

ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE CITY OF BROTHERLY LOVE

in association with

HERITAGE WEST



WEST PHILADELPHIA COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECT

Our Information

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Course Structure

This is an off-campus excavation-based course that meets Fridays 10am-5pm. On rain days, we will process excavated artifacts in the lab.



Archaeology is not just ancient history. Historical archaeology provides new ways to understand the recent past through everyday objects, memories of living community members, and forgotten historical records. These sources of knowledge each provide different perspectives about the past. Archaeological excavations uncover artifacts that help reconstruct aspects of daily life. Community members offer stories about specific people, events, and places not recorded in newspapers or census records. Historical records like old maps show how houses and roads in a neighborhood changed through time. Community archaeologists collaborate with community members to bring these sources of knowledge together and tell local histories that are often overlooked and rarely recorded in history books. Community archaeology can also help us understand the present. The pursuit of racial and social justice among communities today is tied to histories of gentrification and systemic racism that historical archaeology works to explore, interpret, and challenge.

Course Objectives

This course introduces the methods and theories of community archaeology through a hands-on field school model. Students will read archaeologies of Philadelphia, histories of gentrification and forced removal, and discussions of community archaeology as anthropological intervention. At the same time, they will gain skill with techniques related to excavation, record keeping and mapping, and artifact recovery and processing by engaging with social scientific analysis of the material culture and landscape features that remain in the archaeological record.

This course is open to all undergraduates, no previous archaeological experience is required. Due to transportation requirements, enrollment is limited and permission of the instructor is required. Course may be repeated multiple times for credit.



The Excavation Site

For over 200 years, the 3500 block of Lancaster Ave. has been home to community centers, theaters, art venues, and residences. The West Philadelphia Friends constructed a meetinghouse there in 1851, which was then replaced in 1901 by the current building known as the Community Education Center. While this building still stands today, many of the other buildings that once filled this block have disappeared. Until recently, the CEC's parking lot held at least seven residences, including some original West Philadelphia homes built in the 1840s. Their remains lay just a few feet below the surface, yet many stories of the people who lived there have been forgotten, ignored, or even actively erased.

