

ARCHAEOLOGY

Professor: Thomas Pluckhahn, Ph.D.

Hello. Welcome to Archaeology. I'm Dr. Tom Pluckhahn, and I'll be the instructor for the course. I've been an archaeologist for the past 25 years or so. I've worked in Europe a little bit, in Central America, but most of my research takes place in the southeast United States, and particularly in Florida. I've been teaching archaeology here at USN for about the past 10 years. I try to incorporate undergraduates into my research. I've had undergraduates working with me at Crystal River, in the field, and now processing artifacts here in the lab.

And I'll be talking about Crystal River and some of my other research as we go through the course. Archaeology is a topic that is out there in the popular media. You guys have seen archaeology on TV, but a lot of that is junk archaeology. I want you to understand the practice of good, scientific archaeology, and I hope that introduces you to the diversity of the human experience. The archaeological record preserves 40,000 years of human diversity, and that is not covered in history textbooks. Archaeology is the only way to get to most of that history.

We will cover the method and theory of archaeology; we'll do a lot of group exercises that are designed to introduce you to some of the techniques that archaeologists use. We're going to cover some of the major transitions in human prehistory. Those include things like development of behavioral modernity by modern hominids, about 40,000 years ago. The peopling of the world from around 40,000 years ago to about 10,000 years ago. The development of farming around 10,000 years ago. And the development of larger complex societies and urban states, around 5,000 years ago.

And then the third unit in the course is designed to introduce you to the practice of archaeology. We'll talk about archaeological ethics. We'll talk about the business of archaeology, and some of the broader applications of archaeology beyond academia. I love archaeology for a number of reasons. First, it's a great mix of a field and lab. We get to go out and dig in the dirt. Every kid loves that, and archaeologists, I think, are still kids at heart.

But we also get to spend time in the lab doing scientific things like radiocarbon dating, and pottery analysis, but I also love archaeology for the questions that it can answer. There are certain questions about human-kind that can only be answered over the long term. So we get into big topics like, what makes us human? Why did we start farming? Why did we start living in cities? So archaeology to me is a fascinating topic, and I hope you feel the same at the end of this course.