• archaeology =
• archaeology & the public
  – why study the past?
  – what does the past mean to us?
  – what does the past mean to others?
  – whose past is it?
• McGimsey’s prediction
• public interest = destruction?
  – looters & illicit excavators
  – tourism
  – excavation
• meaning of the past
  – archaeology of identity
  – a two-way street...
  – Critical Theory...
    • the one-way street
    • subjective interpretations
  – public disenfranchisement
    – Kossina: right & wrong do exist
• archaeology’s “prime directive”
  – accuracy and authenticity
• who owns the past?
  – the difficult questions...
  – repatriation =
    – North American Solution
      • acquiescence, compromise & collaboration
      – NAGPRA
• what it means to us
  – responsibility to the past...

next class

• student reviews → bring a #2 pencil
• course review: the “Big Questions”
• discussion sections will deal with the “data” relating to these questions
• Thursday-Friday sections → find a section to go to…

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• course has focused on...
  – the questions that archaeologists ask about the past
  – the methods archaeologists use answer these questions about the past
• but, there are broader questions...
  – Why, beyond the reasons of scientific curiosity, do we want to know about the past?
  – What does the past mean to us?
  – What does the past mean to other people with different viewpoints?
  – Whose past is it anyways?
Surely significant to modern descendents of its builders, but is there also a broader significance to humanity?

WHAT DOES THE PAST MEAN TO DIFFERENT PEOPLE?

Should the pyramids be protected from destruction in the same way that we would protect an endangered species?

If looting of ancient sites is to be deplored, should it not be stopped, even if the sites on privately owned land?

WHO OWNS THE PAST?

archaeologists have a special responsibility because excavation is destructive of the archaeological record
• Charles McGimsey’s prediction...

– “The next 50 years – some would say the next 25 – are going to be the most critical in the history of American archaeology. What is recovered, what is preserved, and the goals of which are accomplished during this period will largely determine for all time the knowledge available to subsequent generations of Americans concerning their heritage from the past. The next generation cannot study or preserve what already has been destroyed.”

• the grand irony...

– increasing public interest in the archaeological past is also leading to increased destruction of the archaeological record

– looters and illicit excavators
  • looters are knowledgeable → use the results of scientific archaeology to improve their ability to find and plunder sites
  • public educated about the past appears to encourage the flow of plunder into private collections and public museums to satisfy antiquarian lust

El Brujo, Peru
landscape pockmarked with looters’ pits

• the grand irony...

– increasing public interest in the archaeological past is also leading to increased destruction of the archaeological record

– tourism
  • the sheer numbers of tourists has great potential for destroying the archaeological wonders that people seek to enjoy

Lascaux, closed to tourism
new regulations in 2001 for Machu Piccu trek
• the grand irony...
  – The past is BIG BUSINESS
    • EarthWatch & Eco-tourism to Southeby’s & eBay!

• What can we do about problems of destruction of the archaeological record?
  – Cease all archaeological excavation?

  ![The Anti-Dig!](image)

• What is it about the past that makes it important and valuable to us?

  people want things that are authentic
  …and are willing to protect them if they are.

  ![the red wolf: doomed by a lack of authenticity?](image)

Look how far we have come…Look at how little we have changed…Past as guide to the present and future…
- The Meaning of the Past: The Archaeology of Identity
  - people define themselves to different degrees on basis of (distant) past...
  - the past means different things to different people...
  - meanings based on many domains of experience (not just physical remains)

- The Meaning of the Past
  - The “meaning” that people attribute to their lives and experiences certainly influences...
    - the questions that they ask of the world
    - what data they perceive as important for answering those questions
  - The empirical evidence of the archaeological record also...
    - constrains how we answer questions
    - ultimately can change how it is that we assign meaning to our lives and experiences

A two-way street!
- what (empirical evidence)
- why (proximate & ultimate cause)
- why (what it means to me)

- The Meaning of the Past: Archaeology of Identity
  - Critical Theory in archaeology
    - since archaeology is first-and-foremost political, its validity is primarily established when it is used for political purposes
      - i.e., the search for general rules of human behavior is meaningless, rather archaeology should be used to actively overthrow the current political order
      - this is “archaeological” activism...
Critical View: The one-way street!
what (constructed empirical evidence)

why (self-justifying explanations)

why (political oppression)

• The Meaning of the Past: Archaeology of Identity
  – Archaeology almost everywhere is PRIMARILY “archaeological activism”...
  
  • archaeological research serving the purpose of establishing, defining and perpetuating Nationalist goals
    – Mao Zidong and the People’s Revolution in China
    – Gustav Kossina and the Nazi agenda
    – Hindus, Muslims and the Ayodhya temple
    – Custers last stand…

  • Relativism is fine up to a point, but we also have to draw a line between what is right and what is wrong...

  achieve political goal vs. meet scientific standard?

• The “Prime Directive”
  – The fundamental goal of archaeology must be to provide people in general with a better understanding of the human past...
    • ... so that we can better define ourselves…

• William D. Lipe...
  – a better understanding of the past (and the primary public service of archaeology) comes from being able to authenticate and provide an accurate as possible picture of human behavior in the past
  
  – What if this makes us confront uncomfortable aspects of our past?
    • Cannibalism in the Anasazi South West...
    • Cow butchery at what has long been seen as an ancient Hindu temple...
    • Daily life in a Japanese-American internment camp during WWII...

• Who owns the past?
  – colonial mentality…
    • natural for “spoils” of colonial occupation to end up in museums and major collectors in the West
• Who owns the past?
  – Difficult questions...
    • Should antiquities acquired for Western Museums during the colonial era be returned to their lands of origin?
    • Should archaeologists be free to excavate the burials of groups whose modern descendants may object on religious or other grounds?
    • Or, should human patrimony outweigh that of any particular group to ensure the preservation of the past for future generations?
  – No straightforward answers...

• Who owns the past?
  – Repatriation =
    • the return of cultural properties and human remains to the lands and peoples from which they were originally taken
  – the legal and moral issues of repatriation
    • treaties still in effect?
    • universal human interest v. national & ethnic interests of modern nation states...
    • rather than repatriating one nation’s antiquities, would it be more enriching to share the great works of one’s own cultural traditions

• Native Americans & Repatriation
  – in recent years Native Americans very successful in developing legislation that prevents archaeological excavation & mandates return of collections now in museums
  – NAGPRA 1990 (Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act)
    • Federal legislation requiring all federally-funded institutions and agencies (including UCLA) to return Native American skeletons, funerary and sacred objects, and items of “profound cultural importance” to American Indian tribes and Native Hawai‘ians

• Who owns the past?
  – Excavating human burials: Should we disturb the dead?
    • can archaeologists reconcile a respect for the people of the past with the deliberate disturbance of their remains, destruction of their tombs, and removal of their bodies and grave goods against the wishes of modern groups who, for religious or other reasons, see themselves as the living descendants of the deceased?
    • only way forward lies in negotiation and compromise
• Native Americans and Repatriation
  – Note: Native Americans and Archaeology are not simple adversaries
    • no single unified Native American tradition and there are wide-ranging attitudes towards the dead and NAGRPA
    • no single archaeological agenda…

  – North American situation is developing in terms of...
    • acquiescence → return of very recent remains of identifiable ancestors of living peoples
    • compromise → formally recognizing the scientific value of the study of human remains and, in many case, allow such study before repatriation
    • collaboration between archaeologists and Native Americans & emphasis on training Native archaeologists

• What does this mean to you?
  – So many questions and very few answers!

  – Key points are that
    • you have a responsibility to the past
    • the past has value (myriad values in fact)
    • you have a role to play in determining Who Owns the Past, Who Interprets the Past and ultimately the Meaning of the Past