ARCL 410 / PHIL 419 (Philosophy of History)
EVIDENTIAL REASONING & COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE IN ARCHAEOLOGY
Winter 2025 | Term 2

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Seminar meetings: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 3:30-5:00, BUCH B302
Office Hours: Wednesdays 2:30-4:30, or by appointment
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Seminar overview

How do we know what (we think) we know about the past? What counts as evidence of past events, conditions and processes, and as best practices for working with this evidence? These questions have long intrigued philosophers of the historical sciences and practitioners in these fields. In this seminar we will focus on two sets of philosophical issues raised by archaeological practice: the strengths and limitations of reliance on "trace evidence"; and the epistemic implications of the collaborative and Indigenous-led research programs that have taken shape in archaeology in recent decades.

The seminar will begin with a selection of readings on the nature and status of trace evidence, analogical reasoning, and inference to the best explanation, juxtaposing archaeological literature on these topics with what philosophers of science and science studies scholars have had to say about evidential reasoning in the historical sciences. Source texts for this section include selections from *Evidential Reasoning in Archaeology* (Chapman & Wylie 2015) and *Rock, Bone and Ruin* (Currie 2018), as well as essays by Latour on "mobile immutables," contributions to *Data Journeys in the Sciences* (Leonelli & Tempini 2021), and selections from Trouillot's *Silencing the Past* (1995).

We then turn to critical histories of settler-colonial archaeology and a selection of readings that represent contemporary Indigenous-led and community-based collaborative archaeology. Some critics of collaborative practice object that it inevitably undermines the integrity of archaeological inquiry while others ask whether archaeology can ever be successfully reconfigured as an anti- or de-colonial practice. At the same time those who work for, or in partnership with Indigenous communities describe how profoundly their practice has been transformed, and often say they have never done better archaeology, in any number of senses.

To untangle the many threads of argument that make up this debate we will start by reading Roy's history of archaeology at Musqueam, "Ćesna:m, the Marpole Midden, and the Dispossession of Aboriginal Lands in British Columbia," alongside Tuck and Yang's "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor" and Raibmon's account of local practices responsible for "Unmaking Native Space." We then turn to an exchange about the status of Indigenous oral histories in relation to archaeology in this region (Henige vs Menzies and Martindale, 2019) and, to put this in a broader context, we will read contributions to *A Global Dialogue on Collaborative Archaeology* (2019). We close the semester with examples of current collaborative research practice described in *Archaeologists of the Heart* (2020) and in *Unearthing Forgotten Values: Toward a Meaningful Archaeological Practice* (Connaughton 2025), alongside selections from a philosophical discussion of *Transformative Transdisciplinarity* (Ludwig and El-Hani, 2025)

Seminar format and requirements
This course will be run as a reading-intensive seminar with the emphasis on in-class discussion. Requirements include regular reading response posts, in-class presentations, and a research term paper.
   Students in any field of historical research, as well as from Philosophy and science studies, are most welcome.
   Graduate students who prefer to take this course for 500-level credit should contact the instructor to make the necessary arrangements before registration closes.

Prerequisites: There are no prerequisites for this seminar but it is recommended that you have some background in an historical science and/or in philosophy of science/science studies.

Texts: All assigned readings will be available online, through Canvas and the Library Online Reserves.