



Salish Archaeology in Western Washington

A mystery to ponder

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Academy for Life Long Learning

Three two-hour sessions:

TUEs: MAR 6 / MAR 13 / MAR 20
10 AM to NOON

St. Luke's Education Center
3333 Squalicum Parkway

Everything in **BLUE** is an active link.

Brief course description: [eMail the instructor](#)

How do archaeologists identify and trace prehistoric cultures? The answer is fundamental for interpreting prehistoric remains. Around Puget Sound, traditional archaeological thinking tells us we have two sets of cultures, one living in the foothills and the other living on the shore. But the evidence from history, linguistics and ethnology suggests only one set of cultures, each occupying a bit of the shore and the adjacent hills and river valleys. How can we resolve these views? What does this mean for archaeology?

If you or someone you know have artifacts from the Pacific Northwest, bring them to class to find out what they are and what they mean.

Expanded Course Outline [Return to Home Page](#)

Society & Culture / Culture Area / Culture Depth

Anthropological Concepts of Society & Culture

Culture viewed as a series of domains, e.g.:

- Social structure & organization
- Economic structure & organization
- Material culture

The concept of the culture area

- Northwest Coast Culture Area

- The Plateau Culture Area

The concept of "cultural depth"

- The case of the Salish and glattochronology

Culture / Style / Function

Function = physical/economic function

Style = intangible/social function

Historical cultures defined by style

Archaeological cultures defined by function + style

Differences reflect nature of available information

Display frequency vs survival frequency

Archaeology and Prehistory

Prehistory is the story we tell

Archaeology is how we unearth the story

Prehistory is the story of societies without writing

Prehistoric Societies / Prehistoric Cultures

Continuum of social/cultural complexity

Continuum of economic adaptations

Prehistoric societies largely invisible

Archaeology focuses on prehistoric cultures

What is a prehistoric culture?

Physical remains to work with ...

- stone = most often preserved

- original site structure

- bone

- shell

- wood, fiber, plants

- skin, integument = rarely preserved

Geographic distributions of ...

- types of archaeological sites (settlement)

- subsistence remains (economies)

- burials/cemetaries

- artifacts (tools) & debris from tool making

So a prehistoric culture is a geographic association of ...

- settlement, economic, burial & artifact patterns

A prehistoric culture may represent ...

- a single society = least common outcome

a closely related group of societies, or
an entire culture area = most common outcome
Sometimes prehistoric cultures include societies that are
very different. Studying such cases can help us better
understand the prehistoric record.

Tool Form reflects Style and Function

The tool and its components
The process of compositization
Sorting out functional and stylistic attributes of tools
Tools as cultural markers
Examples using stone tools

The Problem in the Western Puget Sound Basin

Statement of the problem
Graphic comparison of a cultural marker: the arrowhead

The Geographic Stage

The Northwest Coast
Circum-Pacific conveyor belt
Western Intermontane Plateau
Interior corridors, rivers & passes
We will come back to this geography time and again.

Limitations / Scope of Comparisons

Archaeology's fragmentary puzzle
Geology & Site Preservation:
Basin, Foothills, Plateau compared
Raw material preservation compared for results of:
Displacement on faults & changes in sea level
Cycles of riverine erosion and deposition
Preservation of economic activities
evidence for hunting compared
evidence for fishing compared

Resource Diversity / Technological Specialization

Puget Sound and its shores
Differences among river basins
Fraser, Skagit, Snoqualmie, others compared

Systematic Comparisons

Shore / Delta / East Foothills / West Foothills / Plateau

What Do the Comparisons Tell Us?

Hypotheses Consistent with the Observations

What We Need to Test the Hypotheses

Expect to see a few more additions and elaborations as the
presentation is refined.

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