

HTS 3090 Syllabus

Doing Archaeology, 4 credits

Fall 2026

Instructor Information

Instructor: Allison Mickel

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General Course Information

Description

This course will introduce you to the basic research methods of archaeological investigation by giving you firsthand, down-in-the-dirt, hands-on experience with archaeological tools and methods. We'll learn how archaeologists choose where to excavate, set up a dig, recognize stratigraphy, remove and sift through the dirt, wash and analyze artifacts, draw conclusions about past environments and human behavior, and present their conclusions to interested communities. We will mostly be working at Hollywood Cemetery, allowing us to learn about the history of the city where we live, learn, and work every day. We will engage local residents and leaders in our research process, culminating in an exhibition open to community members. You will gain experience in and ultimately lead all aspects of this project, start to finish, and you will leave the course with practical experience in research design, scientific methods, project management, writing & presentation, and public outreach.

Course Learning Outcomes

- Learn how to design and implement a scientific research project, from agenda-setting to dissemination of results.
- Consider the advantages and drawbacks of various approaches to archaeological investigation, and be able to decide between them based on research question & goals.
- Develop skills in archaeological investigation, documentation, and analysis.
- Gain insight into the history of Atlanta, and foster a sense of curiosity about the hidden pasts of the places we belong.
- Build relationships with members of the Atlanta community, and with each other.
- Understand best practices for community engagement in research.
- Present scientific research findings in a way that makes clear why the past matters to diverse communities.

Required Course Materials

All required readings will be linked on Canvas.

Grading Policy:

Assignments

- **Methods and Safety Quiz: 10% of overall grade**
 - *In week 4, we will have a quiz on the archaeological methods and safety protocols we have studied in class. You will receive a grade on the quiz, worth 10% of your overall grade, but you will not be able to participate in fieldwork until you pass the quiz. You may retake the quiz once weekly until you receive a passing grade.*

- **Field Notebook and Digital Documentation: 30% of overall grade**
 - *As an archaeologist, you will be responsible for documenting everything you do. Your field notebook & digital data entry will be collected and assessed each week for thoroughness and accuracy. You will receive feedback each week— there is no need to get it exactly right from the start! We are here to learn.*

- **Leadership and Community Contributions: 60% of overall grade**
 - *Most of your grade in this class is based on your participation in class discussions, excavation, artifact analysis, and exhibition planning. This means coming on time and prepared to each class session, helping to make decisions collaboratively, contributing to a positive and welcoming class environment, respecting the many stakeholders involved in this work, and being proactive in group work.*

Your grade on each of these components, as well as your overall grade in the course, will be assigned a letter grade according to the following scale:

A	90.0-100%
B	80.0-89.9%
C	70.0-70.9%
D	60.0-69.9%
F	< 59.9%

Course Policies

Attendance and/or Participation

Since this class is almost entirely based on in-person work, attendance is required for every class session. Please plan to arrive on time, and to stay for the duration of our scheduled time together. Of course, if you have an emergency or a medical conflict, let me know and we can find a solution.

Academic Integrity

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. Review [Georgia Tech's Honor Code](#) and the student [Code of Conduct](#).

Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarism on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, who will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

It might seem like archaeology and this class demand able bodies and minds to show up every day and carry out the physical labor of excavation. This is not the case, however—[there is an entire network](#) of disabled archaeologists. Members include Deaf archaeologists, chronically ill archaeologists, colorblind archaeologists, and archaeologists in wheelchairs. This class is for you, however your body and mind work.

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, [contact the Office of Disability Services](#) (404-894-2563) as soon as possible to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible in order to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement

At Georgia Tech, we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. [The Student-Faculty Expectations](#) articulate some basic expectations that you can have of me and that I have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and

cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek. Therefore, I encourage you to remain committed to the ideals of Georgia Tech while in this class.

Student Well-Being:

At Georgia Tech, we are concerned about your overall physical, social, and mental well-being. A [comprehensive list](#) of wellness related resources has been compiled and maintained by the Office of the Vice President for Student Engagement and Well-being ([student-resource-guide \(gatech.edu\)](#))