

Major Theoretical Approaches of the 20th Century in Archaeology

Interpretive Approach	Foci of Inquiry	Types of Questions about past humans that are addressed
<i>Culture History</i>	Time & Space questions (Temporal/Spatial) Basis for Processualism & Postprocessualism	<i>What</i> happened? When & Where? More descriptive than explanatory Direct Historical Approach – cultural continuities in descendant groups through history (time)
<i>Processualism</i> Cultural Ecology, Cultural materialism are major processual approaches	Adaptations to various environmental settings; processes of culture change; strong alignment with Scientific Approach; empiricism. Techno-environmental materialism – direct material benefits (food, shelter, clothing, etc)	<i>How</i> was past human behavior structured? <i>Why</i> do we see certain behavioral responses to changing environments? Processes of change, more on group level More explanatory than descriptive
<i>Postprocessualism</i> Cognitive Archaeology, Gender (feminist perspectives) & Marxist approaches are part of postprocessualism	Focus is on ‘emic’ (insiders) perspectives. Ideological & symbolic systems are seen as important. NOT so much emphasis on technology & the environment or use of quantitative methods to explain culture	<i>How</i> do <u>individuals</u> contribute to culture change? <i>Why</i> do we see certain human behavioral responses to changing perceptions of the universe? Social relations? More explanatory than descriptive