Field School in Arctic Archaeology:  
Walakpa Site  
ANTH-495 (6 credits)

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Meets: Monday-Saturday, daily, field, Barrow lab  
June 26 through August 5, 2017  
Instructor: Dr. Anne M. Jensen  
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Meeting: six-week course, June 26 through August 5, 2017. Held at the Walakpa site (~15 miles south of Barrow, AK) and in the laboratory in Barrow  
Prerequisites: ANTH F211 (Fundamentals of Archaeology) or equivalent and permission of instructor  
Format: fieldwork, laboratory work, lecture, and discussion

Course Description

This field school is a six-week experiential learning program, through which students will learn fundamental techniques of archaeology as they apply to the Arctic, including site identification and recording, testing, and excavation. Students will also learn to identify common artifact types, and learn basic artifact and sample processing procedures. Evening lectures and discussions will expand these skills and introduce additional topics, including archaeological research design, community archaeology, global change effects on cultural heritage, the legal and ethical aspects of archaeological excavation, and various specialized types of analyses.

Students will spend a short period in Barrow at the beginning and end of the field season, where they will visit other important archaeological sites and may have the opportunity to participate in community events. Participation in field mobilization and demobilization, as well as general camp tasks during the field season will provide students a basic grounding in the logistics required to do successful Arctic archaeology.

The field school will take place at the Walakpa site, (Ualiqpaa in Inupiaq) an iconic deeply stratified archaeological site on the Chukchi Sea coast of Alaska’s North Slope, 20 km south of Barrow. It is the only site on Alaska’s coastline between Canada and Cape Krusenstern with confirmed intact vertically stratified Neoeskimo and Paleoeskimo components, and the only one known to contain the entire
sequence from Pleistocene deposits to recent occupations. Past excavations at one corner of the site exposed c. 4000-years of stratigraphy from Recent Iñupiat to Late Western Thule, Early Thule, Birnirk, to an Arctic Small Tool Tradition (ASTt) occupation, apparently resting on Pleistocene strata. More recent excavations, working within the same site grid, encountered undisturbed, primary stratigraphy, a complete house, a possible multi-room house, and a cache of mummified ring seals. There is remarkable preservation of Late Birnirk/Early Thule materials. The site is owned by the Iñupiat of Barrow, and is of great importance to them due to the cultural heritage it contains.

In September 2014, a single intense storm surge removed over 13 m of the site. High waves undercut the site, causing several large blocks to collapse onto the beach. A fall 2015 storm did additional damage to the site. As a result, roughly 1/3 of the cultural features at Walakpa have been destroyed in just 3 years. Even more catastrophically, this includes nearly ½ of the deepest stratigraphy with the greatest potential to contribute significant data about the Paleo-Eskimo and earlier Neoeskimo components.

Despite the devastation, Walakpa still has verified untouched and well-stratified deposits that can address crucial questions in Arctic archaeology and in archaeology in general. Other multiple component sites occur on the Alaskan Arctic coast, but most are horizontally stratified across kilometers (e.g., Cape Krusenstern or Cape Espenberg) or contain at most two or 3 components (e.g., Nuvuk). Walakpa, uniquely, can allow us to examine stratigraphically superimposed coastal Paleoeskimo and Neoeskimo occupations, as was done at Onion Portage in the interior. Walakpa’s information potential extends beyond anthropology to other disciplines. It contains geomorphological, paleozoological and paleobotanical data extending from living memory back past the region’s first known human occupation.

The 2017 excavations will concentrate on excavating the possible multi-room structure that was discovered last year, as well as whatever might lie beneath it. We also hope to recover three additional mummified seals, and to excavate a primary lithic reduction area containing a remarkably varied array of raw material that was revealed by erosion in fall 2016, assuming that it has not eroded.

Students will not only learn about archaeological field methods, they will have experience with community archaeology, and will have insight into emerging issues of global change effects on cultural resources. Due to the urgency of the situation, emphasis will be placed on rapid and efficient techniques in the field, which will be beneficial to students who plan to be involved in cultural resource management work.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

After completing this course, students will be able to:

- Identify and record an archaeological site.
- Demonstrate competence in basic procedures of excavation and documentation including:
  - Lay out an excavation unit.
  - Use standard tools and techniques to excavate the unit to professional standards.
  - Fill out paper documentation.
  - Complete plan maps and profiles (using both traditional and electronic methods of provenience control).
  - Photograph the excavation unit.
• Indicate a basic understanding of archaeological method and theory.
• Demonstrate competence in basic field laboratory processing techniques.
• Demonstrate an understanding of basic problems in coastal Arctic archaeology, including chronology, stratigraphy, taphonomy, site formation processes, and factors that affect sites, including the effects of global change.
• Understand archaeological research designs and how they impact field investigations.
• Demonstrate an understanding of how to evaluate archaeological finds.
• Demonstrate an understanding of archaeological ethics.
• Demonstrate an understanding of relevant cultural resources laws and regulations.

Required Texts
There is no required text. Readings covering regional cultural history, Iñupiat culture, prior work at Walakpa, paleoclimate/paleoecology, community archaeology, and various analytic techniques will be provided.

Students with Disabilities
The University of Alaska Fairbanks is committed to equal opportunity for students experiencing disabilities. Due to the physical nature of archaeological field studies and the remote location of the field camp, students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the instructor prior to enrollment in the course so that arrangements may be made to ensure a positive educational experience.

Evaluation and Grading Policies
This course uses a letter grading system (A, B, C, D, and F). A=90-100%, B=80-90%, C=70-80%, D=60-70%, F=0-60%. Your understanding of archaeological field methods and your ability to reduce this to practice will be evaluated using this combination of these factors:

• 40%: Required documentation. Your grade for documentation assignments will be determined based on the completeness, accuracy, and legibility of the submitted forms and field books, as well as the proper execution of documentation photographs (use of scales, properly logged, cleaned for photography). Proper documentation is extremely important, since archaeological excavation is destruction of the archaeological record, and anything not properly and accurately documented is lost forever.

• 25%: Discussion & camp participation/attitude. It is important for students to take part in all aspects of this excavation, in order to achieve the desired learning outcomes. This includes not only the archaeology and the discussions, but the camp logistics as well. Assigned readings should be finished before the discussion. Completing reading early will be beneficial, since there will be professional archaeologists and advanced students participating in the excavations, and topics may well come up before the assigned date. Crew members with positive attitudes are very important for a productive excavation in the challenging field conditions of the Arctic, and help keep the entire experience positive for other students, the professor, other crew members, and visitors, whether community members or scientists.

• 25%: Performance in field and laboratory activities. Your grade for field and laboratory performance will be based on the degree to which you demonstrate knowledge of the basics of various field
techniques, and the skill with which you perform them. In some cases, individuals have particular aptitude for a particular task, and may spend extra time on that task, learning to perform it particularly well. However, since this is a field school, and many smaller projects will need crewmembers to be able to perform all tasks, you will be expected to demonstrate basic competence in all areas that are covered in this course.

● 10%: Exit Essay. Each student will be expected to turn in a short (~five pages) essay prior to leaving the field, reflecting on the experience, what they have learned from it, and how they will be able to apply that knowledge in the future.

Location
The field school will take place at the Walakpa site, (Ualiqpaq in Inupiaq) an iconic deeply stratified archaeological site on the Chukchi Sea coast of Alaska’s North Slope, 20 km south of Barrow, as well as in the archaeological laboratory in the Barrow Arctic Research Center in Barrow.

What to Bring
Excavation equipment and major camp equipment (mess and lab tents, kitchen gear, etc.) will be provided. You will need basic personal camping and field gear (tent, sleeping bag, sleeping pad, rain gear, warm gear) although we may be able to help if you do not have a tent. All food, and local lodging while in Barrow, will be covered by course fee.). A detailed list of what to bring will be provided by the instructor.

Schedule (tentative)
Week 1: Arrive Barrow on June 26. Introduction to the project, basics of site documentation (forms, field notebook, site photography). Barrow site visits, Barrow lab, logistics prep, establish camp.

Week 2: Laying out excavation units, Introduction to use of total station. Introduction to basic excavation techniques. Review and begin employing documentation techniques. All unit forms, plan view and photo logs must be turned in by Sunday AM.

Week 3: Introduction to screening and flotation, field processing of artifacts and samples. All unit forms, plan view and photo logs must be turned in by Sunday AM.

Week 4: Introduction to profile drawing. All unit forms, plan view and photo logs must be turned in by Sunday AM.

Week 5: Closing the site, backfilling, preparation of artifacts for transport to lab. All unit forms, plan view and photo logs must be turned in by Sunday AM.

Week 6: Barrow lab. Basic artifact processing and stabilization techniques

We will have visits on site from community members (Elders to toddlers) as well from various scientists who are working in Barrow. We expect the crew will include other senior archaeologists and graduate students.