Archaeology of the Caucasus in Three Acts

I. COURSE OVERVIEW
This course explores the long-term archaeological record of the Caucasus from the appearance of the first hominins in the Pleistocene to Antiquity. In this class we approach this long history as a narrative in three Acts. After an orientation on the history of archaeological research in the region, we shall begin with the deep prehistory of the region, the arrival of the first Homo sapiens, and the appearance of the first farming villages in Act I. In Act II, we will tackle the appearance of life in the highlands and the cultural mosaic of the Chalcolithic period, demographic shift and large-scale migrations in the Early Bronze Age, and the appearance of nomadism and social inequality, and the “Indo-European Question” in the Middle–Late Bronze Age. In Act III, we will conclude our journey with a discussion on the first states and empires, and the genesis of the modern national identities of the Caucasus in Antiquity. In each Act, students will be introduced to the most important sites and finds of each period. We will also discuss the cultural dynamics and forces of cultural change that shaped the Caucasus in each Act from various technological, climatic, economic, and social perspectives. Finally, as we tackle the critical questions and ongoing debates in the scholarship of each time period, we will ground the discussions through comparison with the archaeological record of Mesopotamia, the greater Near East, and eastern Europe.

II. REQUIRED TEXTS

In addition to the textbook, weekly articles will be made available online.

III. COURSE STRUCTURE
This is a weekly seminar. Each seminar is divided into an initial lecture followed by discussions. The lecture, which complements Antonio Sagona’s book, will provide the basis and foundations of the course subject matter. Each week, the lecture will be followed by an in-class discussion based on the articles. These discussions will allow us to unpack the lecture information and engage with the readings and the most fundamental issues and questions related to the topic of the week.

IV. REQUIRED GROUP ASSIGNMENTS
There are three required assignments for the class: one-page thematic summaries, three brief presentations, and a final term paper. These three assignments are interlinked and have built-in redundancies, so that your thematic summaries will lay the ground work for your three presentation, which together are the building blocks of your term paper. These assignments will be done in pairs or in small groups assignments. Detailed instructions for each of the three assignments will be provided on the first day of the seminar.

— One-Page Thematic Summaries (6 summaries total)
Each pair or group is responsible for choosing one of several themes on the instruction sheet. Some of the themes include: technology and material culture, subsistence adaptations, rituals and religions, settlement patterns, architecture and site formation processes, etc. Each group/pair will then research their particular theme related to the periods covered in each Act, using the scholarly sources, including primary sources and site reports.
The summaries must present, in a single page, the type of archaeological evidence for each theme, with reference to specific sites and datasets. Naturally, the available archaeological record and research for some themes will be scant in Act I, but as we progress with the semester and as the literature becomes more extensive, you will learn to become more selective in your approach. I will check with each pair/group on a regular basis to make sure that they are on track and, to lend any assistance that might be needed in navigating the literature.

— **Brief Presentations (3 presentations total)**

The last day of each Act will be dedicated to in-class presentations. Pairs/groups are responsible for making enough copies of their summaries for everyone in the seminar. Each group must then provide a PowerPoint presentation (10-15 minutes long, depending on the number of groups) on the salient patterns and topics related to its theme and the time periods covered in each Act.

— **Collaborate Term Papers**

Your theme of choice, your summaries and, your presentations are the building blocks of your term paper, though you must choose your specific topic in consultation with me. In this research paper (no more than 20-pages long, double spaced), you will write a narrative that explores your theme, its archaeological record, and the theoretical, analytical and methodological challenges associated with it. You may choose to synthesize the data across a broad time frame, or you may choose to pursue a more specific question. **Pairs/groups that produce excellent and thoughtful papers, will have the option to work with me after the semester to turn their paper into a collaborative and publishable manuscript**

V. **COURSE OUTLINE**

9/3 – Introduction

9/10 – Geography, Politics, and History of Archaeology

Dolukhanov, P. M.


Gadjiev, M., Kohl, P.L., and R.G. Magomedov


Khatchadourian, L.


Kohl, P.L.


Sagona, A.


Smith, A.


**DUE ON 9/10: name of group/pair members and their themes of choice**
ACT I. Peopling and Settlement of the Caucasus

9/17 – Scene 1: Arrival of the First Hominins
Doronichev, V.B.
Doronchiev, V.B. and L. Golovanova
2011 Earlier human occupations at Dmanisi (Georgia Caucasus) dated to 1.85–1.78 Ma. *PNAS* 108(26):10432–10436
Sagona, A.

9/24 – Scene 2: Neanderthals and the Middle Paleolithic
Bar-Yosef, O., Belfer-Cohen, A., and D.S. Adler
Golovanova, L.V., and V.B. Doronchivev
Pinhasi, R., Higham, T.F.G., Golovanova, L.V., and V.B. Doronchivev
Sagona, A.

**DUE ON 9/24: First one-page summary**

10/1 – Scene 3: Arrival of *Homo sapiens* and the “Last” Hunters
Kushnareva, K.K.
Leonova, E.
Lioubline, V.P.


Sagona, A.
2017 *The Archaeology of the Caucasus: From Earliest Settlements to the Iron Age*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, Ch. 2 (pp. 66–84)

10/8 – Scene 4: Neolithization and the “First” Farmers
Chataigner, C., Badalyan R., and M. Arimura

Hovsepyan, R., and G. Willcox

Kotova, N.

Sagona, A.

10/15 – Student Presentations *(Second one-page summary due)*

ACT II. Upheavals, Transformations, and Migrations

10/22 – Scene 1: Environmental and Demographic Shift in the Chalcolithic Period
Areshian, G., Gasparyan, B., Avetisyan, P.S., and R. Pinhasi

Lyonnet, B.

Marro, C.

Ollivier, V., Fontugne, M., Lyonnet, B., and C. Chataigner
2015 Base level changes, river avulsions and Holocene human settlement dynamics in the Caspian Sea area *Quaternary International* 395:79–94.

Sagona, A.
10/29 – Scene 2: Cultural Turnover in the Early Bronze Age

Batiuk, S, and M. Rothman

Hovsepyan, R.

Kohl, P.L.

Palumbi G., and C. Chataigner
2014 The Kura-Araxes Culture from the Caucasus to Iran, Anatolia and the Levant: Between unity and diversity, a synthesis. Paléorient (40)2:247–260.

Sagona A.

Wilkinson, T.C.

DUE ON 10/29: Third one-page summary


Anthony D.W.

Mallory, J. P.

Puturidze, M.

Sagona, A.

Smith, A.T.

11/12 – Student Presentations (Fourth one-page summary due)
11/19 – Scene 1: Scythians and the Steppe in the Early Iron Age
Khazanov, A. M.

11/26 – Scene 2: Urartian Empire
Badalyan, R. S., A. T. Smith, and P. S. Avetisyan
Burney, C., and D.M. Lang

Hammer, E.
Smith, A. T.
Zimansky, P.

**DUE ON 11/26: Fifth one-page summary**
Nov 27–Dec 1 Thanksgiving Recess

12/3 – Scene 3: Caucasus between Persia and Europe

Garsoian, N.

Khatchadourian, L.

Knauss, F.
2006 Ancient Persia and the Caucasus. Iranica Antiqua 41:79–118.

Ter-Martirossov, F.I.

Toumanoff, C.

12/10 – Student Presentations (*sixth one-page summary due*)

*Final papers due during the final examination period*