Course Description

Hunter-gatherer studies had long been the last vestige of anthropology's quest for natural man (Barnard 2004)

Although they are no longer the dominant form of human sociality and adaptation, and exist today in relatively minor numbers, hunter-gatherers continue to be the focal point of fundamental debates in anthropology and related fields of inquiry. From the romanticism of Rousseau and the rhetorical extremism of Hobbes, to the evolutionary ideals of Morgan and the ecological idealism of 1970s ethnographers, perceptions of “hunter-gatherers” have both conformed to and effected changes in anthropological inquiry and western society. Having undergone so many and so frequent conceptual shifts in the past two centuries, “hunter-gatherer” is a construct, some have argued, without empirical or evolutionary validity. Clearly people have lived off the land without agriculture or animal husbandry, so at the level of subsistence, “hunter-gatherer” is a meaningful category. However, none of the essentialist qualities once assigned to this mode of subsistence hold up to serious cross-cultural analysis. That is, hunter-gatherer subsistence is not structurally linked to egalitarianism, generalized reciprocity, and settlement mobility, to name a few of the more prominent features. Moreover, hunter-gatherer populations once believed to be deeply rooted in evolutionary time are now understood as historical consequences of state expansion and political oppression. So, what does the concept of “hunter-gatherer” mean these days and what does anthropological knowledge of people living off the land tell us about long-term evolutionary trends, on the one hand, and modern power relations, on the other?

In this seminar, we address this question by considering alternative perspectives on the incredible diversity of lifestyles typically described as “hunter-gatherer.” In previous offerings of this seminar, our review of alternative perspectives was structured by the dichotomy between evolutionary/ecological approaches on the one hand, and historical or political-economic approaches on the other. This dichotomy was useful but arguably a bit disingenuous. We will certainly contrast the two approaches throughout the semester as we try to find threads of complementarity or even agreement. But the seminar this term will be structured by broad topics,
not paradigms. Inspiration for this comes from a relatively new, compact volume by Vicki Cummings (2013) titled *The Anthropology of Hunter-Gatherers: Key Themes for Archaeologists*. Cummings was one of three editors of the even newer but not so compact *Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology and Anthropology of Hunter-Gatherers* (Jordan et al. 2014). In the short companion volume to the *Handbook*, Cummings starts off where most do, with subsistence, and then examines hunter-gatherers in terms of mobility, social organization, belief systems, landscapes, and material culture. Her intent in this volume is to ask if the study of modern hunter-gatherers helps us understand the past. Few would have questioned that 50 years ago, but today one cannot blithely apply ethnographic analogs to ancient people without serious critical reflection.

There is something for everyone in this seminar. We will review the many good contributions of behavioral ecology and other strands of evolutionary thinking. We can add to that the fascinating perspectives of what is often called Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and come to appreciate that the intimate relationships people had with wild plants and animals blurs the conceptual divide between hunter-gatherers and food producers. And we will take a look at some impressive niche construction in the way some hunter-gatherers altered landscapes.

Taking a turn, we will engage literature since the 1960s that paints hunter-gatherers as the “primitive communists” of social evolution. This perspective traces to structural Marxism and the efforts of social scientists to draw contrasts between societies structured by egalitarian principles (thought to be “original” to humanity) and those structured by social rank, status, or class. Much of this discourse in the past few decades has centered on the conditions under which egalitarian social relations are asserted and reproduced, not simply inherited as a “natural” condition. This leads us to a third major perspective, namely the idea that hunter-gatherers consist of societies embedded in larger sociopolitical and geopolitical structures, at least in the modern world. In this sense, hunter-gatherer exists today because of modernity, not in spite of it. We will also consider in this section of the course the extent to which hunter-gatherer societies have always been enmeshed in networks of inequality, or at least difference.

Lastly we will consider that hunter-gatherers are “us,” always have been, both conceptually in the sense that we construct knowledge about hunter-gatherers to understand the modern condition, and objectively in the sense that we have underestimated the complexity of hunter-gatherer societies worldwide and through time.

This seminar is designed for students of ethnography and archaeology alike. Students of ethnography will become familiar with a wide range of comparative material, as well as alternative conceptual frameworks for interpreting hunter-gatherer diversity. Most important, this seminar will help to develop intellectual skills for debasing normative and typological approaches to societal variation. For archaeologists the seminar offers the opportunity to delve into the empirical record of hunter-gatherer diversity for analogical purposes, while reminding us of the shortcomings of uniformitarian principles. We will actually consider very little archaeological material in this class, though I hope you will agree that everything we cover is extremely relevant to any archaeology of hunter-gatherer “prehistory.”
Readings

You do not have to purchase anything for this class; all readings will be posted on the Sakai e-learning site for the seminar (https://elearning2.courses.ufl.edu/portal/site/UFL-ANG6186-84598-12016). However, there are some texts you may want to purchase if you do not already own them. The concise Cummings (2013) volume mentioned above would be useful if you have no prior experience with the literature on hunter-gatherers. Smathers has an e-book version you can read online. Robert Kelly’s (1995) The Forager Spectrum is a tour de force of behavioral ecological perspectives on hunter-gather diversity, and now his second edition, under new title (Kelly 2013), updates and expands on this benchmark synthesis. A collection of topical essays edited by Panter-Brick et al. (2001) takes an interdisciplinary approach, with chapters dealing with language, demography, nutrition, and health, as well as behavioral ecology, technology, and art. The Handbook noted earlier (Cummings et al. 2014) is a trove of current syntheses, but it is very expensive (~$200). An earlier encyclopedia issued by Cambridge University Press (Lee and Daly 2004) is now available in paperback; its content is largely ethnographic.

We will read portions of all the volumes noted above, as well as a few dozen papers and chapters from other books. You are invited to introduce additional readings for the seminar, but if you do please provide a digital copy that can be posted to the e-learning site at least one week before it will be introduced into discussion. All such additions will be considered supplemental to the core readings listed below, all of which are mandatory.

Format and Expectations

This is a graduate seminar so the expectation is that everyone will prepare for each class session by reading all the assigned materials and developing some thoughts for discussion. I will provide a brief overture of each week’s topic, as well as a list of questions and topics to discuss.

Your major assignment is a term paper, which will be divided into two parts, the first conceptual, the second substantive. The conceptual portion of the paper will center on one or more themes drawn from a list of possible topics; the substantive portion will focus on a particular society or group of people, either “traditional” hunter-gatherers or some small-scale equivalent. Either way, you are expected to relate your case material to the conceptual theme you choose, as well as place your case material into broader historical and sociopolitical context. Each portion of the paper is expected to be ~15 double-spaced pages. I will provide guidelines for writing papers by our third meeting. Your final grade for this seminar will be based on the quality of the paper (30 percent each part), a 20-minute presentation of your research (20 percent), and participation in discussion (20 percent), which of course requires attendance.
### Course Outline

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 6</td>
<td>Conceptualizing Hunter-Gatherers</td>
<td>Lee and Daly 1999; Barnard 2004; Jordan and Cummings 2014; Kelly 2013 (Chapter 1)</td>
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<td><strong>Hunter-Gatherer Subsistence</strong></td>
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<td>Jan. 20</td>
<td>Scarcity and Abundance</td>
<td>Bailey et al. 1989; Bailey and Milner 2002; Hayden 1994; Sahlins 1972 (Chapter 1); Waguespack and Surovell 2003</td>
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<td><strong>Hunter-Gatherer Mobility</strong></td>
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<td>Jan. 27</td>
<td>Mobility</td>
<td>Kelly 2013 (Chapter 4); Kent 1992</td>
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<td><strong>Hunter-Gatherer Sociality</strong></td>
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<td>Feb. 10</td>
<td>Egalitarianism as Culture and Politics</td>
<td>Ingold 1999; Woodburn 1982; Boehm 2001; Brunton 1989; Henrich 2012</td>
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<td>Feb. 17</td>
<td>Social Complexity</td>
<td>Arnold et al. 2015; Sassaman 2004; Kelly 1995 (pp. 302-331)</td>
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<td>Feb. 24</td>
<td>Symbioses, Alliances, and Networks</td>
<td>Apicella et al. 2012; Wiessner 1982; Grinker 1994 (Chapter 3)</td>
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<td>Mar. 2</td>
<td>Spring Break – No Class</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Hunter-Gatherer Belief, Cosmology, Memory, and Landscape</strong></td>
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<td>Mar. 9</td>
<td>Relational Ontologies</td>
<td>González-Ruibal et al. 2011; Zedeño 2008; Jordon 2003 (Chapter 5); Cannon 2014</td>
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<td>Mar. 16</td>
<td>Learning and Memory</td>
<td>Conkey 2001; Holdaway and Allen 2012; Ingold 2000; Oetelaar et al. 2013</td>
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<td>Mar. 23</td>
<td>Landscape</td>
<td>Basso 1996; Oetelaar and Meyer 2006; Morphy 1995; Sassaman and Randall 2012</td>
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<td><strong>Hunter-Gatherers and “Us”</strong></td>
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<td>Mar. 30</td>
<td>Historical</td>
<td>Sassaman 2001; Woodburn 1988; Stiles 2001; Headland &amp; Reid 1989</td>
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Presentations

Apr. 6  Rhetorical Flannery and Marcus 2012 (Chapters 1-5); Trigger 1999; Lee 1992; Suzman 2004

Presentations

Apr. 13  Presentations

Apr. 20  Presentations

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Readings

Ames, Kenneth

Apicella, Coren L., Frank W. Marlowe, James H. Fowler, and Nicholas A. Christakis

Arnold, Jeanne E., Scott Sunell, Benjamin T. Nigra, Katelyn J. Bishop, Terrah Jones, and Jacob Bongers

Bailey, Geoff, and Nicky Milner

Bailey, R. G. Head, M. Jenike, B. Owen, R. Rechtman, and E. Zechenter

Barnard, Alan

Basso, Keith H.

Boehm, Christopher

Brunton, Ron
Cannon, Aubrey

Conkey, Margaret W.

Coupland, Gary, Kathlyn Stewart, and Katherine Patton

Cummings, Vicki

Cummings, Vicki, Peter Jordan, and Marek Zvelebil (editors)

Flannery, Kent, and Joyce Marcus

González-Ruibal, A., A. Hernando, and G. Politis

Grinker, Roy Richard

Hayden, Brian

Headland, T. N., and L. A. Reid

Henrich, Joseph

Hitchcock, Robert
Holdaway, Simon, and Harry Allen

Ingold, Tim


Jordan, Peter
2003 Material Culture and Sacred Landscape. AltaMira, Walnut Creek, CA.

Jordan, Peter, and Vicki Cummings

Kelly, Robert L.


Kent, Susan

Koster, Jeremy M.

Lee, Richard B.

Lee, Richard B., and Richard Daly

Lopes, Priscila F. M., Mariana Clauzet, Natalia Hanazaki, Milena Ramires, Renato A. M. Silvano, and Alpina Begossi
Morgan, Christopher

Morphy, Howard

Oetelaar, Gerald A., David G. Anderson, and Peter Dawson

Oetelaar, Gerald A., and D. Meyer

Panter-Brick, Catherine, Robert H. Layton, and Peter Rowley-Conwy (editors)

Sahlins, Marshall

Sassaman, Kenneth E.


Sassaman, Kenneth E., and Asa R. Randall

Sheehan, Michael S.

Stiles, David

Suzman, James
Trigger, David S.

Waguespack, Nicole M., and Todd A. Surovell

Wiessner, Polly

Winterhalder, Bruce

Woodburn, James


Zedeño Maria Nieves