

# Doing Archaeology

HTS 3090 — FALL 2026  
PROF. ALLISON MICKEL

TUESDAYS/THURSDAYS 2:00-3:15 PM  
FRIDAYS 9:30-12:15 PM  
ARCHAEOLOGY LAB/OCE G35



# The Plan

This course will introduce you to the basic research methods of archaeological investigation by giving you firsthand, down-in-the-dirt, hands-on experience carrying out an archaeological excavation. 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. Our excavation will take place all over Atlanta, 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 of your work. 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.

# Objectives

- 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 excavation and artifact analysis, and be able to decide between them based on research question & goals.
- Develop skills in archaeological excavation, documentation, and analysis.
- Gain insight into the history of Atlanta in specific, and foster a sense of curiosity about the hidden pasts of the places we belong, in general.
- 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.



Looking for help?  
Sign up for  
office hours!

# My Expectations Of You

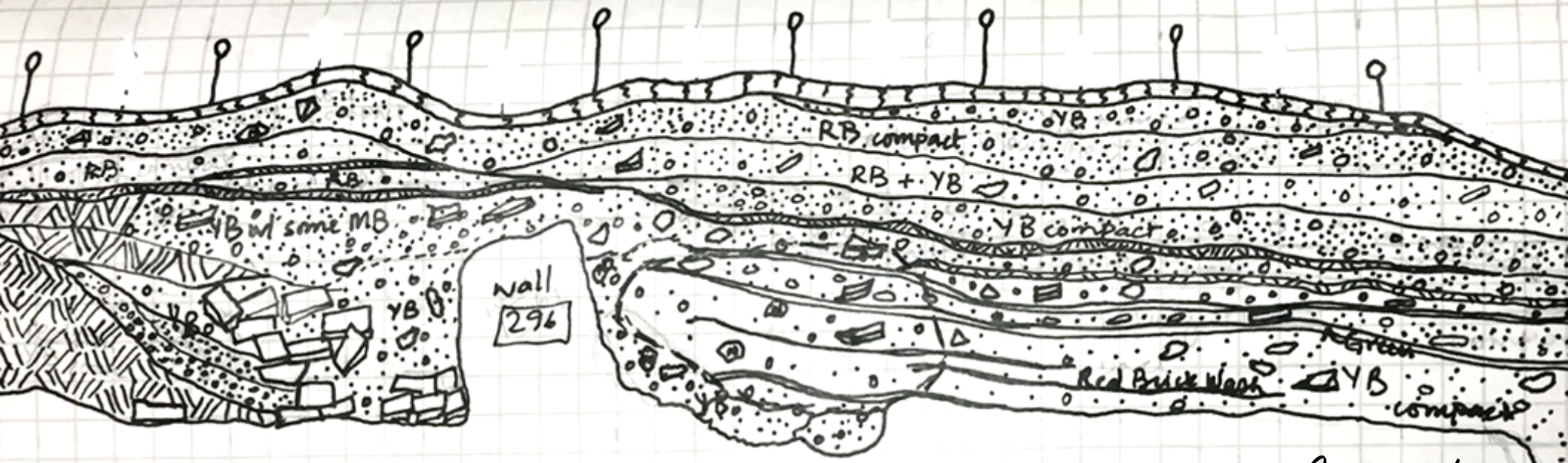
- Demonstrate care toward your classmates, faculty, and all relevant project stakeholders in the decisions you make about this class. This includes attendance, contributions to group work, communication, documentation, and your handling of archaeological materials.
- Come on time to each class meeting and put your best effort into all assignments as well as excavation and exhibition work. Use all safety measures you have learned while excavating.
- Ask for help from me or your classmates when you need it. Communicate openly and honestly with me about any concerns or challenges you experience while in this course. Offer help to classmates who seem like they could use it, even if they are not asking directly.



# My Commitments to You

- Sharing my own passion for archaeology. This doesn't mean that I expect you to become an archaeologist, simply that I am committed to sharing what I love about this field with you.
- Planning of all logistics associated with the project, including necessary permissions, budgeting, equipment, and conservation.
- Thoughtful and thorough preparation for fieldwork and exhibition work before any hands-on work begins, ensuring that you will be capable and ready to dig, handle artifacts, and discuss findings.
- Weekly checks and feedback on your field notebook, to make sure that we are generating as complete an archaeological record as possible.
- Introductions to Atlanta leaders and residents, and guidance on how to conduct oral history interviews and outreach.
- A clear explanation of course policies and expectations.
- Prompt answers to questions via email throughout the week.
- Open office hours each week for you to discuss questions, concerns, or ideas in person.
- A genuine interest in your ideas, perspectives, and goals. I will do my utmost to foster a classroom environment where you feel comfortable sharing your views and to support you in mobilizing your work in this class to reach your future aspirations.
- Snacks, sometimes.

In addition to the above, Georgia Tech's Student-Faculty Expectations articulate some basic expectations that you can have of me and that I have of you.



# Assignments & Grading

## Methods & Safety Quiz

10%

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 excavation until you pass the quiz. You may retake the quiz once weekly until you receive a passing grade.

## Field Notebook & Documentation

30%

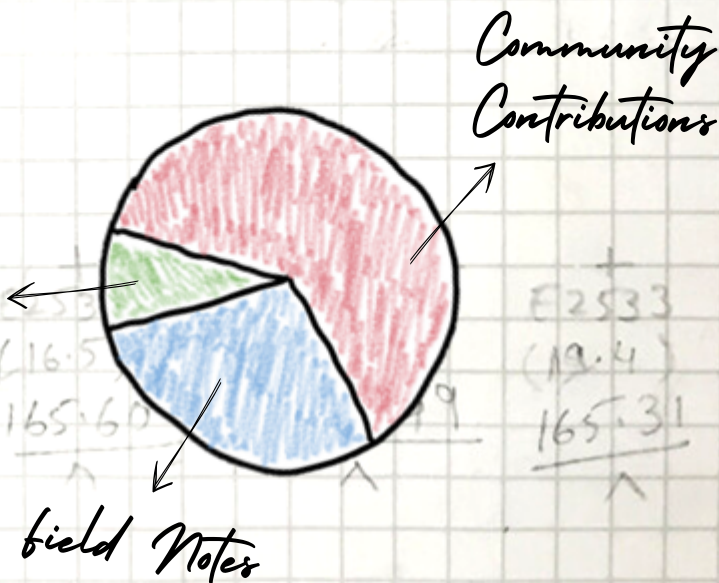
As a researcher, you will be responsible for documenting everything you do and find. Your field notebook & digital data entry will be collected and assessed each week for thoroughness and accuracy. You will receive feedback each week—there is no need to get it exactly right from the start! We are here to learn.

## Leadership & Community Contributions

60%

Most of your grade in this class is based on your participation in class discussions, archival research, fieldwork, 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.

Methods  
Quiz



# Course Policies

## Attendance

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.

## Disability Support

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 have a documented disability, please be in touch with the Disability Services office to receive guaranteed formal accommodations. If you do not, let's talk about what accommodations you need.

## Safety

Accidents and injuries can happen on archaeological sites, but most are preventable. We will spend time in the first few weeks of class learning about best safety practices, basic first aid, and what to do in an emergency—culminating in our methods and safety quiz that you must pass in order to excavate. You must abide by the practices and policies we study; if you do not, you may be removed from the excavation.

## 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.

# Course Calendar

## Week 1

Aug. 25-28

**Meet in Archaeology Lab T/Th**

**Meet in OCE 104 F**

Introduction to the course

Laboratory orientation

Types of Archaeology

*Read & annotate: Renfrew & Bahn: "What is Left"*

## Week 2

Sep. 1-4

**Meet in Archaeology Lab T/Th**

**Meet in OCE 104 F**

Research Design

*Read & annotate: Shafer: "Research Design"  
Hester: "Methods of Excavation"*

## Week 3

Sep. 8-11

**Meet in Archaeology Lab T/Th**

**Meet in OCE 104 F**

Documentation and Fieldwork Safety

*Read & annotate: Examples of archaeological records*

*Watch & annotate: Don't Die in the Woods*

## Week 4

Sep. 15-18

**Meet in Archaeology Lab T/Th**

**Meet in OCE 104 F**

Data and Assemblages

*Read & annotate: Daniel: "Interpretation"*

## Week 5

Sep. 22

**Meet in Archaeology Lab T**

Caring for Culture

*Read & annotate: Hester: "Handling and Conservation of Artifacts"*

*No class Sep. 24 or 25; Prof. Mickel away.*

## Week 6

Sep. 29-Oct. 2

**Meet in Archaeology Lab T/Th**

**Meet in OCE 104 F**

Sharing the Past

*Read & annotate: McLean: "Planning for People"  
Mayfield & Simmons: "Why the Present Matters"*

## Methods & Safety Quiz

*No class Oct. 6; Fall Break.*

# Course Calendar

## Week 7

Oct. 8 & 9

### Meet in Archaeology Lab Th

*Read & annotate: Hollywood Cemetery background  
Deer Creek Farm background*

### Meet at Hollywood Cemetery F

Hollywood Cemetery Fieldwork

### Oct. 10: Hollywood Cemetery River Cleanup

### Oct. 12: Extra Credit Lecture by Antonis Iliopoulos

## Week 8

Oct. 13-16

### Meet in Archaeology Lab T/Th

### Meet at Hollywood Cemetery F

Hollywood Cemetery Fieldwork

## Week 9

Oct. 20-23

### Meet in Archaeology Lab T/Th

### Meet at Hollywood Cemetery F

Hollywood Cemetery Fieldwork

## Week 10

Oct. 27-30

### Meet in Archaeology Lab T/Th

### Meet at Deer Creek Farm F

Deer Creek Farm Fieldwork

## Week 11

Nov. 3-6

### Meet in Archaeology Lab T/Th

### Meet at Hollywood Cemetery F

Deer Creek Farm Fieldwork

## Week 12

Nov. 10-13

### Meet in Archaeology Lab T/Th

### Meet at Excavation Site F

Excavation Experience

## Week 13

Nov. 17-20

### Meet in Archaeology Lab T/Th

### Meet at Excavation Site F

Excavation Experience

## Week 14

Nov. 24

### Meet in Archaeology Lab T

Interpretation and Presentation

*No class Nov 26-27; Thanksgiving Break.*

# Course Calendar

# Bibliography

## Week 15

**Meet in Archaeology Lab T/Th**

**Meet in OCE 104 F**

Interpretation and Presentation

**Dec. 1-4**

## Week 16

**Meet in Archaeology Lab T**

Interpretation and Presentation

**Dec. 8**

*Exhibition TBD.*

Daniel, Glyn. 2024. "Interpretation." *Britannica*.

<https://www.britannica.com/science/archaeology/Interpretation>

Feder, Kenneth L. 2016. "Background Research." Pp. 50-53 in *Field Methods of Archaeology*, ed. T.R. Hester, H.J. Shafer, and K.L. Feder. 7th ed. New York: Routledge.

Hester, Thomas R. 2016. "The Handling and Conservation of Artifacts in the Field." Pp. 143-158 in *Field Methods of Archaeology*, ed. T.R. Hester, H.J. Shafer, and K.L. Feder. 7th ed. New York: Routledge.

Hester, Thomas R. 2016. "Methods of Excavation." Pp. 69-112 in *Field Methods of Archaeology*, ed. T.R. Hester, H.J. Shafer, and K.L. Feder. 7th ed. New York: Routledge.

Mayfield, Tracie and Scott E. Simmons. 2018. "Why the Present Matters: The Importance of Community Outreach and Public Engagement in Archaeology." *Anthropology Now*. <https://anthronow.com/feature-preview/why-the-present-matters-the-importance-of-community-outreach-and-public-engagement-in-archaeology>

McLean, Kathleen. 1993. *Planning for People in Museum Exhibitions*. Ann Arbor: Association of Science-Technology Centers.

Renfrew, Colin and Paul Bahn. 2019. "What is Left? The Variety of the Evidence." Pp. 48-73 in *Archaeology: Theories, Methods, and Practice*, ed. C. Renfrew and P. Bahn. 8th ed. London: Thames and Hudson.

Shafer, Harry J. 2016. "Research Design and Sampling Techniques." Pp. 21-40 in *Field Methods of Archaeology*, ed. T.R. Hester, H.J. Shafer, and K.L. Feder. 7th ed. New York: Routledge.

"Wilderness First Aid Basics: Part I." *Don't Die in the Woods*.

<https://dontdieinthewoods.com/blogs/survival-skills/wilderness-first-aid-basics-part-1-common-outdoor-injuries>