted as an essential component of civilization. What do you actually learn by going to a museum? Does just looking at stuff do anything for anybody?

Report 4. How did the Getty in Los Angeles, the Met in New York, and the ROM build their collections? Was it all ethical? And what about the UN convention on antiquities – have they followed that to the letter?
Week Eleven (Mar 22): CRM and Colonialism

Cultural Resource Management is a big deal these days, and you feel it is really important that you invest a lot of time and effort not just in preserving your site, but educating the local population in the value of archaeology. You are really excited too about eco-tourism because you think that it can bring economic prosperity to some pretty poor people, who live without the modern material benefits of the western world. The moral obligations of the more fortunate are deeply engrained in you through years of volunteerism. Noblesse Oblige, anyone? But have you ever stopped to think about the outcomes of this, and the impact of dependency? Or about what the lives of the “less fortunate” is really like – it is truly worse than yours, or do you just each live in different value systems? Who are you to judge?

Week 12 (Mar 29): Opportunity or Rank Opportunism?

The outbreak of war brought things to a catastrophic end. You have been desperately trying to get your government to intervene on behalf of antiquity because you remember all too well the Iraq museum fiasco, and the fact that western armies did things like station tank battalions right on top of ancient sites. Imagine what the vibrations did to subsurface remains! Not to mention the bombing of everything by all concerned! You set up projects to do things like monitor the destruction of sites. You really did your best (although cynics might ask, where are the people in all of your efforts?). Now the war is over, the dictatorship has been ejected, and the country is under occupation. Because you had a pretty high profile during the war, you are the person to whom the conquerors turn to rebuild the antiquities authority. You see the opportunity to fix everything that was wrong with that ridiculous bureaucracy run by people who knew little about archaeology and cared, as far as you could see, less. What is more – you will be the most important person in the archaeology of that country.

Week 13 (Apr 5): Indiana Jones, the AIA, and the future of Archaeology

Everybody loves Indiana Jones. So it seems a good idea to invoke this character as much as possible to get students and the general public interested in archaeology. It can only be good for the field, right? Putting Harrison Ford on the board of the AIA is really going to bring in new, and hopefully, young, members, which is essential if archaeology is to survive. What does it matter if he is personifying a tomb robber?

Report 5: look at the membership of AIA before and after Ford’s appointment. Did it make a difference? Did the protests against this appointment make a difference? In general, what are the demographics of archaeological societies?