

TUTORIAL: Primitive Skills in the Modern World

Fall 2003

Prof. John Whittaker

Class: T Th 8:00-10:00 Goodnow 206

Office: Goodnow 207 Extension 3447

Office Hours: MWF 8:30-10:00.

Modern popular culture is seeing a revival of interest in primitive skills: traditional technologies such as flintknapping, archery, weaving and basketry, fire-making, and tracking. We will combine practical experience to learn a couple of simple pre-industrial technologies with reading and writing to explore questions raised by the term “primitive skills.” What is our notion of primitive, and why does “the primitive” appeal to people today? What is skill? How are skills learned and differently valued in the context of our culture?

One purpose of the tutorial is of course to help you learn skills: the scholarly skills of finding information, reading critically, writing clearly, and discussing logically. As much as possible, class sessions will focus on discussion of readings, activities, and the written assignments rather than lecture. Accordingly, it is your responsibility to come to class, and to come prepared: do assigned reading and writing before the class for which it is listed, think about it, and arrive with ideas to talk about.

Grading will be based on six short written assignments, an oral presentation, and class participation.

Texts

Seton, Earnest Thompson

1962 (1903) Two Little Savages. New York: Dover Publications Inc.

Blankenship, Bart, and Robin Blankenship

1996 Earth Knack: Stone Age Skills for the 21st Century. Layton, UT: Gibbs Smith.

McPhee, John

1982 Survival of the Bark Canoe. New York: Noonday Press.

1 Sunday 8/24 1:00-3:00

Who are we, what are we doing?

Sign up for advising

Assign I: Essay on an artifact

(Monday 8/25 and Tues 8/26)

Individual advising meetings

4:00-5:00 Introduction to Atlatls)**Tuesday - communal dinner 5:30 at 1517 Elm St**

Thurs 8/28

What is skill? What is primitive? How archaeologists look at technology.
 Discuss beginning of Blankenship, Chadwick article
 DUE: Assignment I
 READ: begin Blankenship
 READ: Chadwick, John 1987 Linear B and Related Scripts. Berkeley: University of California Press. (Chapter 7: The Phaistos Disk).

2 Tues 9/2

Technology and meaning.
 Assignment I returned for rewrite.
 Writing handouts
 READ: Allen, Frederick 1995 Woolly Mammoth. Invention and Technology 11(1):4-5.
 READ: Wohleber, Curt 2003 Duct Tape. Invention and Technology 19(1):12-13.
 READ: Gibson, Thomas D. 1996 Capping the Bottle. Invention and Technology 11(4): 64.
 READ: Matthei, Harry 1997 The Tin Garage. Invention and Technology 13(1): 64.

Thurs 9/4

DUE: Assignment I rewritten
 Film: Eskimo or other
 READ: Erikson, Kai 1989 On Sociological Prose. Yale Review 78:25-38.
 READ: "Oops, About Writing an Effective Letter to an Employer"

3 Tues 9/9

Technology and Skill: Discuss film.
 Discuss Assignment I.
 READ: Whittaker, John 2002 Coaching the Atlatl: How a Spearthrower Throws a Spear. Grinnell College web page. URL <http://web.grinnell.edu/anthropology/Faculty/johnw.html> (visited 8/10/2003).

Thurs 9/11

Atlatl Practice (meet at the Atlatl Range)

FRIDAY 12 leave for Cahokia after classes (4:30)

SATURDAY 13 atlatl event at Cahokia

SUNDAY 14 return from Cahokia

4 Tues 9/16

Discuss Cahokia trip
 Academic Honesty exercises
 Handout on citations
 Assign II: The anthropological witness: description and interpretation of events

READ: Johnson, Nicholas 2002 Facing the Raging Cow. Scarlet and Black, May 3, 2002: 12.

READ: Geni, Joe 2002 Men's Tennis Moves on to MWC Tourney. Scarlet and Black, May 3, 2002: 11.

READ: Gmelch, George 1971 Baseball Magic. In Conformity and Conflict. James Spradley and David MacCurdy eds. Pp. 346-352. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company.

READ: Wooley, Sir Leonard 1962 As I Seem to Remember. George Allen and Unwin, London. pp. 32-34.

Thurs 9/18 (JW leave for Ft O after class)

Finish Academic Honesty

Discuss articles

5 Tues 9/23

Finish and discuss Blankenship (select some skill to learn)

DUE: Assignment II

Thurs 9/25

Discuss Assignment II.

Fire making.

READ: Blankenship pp12-31

READ: Baugh, Dick 1999 The Miracle of Fire by Friction. In Primitive Technology: A Book of Earth Skills. David Wescott, ed. Pp. 32-33. Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith Publisher.

READ: Warren, Robert Penn 1989 On Reading Fiction. In New and Selected Essays. New York: Random House.

READ: Begin Seton, Two Little Savages

6 Tues 9/30

Skill, technology, and symbolism – discuss symbols

Fire

READ: London, Jack. 1953 To Build a Fire. In Best Short Stories of Jack London. Garden City: Garden City Books.

Thurs 10/2

Discuss Two Little Savages

Assign III: Literary analysis, a character in Two Little Savages

7 Tues 10/7

DUE: Assignment III due

Finish discussion of Two Little Savages

READ: Eiseley, Loren 1971 The Night Country. Charles Scribners Sons, New York. pp. 3-12.

Thurs 10/9

Field Trip: Nettle harvest and other gathering

8 Tues 10/14

Discuss Assignment III

Cordage

READ: Blankenship 32-65

Thurs 10/16

Food

READ: Blankenship pp. 126-139

READ: Whittaker, J. n.d. Why My Office Stinks. Unpublished ms.

FALL BREAK 10/18-10/26**9 Tues 10/28**

LIBRARY: Intro to web and related resources with Jenn Green

Assign IV: Article abstracts

READ: Heizer, Robert F. 1970 The Anthropology of Prehistoric Great Basin Human Coprolites. In Science in Archaeology, 3rd edition. D.Brothwell and E.Higgs eds. pp. 244-250. New York: Praeger Publishers.

READ: Madsen, David 1989 A Grasshopper in Every Pot. Natural History 7():22-24.

Thurs 10/30

DUE: Assignment IV

Discuss Madsen, Heizer articles, abstracts, food

10 Tues 11/4

Flintknapping, demonstration

READ: Blankenship 66-89

READ: Whittaker, J. Flintknapping: Making and Understanding Stone Tools. Austin: University of Texas Press. (Pages 127-166)

Thurs 11/6

Flintknapping

11 Tues 11/11

Discuss knapping, learning

READ:

Assign V: Review a Web Site

Thurs 11/13

DUE: Assignment V

Discuss webs, internets, society

12 Tues 11/18

Discuss Assignment V

READ: McPhee, Survival of the Bark Canoe, pp.1-42

Assign VI: Learn, demonstrate, and describe a primitive skill

Thurs 11/20 NO CLASS AAA meeting**13 Tues 11/25**

READ: McPhee pp. 43-83

Thurs 11/27 NO CLASS THANKSGIVING**14 Tues 12/2**

READ: McPhee pp. 84- end

Thurs 12/4

Oral Reports

15 Tues 12/9

Oral Reports

Thurs12/11

Oral Reports

Assignment VI due