Stealing Wheelbarrows: Archaeology as Political Action

Archaeology does not directly engage in the key struggles of the modern world. Archaeologists do not in any noteworthy way direct armies, imprison people or free people from bondage. Clearly archaeology is a weak instrument for overt political action and this should comfort archaeologists. We do not violate the civil rights of people if we wrongly reconstruct power and authority in the British Bronze Age. Nonetheless, the past is a locus of political struggle, and this struggle can have significant costs and consequences. Political struggles over the past are first and foremost ideological especially when their political nature is covert, hidden or obscured. Thus when we reconstruct relations of power and authority in the past we reinforce or challenge contemporary ideologies. Dr. McGuire will discuss how we can do an archaeology that challenges the status quo and confronts power and authority in the present.

The Department of Anthropology presents:

Dr. Randall H. McGuire

Friday Feb. 6 at 3:00 pm in FA 126

Randall H. McGuire is a Distinguished Professor of Anthropology at Binghamton University in Binghamton, New York. He received his BA from the University of Texas and his MA and PhD from the University of Arizona. He has taught at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Brazil, Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, Argentina and at the Esquela Nacional de Antropología y Historia in México City. He has published extensively on Marxist theory and Indigenous archaeology. From 1996 to 2007, he and Dean Saitta of the University of Denver directed the Archaeology of the Colorado Coal Field War, 1913-1914 project near Trinidad, Colorado. He has worked with Elisa Villalpando of the Centro INAH, Sonora for 29 years investigating the Trincheras Tradition of northern Sonora, México. The Spanish summary of their excavations at Cerro de Trincheras, Entre Muros de Piedra was published in Hermosillo, Sonora in 2010. The full site report on the excavations was published by the Arizona State Museum in 2011. His latest books include Archaeology as Political Action, The Archaeology of Class War with Karin Larkin, and Ideologies in Archaeology with Reinhard Bernbeck. He recently published “Steel Walls and Picket Fences: Rematerializing the U.S.–Mexican Border in Ambos Nogales” in American Anthropologist (2013, 115(3).

His webpage is: http://bingweb.binghamton.edu/~rmcguire/index.html.