ANTH 150: EXPLORING ANTHROPOLOGY: ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE FUTURE
Offered: Fall 2016
INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Quentin Mackie
-NEW COURSE-
COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

“We drive into the future using only our rearview mirror to guide us” – Marshall McLuhan.

Archaeologists study human diversity over time and space primarily through the material remains people leave behind – their stuff. As such, archaeologists have an unusual perspective on human life and culture. In this course we will learn about the strengths and weaknesses of the archaeological worldview through the device of thinking about future archaeologists’ perspective on the present day. What evidence of present-day human life will be knowable 500 years from now? Or 500,000 years? 5,000,000 years? What of our stuff will survive the longest, and how might it be interpreted? Using examples such as time capsules, green burials, survivalist stashes, lost shipping containers, the Rosetta Disk, and the Voyager probes, we will discuss what of the contemporary material world will have lasting impact or provide durable evidence into the deep future, and perhaps find that our leftovers speak louder and more clearly than we know, or might like.

It is a truism in archaeology that, “The Present is the Future of the Past”. By looking at our world through the lens of the future, we hope to gain insight into current conditions and the sometimes futile attempts to predict and pre-adapt to unknown, future events. We can then apply this insight onto archaeological case studies, where people were living, as are we all, in ignorance of what their future, our present, might hold.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT
Readings from a variety of sources will be assigned, and through assignments and class discussion the integration of material from a number of interdisciplinary and international perspectives sources will be emphasized. Students will gain an appreciation of archaeological method and theory, especially site formation processes, survivorship bias, and interpretive dilemmas.