

**Archaeology 531.78**  
**Egypt and Northeastern Africa before the Pharaohs**

**Fall 2009**

Instructor: Dr. Mary McDonald  
Office: ES 828  
Telephone: 220 6018; e-mail: [mmcdona@ucalgary.ca](mailto:mmcdona@ucalgary.ca)  
Office hours: Tuesday 2:30 – 4:00 PM or by appointment  
Lectures: TR 12:30 PM ES 822\*

**Course description:**

This course explores the prehistory of Northeastern Africa, defined in modern political terms roughly as Egypt, the Sudan and Libya, although Sahara-wide trends will often be considered. In addition, Northeastern Africa has never existed in isolation, and much of its prehistory can only be understood in light of developments elsewhere on the continent.

Our core area consists of two contrasting zones, the Nile Valley and the surrounding desert. The Nile Valley has been intensively explored by archaeologists for well over a century, but the Eastern Sahara, only for the last 30 to 40 years. As archaeological information from the Valley is combined with the new data from the surrounding desert, a coherent picture is emerging of a half-million years of Prehistory. This course will examine that record, and the light it throws on such issues as the emergence of modern human behavior, human migrations out of Africa, adaptations through time to a very arid but volatile environment, the switch to food production, and the development of complexity and one of the world's oldest primary civilizations.

Classes will entail both lectures and student presentations and discussion.

**Required texts:**

Phillipson, David W. 2005 *African Archeology*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Cambridge.  
Stahl, Ann Brower 2005 *African Archaeology*. Blackwell, Oxford.

**Course evaluation:**

3 quizzes (Oct. 13, Nov. 17, Dec. 8)	15%, 15%, 10%
In-class presentation	20%
Research paper (due Nov. 26)	30%
Class participation	10%

Note: there is no final exam in this course.

**Grading scheme (%):**

A, A+ 85-100	B+, B, B- 79-70	D+, D, D- 59-50
A- 80-84	C+, C, C- 69-60	F <50

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\* In case of emergency, assembly point is the ICT Food Court.

**In-class presentation:**

Each student will lead us in a seminar on some major topic area in Northeast African prehistory. Your topic should be cleared with me by Thursday Sept. 24. Some suggested seminar topic areas (but you may certainly select some other issue of interest to you):

North African rock art: interpretation or dating issues

Early domestic cattle in the Sahara? For or against.

Did desert dwellers influence the development of the Egyptian Civilization?

Description and assessment of one of the large multidisciplinary projects working in the Eastern Sahara.

**Research paper:**

A 10-12 page research paper (250 words per page), worth 30 points, is required. It is due Thursday Nov. 26. The topic, normally a different one from your seminar topic, must be cleared with the instructor in advance, by the end of the sixth week, Oct. 15. A research paper should involve at least one source per page of text, so at least 12 substantial sources (e.g. other than textbooks, encyclopaedia articles), from scholarly journals, monographs or web sources. Use the referencing format found in *American Antiquity*. And, of course, avoid plagiarism.

Number your pages, and no plastic binders, please.

**Rough outline of weekly topics and readings:****Week 1:**

--Introduction; brief history of exploration. (Stahl # 1)

--Geography, climate, changes through time. (Phillipson chap 1)

**Week 2:**

--Lithic terminology; earliest evidence of humans in North Africa. (Phillipson chap 2, 3)

--MSA (Middle Stone Age): introduction.

**Week 3:**

--MSA and the emergence of modern human behavior. (Stahl # 4; McBrearty & Brooks 2000 in *J. of Human Evolution* 39:453-563)

--MSA: the Nile Valley (Stahl # 5)

**Week 4:**

--MSA: the Eastern Sahara. (Phillipson chap 4, *passim*)

--The Aterian. (Phillipson p. 131 ff)

**Week 5:**

--LSA/UP (Upper Palaeolithic) in the Nile Valley

--LSA/UP in the Sahara: an empty desert?

**Week 6:**

--**Mid-term**, Oct 13.

--“Out of Africa” via the Sinai?

**Week 7:**

- “Out of Africa” via the Red Sea?
- Late Palaeolithic intensification in the Nile Valley

**Week 8:**

- Resettlement of the desert after the Pleistocene. (Stahl # 7)
- North African rock art. (Stahl # 8)

**Week 9:**

- In-depth studies: work of the CPE (Combined Prehistoric Project): Wendorf & Schild (2001)
- In-depth studies: the Acacus, SW Libya. (See articles in *African Archaeological Review* 16:211-238 [1999]; *J. of World Prehistory* 18:107-154 [2004]).

**Week 10:**

- In-depth studies: Dakhleh Oasis: the Early Holocene.

**Week 11:**

- Mid-term**, Nov. 21.
- In-depth studies: Dakhleh Oasis: the mid-Holocene.

**Week 12:**

- The Nile Valley Neolithic. (Phillipson p. 181 ff)
- The Predynastic

**Week 13**

- The Predynastic
- Complex societies in NE Africa: Pharaonic Egypt and its successors. (Phillipson chap. 7 to p. 234)

**Week 14**

- Quiz, December 8

**Please note the following journals:**

The African Archaeological Review  
 The Journal of African Archaeology  
 Nyame Akuma  
 West African Journal of Archaeology  
 Azania  
 Sahara  
 The South African Archaeological Newsletter

**Useful website for maps:**

<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/africa.html>