Embodied Cognition and Material Culture
(ANTH 4255/5255)

Instructor: Dr Lambros Malafouris (University of Oxford)
Email: lambros.malafouris@keble.ox.ac.uk
Web: http://www.keble.ox.ac.uk/academics/about/dr-lambros-malafouris

Course Objective:
The aim of this course is to explore the nature of the relationship between cognition and material culture—what it is, how it changes, and what role the human body plays in forging those links. We shall adopt a cross-disciplinary embodied cognition approach and using a variety of archaeological and anthropological themes and case studies will offer a comparative examination of the impact of material culture on the making and evolution of human intelligence (brain and body) from its earliest beginnings to the present day.

Required Texts:
COURSE OUTLINE

WEEK 1: Cognition and material culture: An Introduction
Key reading:

I. New perspectives in the cognitive sciences

WEEK 2: Embodied cognition
Key readings:

WEEK 3: Distributed cognition
Key readings:

WEEK 4: Extended mind hypothesis
Key readings:

WEEK 5: Enactive cognition
Key readings:
II. Things and Thinking

WEEK 6: Material signs
Key readings:

WEEK 7: Material anchors
Key readings:

WEEK 8: Material metaphors
Key readings:

WEEK 9: Material agency
Key readings:

WEEK 10: Material memories
Key readings:
III. Growing our minds, extending ourselves

WEEK 11: Developmental systems theory DST
Key readings:

WEEK 12: Neuroconstructivism
Key readings:

WEEK 13: Niche construction
Key readings:

WEEK 14: Theories of neural reuse
Key readings:

WEEK 15: Cognitive ecology & Metaplasticity
Key readings:
Method of teaching:
There will be 3 essays (1500-2000 words) based on pre-approved topics/questions plus 1 book review (max 1000 words). Your grade will be determined strictly on the basis of your essays/reviews marks (25% each).

Graduate Students:
Graduate students may choose to write a single research essay (max 6000 words) on a topic approved by Dr Malafouris plus 2 book reviews (max 1000 words).

Due Dates and Deadlines:
ESSAY (1) by end of WEEK 5
BOOK REVIEW (1) by end of WEEK 10
ESSAY (2) by end of WEEK 10
ESSAY (3) by end of WEEK 15