

The Writing Centre

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WRITING PAPERS IN ARCHAEOLOGY

Archaeology is the study of the human past through material remains. Through artefacts, ecofacts, and other physical evidence for human activity, archaeologists attempt to reconstruct past societies and cultures. Archaeology papers differ from history papers in that they do not focus on written evidence; while historical sources may be incorporated into an argument, the paper should primarily use material remains as evidence.

DEVELOPING YOUR THESIS

Archaeology students have a unique challenge, because the material we study is not always available for us to examine firsthand. This makes it difficult to develop new ideas and conclusions surrounding this material. For many archaeology classes, the semester will culminate in a term paper on a topic of your choosing. Depending on the assignment, you may be able to conduct a literature review on a topic from a new perspective. If not, you may wish to ask yourself some of the questions below to kickstart your brainstorming. Within the scope of your course...

- What topic interests you the most?
- Is there an artefact style or raw material whose distribution has been well-documented, allowing you to infer something about the people who made/used it?
- Is there an archaeological method, theory, or practice with which you see an issue?
- Have previous archaeologists been overlooking a certain line of evidence or a certain group of people?
- Is there a well-established debate surrounding some aspect of the human past about which you have an opinion you can support?

CITATIONS AND FORMATTING

Depending on the nature of the course, archaeology papers will most often be written in one of two citation styles:

Society for American Archaeology (SAA)

Journals using this citation style are mainly focused on North American archaeology, or more broad discussions of archaeological methods, theory, and practice. Professors will often request this citation style regardless of the geographical or topical focus of your paper. You can find the complete SAA style guide by searching “style guide” on <https://www.saa.org/>. The basics are below:

- In-text citations include the author’s last name and the year. If using a direct quote, the page number is also included.
 - E.g. (Lipe and Varien 1999) or (Lipe and Varien 1999:204)
 - If there are more than two authors for the reference, “et al.” is used after the first author’s name in the in-text citation
- In the “References Cited” page, only the first author’s name is written with the last name first. Larger works (e.g. books, journals) appear in italics, while shorter works (e.g. articles) do not.
 - E.g. Ashmore, Wendy
1991 Site-Planning Principles and Concepts of Directionality among the Ancient Maya. *Latin American Antiquity* 2:199–226.

American Journal of Physical Anthropology (AJPA)

As its name suggests, this journal mainly publishes papers on human bioarchaeology, although this formatting style may be appropriate for some other aspects of archaeological science as well. A short summary of the citation and formatting guidelines can be found at https://laverne.libguides.com/ld.php?content_id=5102150. The citation basics are below:

- In-text citations are similar to SAA on a basic level. They include the author’s last name and the year of publication, and “et al.” is used with more than two authors. In AJPA, however, the names and years are separated by a comma.
 - E.g. (Hutchinson, 1999)
- The References page follows CBE (Council of Biology Editors) citation guidelines, which are summarized at https://mc.libguides.com/ld.php?content_id=12579111. Main title of cited works are not italicized or enclosed in quotations, and pieces of information within the entry are separated by periods. Many journal titles can also be abbreviated within the reference.

- E.g. Fagan R. 1992. Characteristics of college student volunteering. *J Vol Admin* 11(1): 5-18.