Landscape Archaeology
ANTH 4953 - Spring 2016
Tuesday/Thursday, 12:00 pm - 1:15 pm
Instructor: Dr. Asa Randall

The image of archaeology conjured in the popular imagination is excavation of particular archaeological sites. However, people living today and in the past were rarely confined to isolated places. This life beyond one place is the subject of study covered by “landscape” archaeology; or, the study of how humans experienced, moved through, and modified their environments, and how they responded to climate change. This course will provide you with a background in the study of ancient landscapes by considering the method and theory of landscape archaeology, informed by case studies from throughout the globe and through history. Because it is not possible to excavate an entire landscape, we will learn how to reconstruct past landscapes from ground survey and regional synthesis, the analysis of past ecologies (geoarchaeology), and identifying archaeological sites and important environmental features from the air (aerial pictures) and space (satellites imagery). We will consider how different kinds of societies (hunter-gatherers, farmers, city dwellers) settled into and modified landscapes in different ways. We will also consider the significance of landscapes, or how societies in the past created different socially important places such as monumental or sacred landscapes. Finally, we will also examine how past societies made themselves resilient or vulnerable to climate change, and whether these past examples can help us understand contemporary climate change. This course is of value to anyone interested in how people transform environments.