

PhD COURSE:

ARCHAEOLOGICAL THEORY: THE PHILOSOPHICAL LEGACY AND CURRENT CHALLENGES

- *Location:* Sandbjerg Gods, Sandbjergvej 102, DK-6400 Sønderborg, www.sandbjerg.dk
- *Date:* October (21) 22-24, 2009 (arrival on October 21)
- *Organiser:* The Danish PhD School in Archaeology. Professor Bjørnar Olsen is responsible organizer
- *Course format:* Lectures by invited teachers; papers and discussions of pre-circulated papers by participating doctoral students
- *Work load:* Participation is estimated to the equivalent of 5 ECTS (60 ETCS = one year), or one month of full-time work

Throughout the last two decades archaeological theory has become more diverse and perhaps more ambiguous. The old divide between processualists and post-processualists is becoming increasingly more irrelevant as new agendas and new concerns are facing the archaeological community. Taken for granted dualities that have set the agenda for much former reasoning and debates, such as understanding vs. explanation, humanities vs. natural sciences, art vs. scholarship, are also claimed to have been blurred, transcended, or lost their significance. In other words, well into a new millennium we are facing a theoretical terrain that seems very different from the ones conditioning previous archaeologies.

In this course we will take a fresh look at theory in archaeology. Invited lecturers are asked to discuss what theoretical challenges are facing the discipline today and to consider if our current theories - and approaches to theorizing - are relevant to these challenges. For example, is archaeology to be conceived as a "human science" and does the long hailed *Verstehen*/interpretative perspective still constitutes a relevant epistemological framework for current archaeological reasoning? Should archaeology continue to engage with grand theories, even try to build a "core theory", or should this be eschewed in favor of theoretical bricolage, eclecticism and pragmatic approaches? In what way does the buzz about a "return to things" in cultural studies and the social sciences affect theorizing in the "discipline of things" itself?

Another relevant set of questions relate to the credibility and consumption of theory in current archaeology. Is Ian Hodder (still) right in his optimistic turn-of-the-century claim that archaeologists “are more than ever aware of the theoretical underpinnings of all data recovery, description and sequencing, and ... more than ever aware of the diversity of theoretical approaches being explored” (Hodder 2002)¹? Or are the sceptics more accurate in their diagnoses that the theory increasingly consumed is trivialized, watered-out and has lost its critical edge?

This course invites PhD-students to present papers that outlines and discuss theoretical perspective in relation to their own fields of study. While relating to relevant issues mentioned above we would like to see reflections on how the chosen theoretical framework enrich and help the particular study being conducted. Do we need explicit theorizing? What difference does theory make? What grounds *your* choice of theory? The atmosphere will be informal and constructive and an international panel of four scholars will give lectures and act as advisors and discussants. Student presentations will be pre-circulated and discussed in plenum with teachers acting as main discussants.

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The Danish Research School in Archaeology provides the financial and organisational frame for the PhD course. PhD students who would like to participate in the symposium under the above described conditions are asked to submit a short application to the School secretary Jytte Ringtved (farkjr@hum.au.dk) containing the following parts:

1. Information about start and end dates of dissertation
2. Reasons why this course is important for the dissertation work
3. Title of the planned presentation and an abstract

Deadline for application: **April 5, 2009**

Deadline for the submission of paper for pre-circulation: **September 12, 2009**

TEACHERS

Julian Thomas, University of Manchester, UK

Ewa Domanska, Poznan University, Poland

Brit Solli, University of Oslo, Norway

Bjørnar Olsen, University of Tromsø, Norway

¹ Hodder, I. 2002. Archaeological Theory. In Cunliffe, B., Davies, W. & Renfrew, C. (eds.). *Archaeology: The Widening Debate*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.