Brodie Lecture

(Slide 1) Now that you've had a brief introduction to the learning goals that structure this course, you may find it helpful to see an example of how these skills may be exercised in practice.

(Slide 2) In this course you will be reading texts other people have written, thinking about arguments that they make, and then writing about those texts and their arguments. Many of these skills are rather basic, in the sense that they are preliminary to the sort of higher-level skills that are the focus of college instruction, but they are not so basic that many students, even those who went to good high schools or earned good grades there, can be expected to have mastered when they arrive in college.

In this lecture we will talk a little about a paper by Neil Brodie in a volume published in 2008 by Altamira Press called *Antiquities Under Siege: Cultural Heritage Protection After the Iraq War*. The American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 moved much more rapidly, probably, than either side had expected, with the Iraqi capital of Baghdad falling less than three weeks after the initial invasion of the country, and the United States government was quite unprepared for the task of managing the nation after the fall of the Hussein regime.

(Slide 3) The region that in modern times is known as Iraq was, in the ancient world, known as Mesopotamia, or the land between the rivers – the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, that is. This was one of the first places in the world that civilization arose, roughly five thousand years ago, and the Iraqi Museum in Baghdad was consequently one of the best museums in the world, holding priceless artifacts attesting to the earliest periods of human history. Within the first month after the invasion of Iraq began, the world learned that the museum had been looted, with many artifacts being smuggled out of the country and sold to wealthy collectors. Certainly many of these treasures were sold illegally on the black market, but Brodie's paper focuses on another aspect of the problem, the role of the nominally legal antiquities market as an intermediary selling looted (that is, stolen) artifacts.

(Slide 4) You should have already read Brodie's paper and printed out the outline of his argument. Often it's helpful, when trying to think about the argument that an author makes, to produce an outline like this: it allows you to see, in maybe a page or two, the flow of the argument, which may be hard to see when you're scanning paragraphs that may cover twenty pages or more. Please note a couple of times references are made in the outline to the notes at the end of Brodie's paper, and that square brackets indicate comments by the author of the outline. It's always good to adopt conventions in your own notes that allow you to keep track of what ideas or words are your own, and which come directly from the paper or book that you're taking notes on. This allows you to avoid plagiarism, and also to keep track of your own thoughts and ideas. Now let's look at some of the learning goals and outcomes for this course, and how you might apply them to this paper.

(Slide 5) First, let's consider outcome 1a), **summarize the explicit content of a text**. Well, what are the main things that Brodie addresses? One part of his argument is an attempt to quantify the size the illegal trade in antiquities, and to look at how legislation affects this trade. He looks two major auction houses, Christie's and Sotheby's, to develop an initial gauge of the trade in illegal antiquities in London and New York. He also sampled internet sales in 2003 and 2006 to get an idea of the hidden trade in artifacts. After the war began, various countries passed laws restricting the sale of objects taken from Iraq, and subsequently the auction houses stopped selling them entirely. Brodie concludes from this that much of the material sold before 2003 was sold illegally, and he presents evidence that much of the trade in Iraqi antiquities has since moved online, where it is harder to police. A discussion of the

ineffectiveness of prior efforts helps explain how the looted artifacts could so easily disappear into private hands, and also provides a contrast with the post-2003 period.

In addition, he considers the role that is and could be played by various agents, particularly archaeologists, in stemming this trade. Archaeologists have done a poor job of helping to control looting in Iraq, and much of this failure stems from the rewards system in higher education. He also considers several questions of professional ethics in archaeology, and concludes by making some general policy recommendations looking forward.

(Slide 6) Now let's look at the next outcome, **describe the structure of a paper's argument**. To think about the structure of this paper, the easiest place to begin is with the section headings that Brodie himself provides. The unlabeled first section introduces Brodie's subject, and the short conclusion provides some summary and provides recommendations for future action, based on the arguments in the body of the paper. The bulk of the paper is divided into two sections, one covering the market in Iraqi antiquities from 1990-2003, and the other continuing beyond 2003. Within each section, however, the structure is not primarily chronological.

(Slide 7) The section covering 1990-2003 begins with discussions of antiquities offered at auction, then considers the reasons why the UNESCO convention of 1970 was largely ineffective. This last argument relies on auction statistics to show that there was no discernible decrease in sales until 2003 and considers the political reasons why national legislation failed to pass. He then shifts his focus to considering the reasons why archaeologists failed to influence positive change, and this in turn leads to a consideration of several ethical questions regarding how archaeologists should interact with the trade in possibly looted or stolen artifacts.

The structure of the argument here is clear. Statistics from the auction houses demonstrate the initial claim that the UNESCO convention was ineffective, and the rest of the section looks at reasons for its ineffectiveness, focusing in turn on the groups that Brodie sees as the two chief protagonists, politicians and archaeologists. The discussion of professional ethics that ends the section may go a little beyond giving reasons for the inaction of archaeologists, but it does so in order to present a variety of ethical arguments, so that Brodie cannot so easily be accused of cherry-picking arguments that fit his agenda. And clearly the positive arguments against political action by archaeologists help explain why archaeologists did not intervene more actively after 1970.

(Slide 8) The argument for the post-2003 period is even simpler. Brodie's initial claim that the UN Security Council resolution was more effective than the earlier UNESCO convention is supported by statistics and the rest of the section considers question that follows naturally from this: namely, did the UN resolution succeed in restricting the trade, or did it simply move it to less public venues?

Brodie's sampling of items available on the internet in 2003 and 2006 provides some evidence to support his claim that internet sales increased in his period, and from the fact that items that probably derive from Iraq aren't labeled this way, he concludes that laws aren't being enforced on internet sales. This lack of enforcement in turn begs for an explanation, at which he hazards some guesses.

(Slide 9) It may be useful to compare our treatment of these two learning goals thus far. You'll learn that the skills of summaries of content and descriptions of argument structure tend to overlap in interesting ways – after all, how can you describe the structure of something if you don't know what the component parts are? The content elements are just claims that the authors makes, and the structuring of these elements (or at least a significant subset of them) is the structure of the argument. Putting the matter this way is, admittedly, somewhat abstract, so let's see how the relationship between content and argument structure plays out in Brodie's paper.

Consider the body of his paper. It is divided into two sections dividing events chronologically before and after the invasion of Iraq. A main factor affecting the way that national governments legislated to control the trade in illicit artifacts was a model developed by an international body, UNESCO before 2003 and the UN after that. In both sections Brodie makes claims about the success of governments in stemming the open trade in artifacts, and in both cases he relies on statistical sampling methods. This slide lists some of the main content elements of Brodie's paper, and diagrams the relationship between them. And this outline represents one of his main arguments, that the UN resolution succeeded to effect changes in the open sale of antiquities in a way that the UNESCO convention had failed. Another part of his argument, not outlined on this slide, is that this trade simply moved the illicit trade online and underground.

(Slide 10) Let's be a little more explicit how the analyses of this paper by structure and content differ. Elements of structure in the paper include the large-scale structuring, for example, the division of the body into two chronological parts; and the more fine-grained relationship of elements, for example how in both body sections statistical data are used to understand the effects of an action by an international body. Note that the parallelism of these two body sections is just a function of how Brodie designed this paper: there's no need for the structure of one part of a paper to be at all like the structure of another part. In any case, all the facts, claims, and inferences made in the paper are content elements. This would include, but isn't limited to, facts about the UNESCO convention and UN resolution, the particular auction data cited, and the conclusions drawn in each section.

(Slide 11) The two outcomes discussed so far both require critical reading skills; in the rest of this lecture let's look at representative outcomes for the other three units. First, **drawing inferences from tables**. This slide presents a chart taken from Brodie's Figure 6.2. Along with Figure 6.1, which presents comparable data from Christie's auctions in London, this table provides much of the quantitative evidence cited to support the claim that the UN resolution succeeded to effect changes in the open sale of antiquities in a way that the UNESCO convention had failed. Let's look briefly at how this inference follows from the table.

(Slide 12) For a four year period beginning in 2003, when the UN resolution was passed, Sotheby's put no Mesopotamian cylinder seals up for auction. From 1986 to 2002, in contrast, no such seals had been auctioned there only in one year. Thus there is a correlation between the passage of the resolution and the lack of auctions of such seals, and Brodie assumes that this correlation is accounted for by causation: the UN resolution, which was intended to stop illegal sales, resulted in the cessation of the auction trade in these objects. From these facts, and the assumption of causation, Brodie makes the further inference that most (if not all) of the actions from 1986 to 2002 were of illicitly collected or stolen seals. This inference actually helps to explain his leap from correlation to causation, because the prohibition of illegal sales could most directly affect auctions if those auctions were facilitating the trade of illicitly collected artifacts. The logic of his argument is immediately clear to the reader, even if the reader needs

to take a step back and think about how it works in order to explain the relationship, within the argument, of the various claims.

Furthermore, if the UNESCO convention had helped to eliminate the illegal trade in cylinder seals, then we could have expected either that auctions would drop to zero, or at least there would be some sort of a clear drop in auctions over the period 1986 to 2002. But in fact neither happened; this counts as evidence that the UNESCO convention was ineffective.

(Slide 13) This slide represents some of the inferences made in the last slide. The conclusion (or inference) that the UN resolution caused the elimination of auctions for Mesopotamian cylinder seals only follows from the fact that the drop in auctions correlates with the resolution if we also assume that the items auctioned through 2002 were mostly or entirely illegally acquired. The first inference, that the drop correlates with the UN resolution, follows from the evidence represented in the Figure 6.2. This inference is indicated with a dotted arrow. The second inference, that in this case correlation implies causation, is indicated by the other two, solid, arrows.

(Slide 14) The issue of bias is fairly straightforward in this paper, so it can be dealt with quickly. Let's consider two learning outcomes that clearly are closely connected:

3a) Identify evidence regarding the perspective of an author on an issue
3c) Account for language in a text potentially indicative of bias

Looking at an author's language is one way of identifying his biases. Brodie's position on the trade in plundered or stolen artifacts seems clear: he thinks it should be prohibited. One way you can see this is by looking at his language, for example the words he uses. Consider the following passage from his conclusion:

> *I have argued that the reluctance of governments to ensure that regulatory laws are enforced is partly the fault of archaeologists for not pursuing the research necessary to establish the scale and scope of the problem, and that within the profession there needs to be a more progressive archaeological engagement with the issues involved.*

Let's look at three words underlined in this passage. That the lack of enforcement of the laws is a fault implies that the laws are good, and consequently that enforcing them is good. While it may seem obvious that laws should be enforced, it's really not that simple. Many people believe that immoral laws should not be enforced. The question whether poorly conceived laws should be enforced is not as clear cut, but there are plenty of times when people would argue this as well. In any case, since we can't take if for granted that reasonable readers will believe that all laws should be enforced, taking a perspective on whether any particular law should be enforced reflects one's bias, or perspective. Similarly for the word "problem."

(Slide 15) The word "progressive" is perhaps a little more subtle, and thus more interesting. When Brodie says that "within the profession there needs to be a more progressive archaeological engagement with the issues involved, " he clearly is assuming that it is good to be progressive, and bad not to be. In this context, a progressive attitude is one that is more politically pro-active, and in particular one that takes a clear stand against the trade in illicit artifacts. So this is a clear indication of bias. Now, in this case bias may not be a bad thing, so perhaps we should use the less-charged term "perspective" instead.

Already he had discussed the ethical arguments for and against the position he himself holds, and he presents the alternate perspective fairly, for example, when he discusses the view that the trade rescues artifacts that otherwise would be lost to science. Admittedly, he uses shock quotes around the word "rescues," implies either that he thinks the word is misused here, or at least that he has some reservations regarding its use. And he points out that the Biblical Archaeology society expressed concern about a efforts to stop publication of "unprovenanced" artifacts, that is, objects for which there is not good evidence regarding how they were collected. In his conclusion Brodie decides to make policy recommendations that make his own position abundantly clear. Of course, there's nothing wrong with adopting a position or arguing for it. The reason that the recognition of bias is a learning goal for this course is because it is a skill that critical readers need in order to make use of sources.

(Slide 16) As you'll see when we get to the final unit of this course, the three learning outcomes regarding argumentation (fewer than the four in each of the other units) are somewhat more technical than the preceding ones. We'll explain all the details when you get to that unit, but for the present you may be interested to know that most courses in critical thinking focus much more on these kinds of technical skills and are less practical than the one you're taking. Let's just briefly look at one of the outcomes for this unit, drawing on aspects of Brodie's paper that we've already considered.

4a) asks you to **describe how the selective use of statistics affects the conclusions drawn in an argument**. We've already seen how he makes use of auction statistics to estimate the open sale of illicit artifacts. What Brodie is doing here is extrapolating from a small sample of evidence to a much larger problem, and for what it is worth, he is quite well aware of what he is doing. Still, let's look for a minute at how this part of his argument works. Cylinder seals and tablets are just a small, albeit important, subset of the Mesopotamian artifacts available, and auctions are only one venue for sale. And he selects only one auction house per city, and looks at only two cities, to estimate trends in sales for all of the Western world, which basically means Europe and the Americas. His assumptions are probably reasonable, but one wonders why he didn't present more data. For example, he argues for the choice of Christie's to estimate trends in the London market, arguing that this is the best London auction house to choose because of the three major houses, it was the only one to hold regular auctions of Mesopotamian antiquities throughout the period of his study.

(Slide 17) Partial statistics from the other two houses would be interesting, and presumably easy for him to collect. The critical reader may interpret the absence of such evidence in his paper in at least two ways. First, they may conclude that he didn't do a huge amount of research for his paper – just enough, in fact, to make a case for his conclusion, but not necessarily the best case he could. Second, he had more evidence that wasn't consistent with his conclusions, and chose not to present them. Hopefully the first answer is the case and not the second, because there are ethical problems with suppressing evidence that goes against one's conclusions, though this probably happens more than scholars like to think. In any case, now we have seen both components of this learning outcome: how his use of statistics is selective, by considering the limits of the evidence he cites; and how this affects his conclusions (it makes them tentative, just enough to be suggestive).

(Slide 18) At this point you should focus on what my analysis has done, and what it hasn't. I'm not necessarily arguing that there's a problem with his method – as far as it goes, his argument is fine – but rather I'm pointing to ways that his argument might lead us astray. It's not enough to say Brodie's conclusions are right or wrong. Rather, we should focus our attention on questions like how likely it is that he's right, and where his method might lead him astray. To simply say "I believe him" or "I don't

believe him" is too facile, too simple. Rather, we need to say something like "I am willing to accept Brodie's conclusions for the present, but I wish to keep in mind the ways in which his conclusions might not be acceptable for the further conclusions that I wish to draw."

(Copyright Slide) This lecture is copyrighted by Carl Seaquist and Bethel University. It is protected by a Creative Commons' Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives license. That means you're free to share it with others in this form, but only if you give credit to the copyright holders. You can't modify it and you can't use it for commercial purposes without their permission. For details on what this license implies, see the Creative Commons website: http://creativecommons.org/.