

# FIELD METHODS IN ROCK ART

May 17<sup>th</sup> - June 4<sup>th</sup> 2010

6 hours credit - undergraduate

3 hours credit - graduate

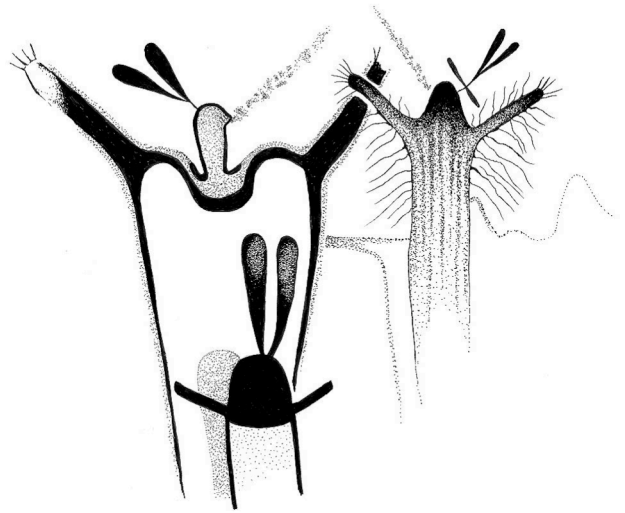
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Since the days that our ancestors began painting on walls of rock shelters, carving totems, and telling stories, the communication of knowledge and beliefs about the world through art has been vital to the development and continuation of self and society. Of the many things our ancestors left to our modern culture, none is more evocative or inherently interesting than their rock art - the engravings and paintings found on cave and cliff walls.

*Field Methods in Rock Art* will be taught at SHUMLA, which is located 50 miles west of Del Rio, Texas, within the Lower Pecos Canyonlands. The Lower Pecos contains hundreds of rock shelters, most of which contain archaeological deposits and many of which contain some of the finest examples of prehistoric rock art in the world dating to over 4,000 years old. No other region in the Americas is known to contain so many well-preserved hunter-gatherer sites in such a small area.

## **Course Description:**

Field methods are the underpinning of the science of archeology. Rock art has posed a unique challenge to the field archeologist because, unlike other artifacts, it cannot be excavated, labeled, bagged, and transported back to the lab for analysis. This course will examine rock art as an integral component of the archeological record. Students will be trained in field methods to record rock art in a region that has the highest density of rock art sites in North America. Students will gain first-hand experience recording rock art sites through photography, field sketches, mapping, and written inventories. These field methods are designed to generate a visual and written description of the art, which can be used to infer and explain past human behavior.

Lectures will expose students to methods of interpretation and analysis and to the theoretical underpinnings of cognitive archeology. Lectures will be provided by the course instructor and by archeologists and anthropologists specializing in the archeology of the Lower Pecos, hunting and gathering lifeways, expressive culture, and foraging adaptations.

## Course Objectives:

- ∞ Students will learn how to establish a field research design and field data collection protocols.
- ∞ Students will learn field methods for recording rock art, including slide and digital photography, mapping, sketching, and written inventories.
- ∞ Students will learn laboratory procedures, record-keeping, cataloguing, and records curation for rock art data.
- ∞ Students will be able to analyze rock art data in order to formulate and test hypotheses.
- ∞ Students will compare and contrast current theories regarding the meaning and function of the Lower Pecos rock art.
- ∞ Students will become familiar with the foraging adaptation, hunter-gatherer belief systems, and the archeology of the Lower Pecos region.
- ∞ Students will have prepared a detailed field journal for future reference and research ideas.

## Course Structure:

The course will be taught at the SHUMLA campus and at archeological sites in the region. Since this is a field methods course, the majority of class time will be spent on-site recording rock art sites. Weather and site access will dictate, to some degree, the daily schedule.

## Textbooks and Required Reading:

- 1) *Rock Art of the Lower Pecos*, by Carolyn E. Boyd, Texas A&M University Press, 2003
- 2) *Introduction to Rock Art Research*, by David Whitley, Left Coast Press, 2005
- 3) Selected articles and book chapters will be assembled into a reading packet available online and at SHUMLA (it is included in the cost of the course).

## Evaluation Methods:

Several instruments will be used to assess achievement of the course objectives listed above. Evaluation methods, general proportions, and considerations include:

- ∞ Participation in classroom and on-site discussions (10%)
- ∞ Quality and quantity of rock art data collection, including legibility, clarity, attention to detail, accuracy, and observational prowess (50%)
- ∞ Two Projects - Field Journal (25%) and Oral Presentation (15%)

## Project Requirements:

**Project 1: Field Journal.** Each student will be expected to keep a field journal in order to 1) record observations from an informed perspective, 2) organize thoughts and formulate questions, 3) identify challenges and note possible solutions, 4) record potential hypotheses and the reasoning behind the hypotheses, and 5) identify areas for future research. In addition to being a good source of data, field journals, if done correctly, challenge the archeologist to be more OBSERVANT and to THINK critically. Required journal entry guidelines will be provided.

**Project 2: Oral Presentation.** Each student will be required to make an oral presentation on a designated journal article or book chapter. In the oral presentation, the student will present the material contained in the reading assignment followed by a critical evaluation of the article or book chapter. All students will be expected to have read the article and be prepared to discuss the reading following the presentation.

## **Student Eligibility:**

Student must have approval from the course instructor and department chairperson. Participation in this course also requires that the student be in very good physical condition and be able to hike across rugged terrain in high temperatures. Access to some of the sites will involve steep climbs and descents, boulder-hopping, and hikes through dense, thorny brush.

## **Accommodations:**

Students will be staying at SHUMLA for the duration of the course. Lodging and all meals will be provided by the School. Students will stay in large canvas cabin tents that are equipped with cots, a small table, and chairs. SHUMLA facilities include restrooms and showers, kitchen, covered pavilion, office, and washer/dryer.

## **Supplies:**

Supplies for the course will be provided by SHUMLA. This includes the textbook, reading packet, rock art recording kit, and field journal.

### Students should bring the following items:

- Small/medium backpack
- Hat with wide brim and bandanna or neckerchief
- Sunscreen - a MUST HAVE, the higher the SPF, the better
- Chapstick with sunscreen
- Camera (highly recommended, but optional)
- Sleeping pad
- Bedding - sheet and blanket or sleeping bag, pillow optional
- Bath towel and washcloth
- Hand and body lotion
- Personal toiletries
- Bag for dirty clothes, etc.
- Insect repellent
- Poncho or raincoat
- Long pants and long-sleeved shirts
- Shorts and short sleeve shirts
- Sturdy boots for hiking; comfortable shoes for around camp, water shoes for the river (not flip flops, they do not stay on your feet in rushing water)
- Lightweight jacket
- Sunglasses
- Flashlight (essential) and lantern (battery powered)
- Binoculars (highly recommended, but optional)

### Students are NOT allowed to bring:

- Illegal drugs and controlled substances
- Firearms
- Animals/pets
- Alcohol

**Smoking in the tents or camp area is not permitted.**

Possession of any of these items will not be tolerated and will lead to immediate expulsion and loss of course credit.