ARCH 2500 **Culture History**

Goal: to define cultural units in terms of their artifact content and then arranging these units in such a way as to accurately reflect their time and space relationships to one another.

Translation: order archaeological material in time and across space so that we can tell from where and when it came.

Historical Types: classes of artifacts that are sensitive for telling time.

Phases: archaeologically defined cultural units marked by a distinctive set of artifacts and restricted to a relatively small area and a relatively brief period of time.

Time-Space Charts / Chronologies: compilation of phases to show their temporal and spatial relationships.

Seriation: a relative dating method that uses historical types to order assemblages through time
Sir Flinders Petrie, Egyptian burial pottery
battleship-shaped curve

Three Assumptions of Seriation
1) All assemblages must roughly the same amount of time.
2) All assemblages must belong to the same cultural tradition.
3) All assemblages come from the same local area.

Occurrence Seriation: uses the presence / absence of historical types to order assemblages in time
Assumes that type distribution is continuous.

Frequency Seriation: uses the relative frequency of historical types to order assemblages in time.
Assumes that type distribution is continuous.
Assumes that distribution is unimodal.

Seriations are testable.

New Methodology
Vertical control of excavations
Horizontal control of excavations

Culture Historical Interpretations

Diffusion: movement of ideas
Migration: movement of people
Trade: movement of stuff
Descent: continuity, persistence

Assumes types change because people come in contact w/one another.

Problems w/CH interpretations

1) rely too heavily on migration/diffusion
2) difficult to distinguish between interpretations
3) phases not meant to explain change

Importance of Culture History

1) organized and described archaeological material
2) developed an important relative dating method
3) developed better excavation methods