This course explains how human history can be understood through the things people leave behind, like trash and abandoned buildings. In other words, this class explains the methods and theories used by archaeologists. Archaeology is the study of human life through material remains. For most of human existence, there were no written texts, so to understand this major part of the human past, archaeologists learn to “read” history by examining material remains and combining a variety of techniques, methodologies and theories. We will review those methodologies as well as explore what kind of knowledge archaeologists can generate. We will investigate what are appropriate archaeological questions, and what kinds of answers are possible. In this course we review how archaeologists understand things like politics, social organization, world views, religion, warfare, and more as well as the scientific techniques used to gain that understanding. Part of this review will involve discussions of various world cultures and societies. It will also involve an evaluation of the role the present plays in understanding the past, and alternately, how the past informs the present.

Format: there will be illustrated lectures, films, demonstrations and hands on lab exercises.

Evaluations will be based on exams, short papers and projects

Honors students will have the opportunity to delve deeper into the practice of archaeology through labs and a tour of an archaeological facility