

GARBOLOGY and ARCHAEOLOGY

What is garbology?

-Garbology is the systematic and scientific study of modern waste

How does garbology relate to archaeology?

-Garbology is a subtype of archaeology; it uses archaeological methods like surveying, excavation, sorting, categorization, and detailed analysis of collected materials

What can we learn from doing garbology?

-How well our municipal waste, recycling, and compost programs are working, and how to improve these programs

-Hidden patterns in what we consume, how efficiently we consume, and how our consumption relates to other factors such as social status, wealth, or health

-What everyday life is like for hidden segments of society such as homeless Americans, undocumented migrants making border crossings, and the modern urban poor who make a living by collecting, sorting, and selling our waste



It's not trash, it's evidence!



Studying UW's waste efficiency



A UW archaeology class doing garbology

Doing Archaeology in General

- 1) Pick a question to examine*
- 2) Choose a relevant sample to study*
- 3) Collect materials for study*
- 4) Sort your materials, take measurements, collect data*
- 5) Analyze data to answer question*

Example: Prehistoric Archaeology

- 1) What did ancient people eat?*
- 2) Study ancient garbage!*
- 3) Recover a sample of ancient bones, shells, seeds, pots, and tools*
- 4) Sort remains based on type, measure amount of each type*
- 5) Determine ancient people ate a diverse mix of local plants, seafood, and land animals!*

Example: Garbology

- 1) How efficient is UW's current waste system?*
- 2) Study UW's modern garbage!*
- 3) Recover a sample of waste from campus public areas*
- 4) Sort waste into categories such as trash, recycling, and compost*
- 5) Determine that about 72% of the waste UW sends to landfills is actually compostable!*



THE UW GARBOLOGY PROJECT

<http://uwgarbology.weebly.com/>