

**University of Mary Washington – Department of Historic Preservation**  
**Historic Preservation 467 – Field Methods in Archaeology**

Summer Session 2010  
Combs Hall

Dr. Douglas W. Sanford  
Stratford Hall Plantation

**Course Introduction:** The course provides an intensive introduction to the methods and strategies archaeologists employ in locating, sampling, and excavating sites. While the course emphasizes historical archaeology, the methods employed readily apply to other types of archaeology. Students will receive instruction in the following techniques: survey; excavation; stratigraphy; observing and recording, artifact identification and dating; photography; mapping; and, field interpretation.

The course occurs on the Stratford plantation estate in Westmoreland County, Virginia - the Lee family home during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The plantation's mansion complex and its surrounding grounds represents the center of study. The multi-disciplinary approach to archaeological research at Stratford combines anthropology, history, the physical sciences, examination of period documents and landscape architecture, and field investigation. Historic preservation at Stratford is addressed as well, including public interpretation and management of outdoor spaces. Particular topics receiving emphasis are the archaeologies of landscapes, plantations, and enslaved African Americans.

**Course Purposes:** This course will not transform students into archaeologists, but will create a critical awareness of archaeological field methods and how those are applied to interpretive problems and research questions. The knowledge gained applies to student backgrounds in anthropology, history, and historic preservation. The course also offers students a solid grounding in how to excavate and record in a controlled and informative manner that facilitates archaeological interpretations and that contributes to site-specific and regional research.

Understanding the nature of the archaeological record, combined with the ability to excavate and record properly are essential skills for all further archaeological endeavors. Within the overall archaeological process then, field archaeology, in coming after a properly developed research design, is a crucial stage for gathering a variety of data in an organized and purposeful fashion. These data form the basis for laboratory analysis and in turn, disseminated interpretations and conclusions found in reports and published articles. In plain language, if you do not “do it” right in the field, you cannot make it right in the lab or in the report.

Students are expected to take a leadership role in their education by asking questions and by participating in classroom and on-site discussions. In this way the field school takes on the nature of the student group that comprises it.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

**Readings and Equipment:** There are no required texts. Required readings will be made available through photocopies and are listed on the course syllabus. Students will be assigned responsibility for presenting and discussing readings on a weekly basis (see the guidelines/handout for discussions and talk with the instructor in advance). Discussions will contribute to students' grades and will occur at arranged times, typically Friday mornings.

The only required equipment is a 3-ring notebook (for field notes and handouts) and a 5-inch Marshalltown trowel.

**Daily Log/Field Journal:** Students will maintain a daily log similar in style and format to those kept by archaeological site supervisors concerning on-site activities and current interpretations. Further discussion of the journal's content will occur in class and in the field. This notebook should accompany students during all class hours and activities and, represents a critical aspect of the course (see **Grading** below).

**Field Hours:** The normal workday on-site will be from 8 AM to 4 PM, with all students remaining on-site until excavations are closed and tools and equipment are stored. Time will be arranged to accommodate field trips. Some evening hours may be required for other events.

**Field Trips:** Attendance is required for two scheduled field trips that provide opportunities to visit archaeological sites and organizations in the regional vicinity of Virginia and Maryland. The field trips typically occur in the course's last two weeks.

**Final Examination:** Given at the course's end, the exam first involves an oral discussion with the instructor concerning topics relevant to the readings and discussions, and to interpretations of the season's excavations. An artifact identification exercise also will comprise part of the examination.

**Grading:** The final grade is based on: (1) daily field work and participation (information exchanges, application of gained knowledge) – [40%]; (2) archaeological quality of the journal – [30%]; (3) presentation of assigned reading and participation in weekly discussions of readings – [20%]; and, (4) results of the final exam (oral discussion and artifact ID test – [10%]).

## **SCHEDULE & READINGS**

May 17 – May 21: Stratford as a Site, Landscape, and Community. Going into the Field & Getting to Know Dirt.

**Sanford:** Landscape, Change, and Community at Stratford Hall Plantation: An Archaeological and Cultural Perspective. *Quarterly Bulletin of the Archeological Society of Virginia*. 54(1):2-19 (1999).

**Stewart:** "Fieldwork Motivation and Design," pp. 37-54 from *Archaeology: Basic Field Methods* (2002).

**Montgomery:** "Good Old Dirt" and "Skin of the Earth," pp. 1-25 from *Dirt: The Erosion of Civilizations* (2007).

May 24 – May 28: African American Society, Material Life, and Landscapes.

**Calhoun:** Stratford's African-American Community.

**Heath and Bennett:** "The little Spots allow'd them": The Archaeological Study of African-American Yards. *Historical Archaeology* 34(2):38-55 (2000).

**Samford:** "Introduction," pp. 1-22, from *Subfloor Pits and the Archaeology of Slavery in Colonial Virginia* (2007).

### ***THERE IS NO CLASS ON MONDAY, MAY 31<sup>ST</sup> – MEMORIAL DAY***

June 1 – June 4: Recording and Interpreting the Archaeological Record.

**Stewart:** "The Archaeological Record and the Recognition of Evidence," pp. 19-35.

**Burke, Smith & Zimmerman:** "Finding Sites," pp. 67-94, from *The Archaeologist's Field Handbook, North American Edition* (2009).

**Kostro:** "Excavating Sites Unseen: The Example of Earthfast Buildings in the Colonial Chesapeake," pp. 183-199 from *Between Dirt and Discussion: Methods, Methodology, and Interpretation in Historical Archaeology*, edited by Steven N. Archer and Kevin M. Bartoy (2006).

June 7 – June 11: (More) Dirt & Distribution; Slavery (part 2).

**Montgomery:** "Westward Hoe," pp. 115-144 from *Dirt: The Erosion of Civilizations*.

**O'Connell et al.:** "Distribution of Refuse-Producing Activities at Hazda Residential Base Camps: Implications for Analyses of Archaeological Site Structure," pp. 61-76 from *The Interpretation of Archaeological Spatial Patterning*, edited by Ellen M Kroll and T. Douglas Price (1991).

**Samford:** "Subfloor Pits and Slavery in Colonial Virginia," pp. 174-189.

June 14 – June 18: Critiquing and Comparing Past and Present Interpretations at Stratford.

**Armes:** "The Second Master of Stratford," pp. 88-113 from *Stratford Hall: The Great House of the Lees* (1936).

**Sanford & Duncan:** Stratford's Changing Landscape—Coming to Terms with Complexity in a Unified Space (2005).

### **FINAL EXAMINATION**

Instructor Information:

@ home: Douglas W. Sanford: 540-373-9747

@ Mary Washington College: Office – Combs 133

Dept. of Historic Preservation 540-654-1314

e-mail: [dsanford@umw.edu](mailto:dsanford@umw.edu)

