

Master's Degree Exam Questions in Archaeology, Department of Anthropology, University of Utah**Theoretical**

1. Outline the history of archaeological thought in North America. How have these historical developments given rise to the diversity of perspectives operating in archaeology today?
2. How did Cultural Historical archaeology define culture? What were the major mechanisms for cultural change? Discuss in detail with substantive examples.
3. Lewis Binford made a substantial impact on American archaeological thought. Identify what you consider to be his major theoretical contribution and discuss its impact on contemporary archaeological practice.
4. Discuss the postprocessual critique of scientific archaeology. What are the most important questions raised by this critique? How would you answer them? What are their implications for anthropological archaeology? For anthropology in general?
5. Behavioral ecology has become a central theory in archaeological science. Discuss key successes of this approach as well as the difficulties involved in applying it in archaeological contexts.
6. Choose one major foraging model used by archaeologists (e.g., prey choice, central place foraging, ideal free distribution). Outline the basics of the model (e.g., question, scale, assumptions, goals, trade-offs, etc.) and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the approach using detailed examples.
7. The behavioral models needed to reconstruct the past must be developed and tested in the present. True or false? Why?
8. Archaeologists are deeply divided on the question of whether ethnoarchaeology is needed to interpret the past. Define ethnoarchaeology and explain this division, providing a rationale for both sides.
9. Some researchers assume that native peoples lived "in harmony" with nature and had little or no impact on the distributions and abundances of plants and animals. Is this position consistent with evolutionary expectations of human behavior? With ethnographic observations of hunter-gatherers? With archaeological reconstructions of prehistoric foraging? Under what conditions might human behavior appear consistent with this assumption?
10. Critique evolutionary ecology from the point of view of another, prominent theoretical perspective (e.g., Marxism, functionalism, cultural ecology, structuralism, evolutionary psychology, dual-inheritance theory). What are the most important weaknesses, or points of argument that arise from your discussion?
11. Critique a theoretical framework used to explain human behavior (e.g. dialectical materialism, structuralism, functionalism, cultural ecology, evolutionary psychology, dual-inheritance theory, NOT evolutionary ecology). Be sure to include a discussion of both its perceived strengths and weaknesses. Use specific case examples to illustrate your argument.

Topical

12. Outline the major features of global climate across the Miocene, Pliocene, Pleistocene and Holocene. Explain the processes that drive major climatic shifts between these epochs.
13. It is often suggested that long term changes in global climate structured the course of human evolution. Evaluate this suggestion by examining major developments in the Hominin lineage relative to changes in African climate and environment.
14. What are some of the more widely cited explanations for the evolution of the genus *Homo*? What are their respective strengths and weaknesses?
15. Explain the major transitions in skeletal morphology and material culture from the Lower to Upper Paleolithic in Europe.
16. Modern humans rapidly expanded out of Africa about 60±10kya. Choose one major colonization event (e.g., Europe, Australia, North America), detail the current state of research and explain the timing and tempo of occupation.
17. Outline the current state of knowledge on Quaternary megafaunal extinctions in North America. What is the most significant driver of this extinction event?
18. What are some of the more widely cited explanations for the development of agriculture? What are their respective strengths and weaknesses?
19. Outline the sequence of events leading to the emergence or adoption of agriculture in a particular geographic setting. How does that temporal sequence inform archaeologists about the drivers of this economic transition?
20. What social institutions would necessarily develop with agriculture? Discuss citing specific examples from the literature.
21. Explaining the emergence of hierarchy and social complexity are central in American archaeology. What are "complex societies"? How they can be identified archaeologically? How is their development linked to human population density, health, and subsistence? Use well studied cases from the Americas to illustrate your answer.
22. What are some of the more widely cited explanations for the development of the state? What are their respective strengths and weaknesses?
23. What is the most interesting problem in the Holocene archaeology of a particular geographic region (e.g., Great Basin, California, Mesoamerica, Southern Africa, Arid Australia)? Discuss the problem in detail, review the current state of research and outline a potential solution.

Analytical and Methodological

24. What do archaeologists mean by "settlement patterns?" What are the major advances that have been made in this field over the past several decades? What assumptions underlie behavioral reconstructions based on these patterns?
25. The reconstruction of site "seasonality" is a common goal in archaeology. Discuss how analyses of archaeological vertebrate materials have been (or could be) used to this end.
26. Discuss the most commonly used quantitative measures of relative abundance in analyses of archaeological faunas. What are the strengths and weaknesses of these measures?
27. Attempts to reconstruct prehistoric "community health" from human skeletons have been hindered by a range of biases and limitations inherent to the data (notably, the osteological paradox). Discuss some of these. How have they been addressed (or not)? What do the problems associated with osteological data remind us about archaeological data in general?
28. How has ancient DNA been used to solve an otherwise unsolvable archaeological problem? Discuss in detail with reference to recent research.
29. Describe two archaeobotanical methods and how they have been used to reconstruct past subsistence. Give specific examples.
30. Outline a specific method used to reconstruct past environments. Provide an example where using this method significantly altered or added to the explanation of the archaeological record.
31. Stable isotope analyses can be used for both geolocation and dietary reconstruction. How do these methods work? Provide three examples and outline the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches to reconstructing past human behavior.
32. What is the most interesting thing archaeologists can learn about human behavior through an analysis of lithic material? What are the limits of this approach? Discuss with reference to specific case studies.
33. Autocorrelation (i.e., Galton's Problem) is common to spatial, temporal, biological and cultural data, but is often overlooked in the analysis of archaeological materials. Define the problem with reference to a specific case study and outline how it can be avoided (or used).
34. The implementation of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) fundamentally changed the character of archaeology in the United States. Summarize the key provisions of the NHPA and discuss its influence on contemporary archaeology.
35. The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) was passed in 1990. What objects are covered by NAGPRA and how are those objects defined? What is meant by "cultural affiliation" and how is that term employed in NAGPRA?