

Case studies for the

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Note: Although some of these case studies were inspired by actual events, the scenarios are intended to be educational and hypothetical. Ethics Bowl participants should only consider the information provided in the scenarios below.

## Case 1

Terese is a parks archaeologist with extensive experience in coastal zones. As part of her specialized training, she has become proficient in the recording and preservation of underwater archaeological sites. On a particularly stormy afternoon, Terese spots a small fishing vessel tossing about dangerously close to the outer reef. She attempts to signal and radio out to the boat, to no avail. By the time she has contacted her supervisors, the boat has vanished.

The following day, when the waters are calmer, Terese gets a call from the coast guard. They want her to assess the remains of a wrecked vessel on the outer reef. As they approach the wreck, Terese becomes quite certain this was not the small vessel from the previous day. Even in the muddy storm surge surf, it is evident that these are the remains of a much larger, older, and more decayed vessel.

Upon closer inspection, Terese thinks she recognizes the large hull of a Spanish trading vessel. Terese knows how treacherous these shores can be, and local lore speaks of at least one major shipwreck in the region. Over the course of her initial assessment, Terese confirms the presence of valuable cargo, including shattered fine porcelains, bolts of disintegrating silks, and peeling lacquered wares. Before long, news of the discovery has traveled the globe, and Terese's quiet shore has become front-page news. The Spanish government claims ownership of the cargo, on the basis that it was aboard a Spanish vessel, while the Chinese government claims the silks and wares as their own cultural heritage. To complicate matters, the ship's precipitous position on the reef places it on the boundary between US and International waters, and Terese's initial assessment suggests that the wreck is unstable.

Terese's immediate concern is preservation and containment. She is aware that, having been dislodged from the muddy shoals within which the ship had previously been buried, the vessel and its cargo are in danger of decaying at a much accelerated rate. Additionally, Terese fears that news of the shipwreck may attract looters – and suddenly she thinks back to the unidentified fishing vessel she spotted the day of the storm. A quick online search confirms her worst fears: fine porcelains suspiciously similar to ceramics discernible in her murky photographs have shown up on an online auction site.

## Case 2

GiNESSA is a contract archaeologist for a private company in Vancouver, Washington. She had remained in the Northwest after completing graduate studies, making the most of her local connections, to get a prominent post as project manager. However, GiNESSA hailed from warmer climes, and after six years of rain and cold she was only too happy to take a job on the Big Island of Hawai‘i.

When she accepted the position, GiNESSA was warned that it would be a challenge: big contracts could get dicey, as the stakes were high on all sides. Developers are keen to expand hotels, condos, and resorts near Kona’s sunny shores, and local business owners welcome the expanded facilities to accommodate higher tourist traffic. On the other side of the debate are those who wish to preserve the natural and cultural resources housed in the dunes.

While managing her very first Phase I project, on a grassy dune site just a few minutes from the airport, GiNESSA is called over by one of her newly-hired shovelbums. Brad is fresh out of undergrad, but has had a reasonable amount of experience digging on the mainland in a variety of contexts. He is involved in a heated argument with Lani, a veteran excavator who is pressuring him to move forward. As GiNESSA approaches their shovel test-pit, Lani announces that she is going on her break. As Lani moves off, Brad nods toward his screen, which contains fragments of disintegrating bone. He says that when he asked Lani about the context she was probing, and the possible presence of human remains, she had told him to “relax” in the interest of getting the project done on time. He then tells GiNESSA that his previous supervisor had been pushing them to ignore more complex, poorly preserved contexts because the company didn’t “have time or money for this kind of triviality.”

GiNESSA can see that the context they are excavating is badly eroded; but she also knows that some of the earliest sites found in Hawai‘i were encountered in sand dunes, and that many dune sites in Hawai‘i were used as cemeteries. Looking carefully over the highly fragmented bone, GiNESSA cannot be certain they are not human remains. She instructs Lani and Brad to interrupt their operation and cover the pit, and to pick up another transect line for the afternoon.

The next morning, GiNESSA approaches her boss. “It’s probably best if you just pretended you never saw it happening,” he advises. “There’s always something you’re not supposed to be digging, and stuff like this is so hard to protect. Besides, we’re probably one of the better CRM firms out here. If our client starts to think we are slowing things down, we might lose our bid, or other future jobs. And then what would become of Hawai‘i’s cultural resources?”

### Case 3

Danielle, an Archaeology major at Whatsammatta University, sees an advertisement in the local paper: "Archaeology Show This Weekend!" Danielle invites several of her friends, many of whom are non-Anthropology majors, to come to the show, expecting that even they will find something to enjoy.

Upon arriving, Danielle is shocked to see that the "archaeology show" is actually more of a looter's flea market; there are rows of tables with vendors selling whole ceramic pots, glass bottles, and even an elaborate mosaic of a Plains Indian made entirely out of several dozen projectile points. Danielle is not that experienced, but becomes increasingly uncomfortable at the sight of what appear to be genuine artifacts being sold.

Danielle's friends are confused by Danielle's sudden mood change and point out that among the tables there are several people giving impromptu but detailed lectures about the history of the different objects that people have brought for appraisal. Mark, one of Danielle's friends and a chemical engineering major, tells Danielle that some of his fondest memories are of coming to similar exhibitions with his grandfather and that his family is pretty proud of the collection of "arrowheads" they have gathered off their property over several generations.

Danielle thinks of the stuffy old museum in town and its outdated display cases. It's no wonder her friends would sooner spend their afternoons here. Still, she reasons, there must be a middle ground.

## Case 4

Robert is an avid backpacker and hiker, as well as an experienced amateur archaeologist. On a recent backpacking trip, one of Robert's friends introduced him to the sport of "geocaching," a sort of virtual treasure hunt where players enter GPS points listed on websites into handheld GPS units to find small caches which usually contain a log of visitors or small knick-knacks left behind by travelers. Some of the caches have no physical component at all, but are just the locations of scenic overviews or interesting geologic features. Robert really enjoys geocaching and finds that it helps him get to know some unique spots off the beaten track and to learn more about some pretty interesting geology.

One day, while browsing an online forum for geocachers, Robert reads about a new website focused on archaeology geocaches. Intrigued, Robert clicks on a link and begins exploring the website. The website is very well-designed and consists of an interactive map of different archaeological sites around the world, including a number of sites in the United States. Some of the sites are on public lands, but there are also a lot of sites listed on private lands. New sites are tagged on the interactive map with an exclamation mark, and Robert notes that many of these are places he'd never thought to visit. Many of the users who have posted coordinates have taken the time to write up long descriptions of the sites along with information about why the sites are archaeologically interesting. Users have created trails which link together different caches along with quizzes on local history or ask visitors to correctly answer questions about some of the nearby artifacts to prove they visited the site and to gain access to clues for the next point on the trail. As a parallel guide, the website publishes recommended practices to avoid disturbing fragile plant and animal life around the geocaches.

Having hiked these hills for years, Robert knows the location of many archaeological sites in his area, some of which he is pretty sure that even some of his professional archaeologist friends don't know about – at least, they had never mentioned these to him. Excited about contributing to this educational endeavor, Robert begins to jot down the locations of sites he has visited. As his list of coordinates grows, Robert is struck by a sudden thought. Going back to the site, Robert notices that the "recommended practices" page says nothing about how hikers could affect archaeological sites. His mind moves quickly through scenarios, thinking about less scrupulous amateurs and even looters who might use the website to locate archaeological sites for profit.

Robert thinks back to his own "discoveries:" easily-recognizable sites that he assumed were "unknown" because they were off the beaten path, and not commonly referenced in public media. He then begins to wonder how his fellow geocachers are acquiring these site locations. How many of these site locations were meant to be undisclosed. Suddenly, Robert is less inclined to contribute to the website than to find a way to shut down the whole endeavor.

## Case 5

Three years ago Professor Heather Herbert, an acclaimed expert in Byzantine archaeology, was granted exclusive permission by the Italian Culture Ministry to conduct a decade-long archaeological project at Livinia, a World Heritage Site. The monumental Byzantine ruins that dot Livinia attract upwards of 150,000 visitors annually. Professor Herbert is the first archaeologist in 50 years to be given unfettered access to Livinia and its surrounding landscape.

Professor Herbert has met with great success in securing project funding from multiple sources, both public and private. As Principal Investigator, she used these resources to build a large project crew of 50, the majority of whom are graduate students. Each season Professor Herbert assigns crew members to work with one of four sub-teams for the entire field season: a geophysics unit, an excavation crew, a GIS and mapping unit, or a pedestrian survey team. She also selects a qualified senior graduate student to supervise the day-to-day operations of each sub-team. Supervisors are expected to organize all of their data and field notes, and to provide Professor Herbert with a daily progress report.

The first three seasons of the project have produced a tremendous amount of exciting new information about Livinia, not least the discovery of over two-dozen previously unknown pre-Byzantine sites within the boundaries of the World Heritage site. These finds have brought constant media attention to Professor Herbert, leaving her little time to write up the results of the first three seasons, let alone wrap her head around the significance of the new data.

Bryan, the supervisor of the GIS and mapping sub-team for the past three seasons, is in the last year of his PhD program at Professor Herbert's university. He is aware of her busy schedule, but he is also increasingly concerned about his own future. He worries that without a peer-reviewed publication reflecting his ties to and efforts spent on the prestigious Livinia project, he may not be competitive on the academic job market. He decides to take initiative and writes a short report about Livinia's archaeological landscape and the newly discovered sites, adding Professor Herbert as second author. Before submitting the article he asks Professor Herbert to review it. She says she is too busy to add text, but she quickly glances over the draft and seems especially pleased by the high quality of Bryan's GIS images. As soon as the journal offers Bryan a provisional acceptance he updates his *Scholar.edu* profile with the title of the article. Minutes later, Bryan is approached by the other sub-team supervisors on the Livonia project. They feel that he's co-opted "their" survey, excavation, and geophysics data into the GIS analysis into his article. After they appeal to Professor Herbert, she realizes that she may have made a few managerial missteps. Fearing that the situation might spiral out of her control and jeopardize the project's reputation, she emails Bryan and asks him to retract his submission to the journal. Before Bryan has a chance to reply, his phone rings. The search committee at Wintergreen University is calling; they have seen his updated *Scholar.edu* profile and they have shortlisted him for their tenure-track position.

## Case 6

Sandy Melmac is an Assistant Professor at Shady Knoll University. For the past eight years she has led an archaeological project on the remote and impoverished tropical island of Loguana. Her project team consists of seven archaeological specialists and seven volunteers who are island residents.

Loguana's history is shaped by past conflicts and abuses. Knowledge about displaced indigenous populations and the conditions of the slavery period have, until recently, been omitted from the island's school history curriculum, the island museum's exhibits, and educational media at heritage sites. The situation is changing now, due in large part to Melmac's team's mapping of 30 previously undocumented or unknown sites, which offer substantial information about these earlier periods.

The Loguana Cultural Trust (LCT) is the agency in charge of overseeing historic preservation and archaeology on the island. Its headquarters building is also the permanent repository for archaeological materials. The LCT is operated by three dedicated volunteers, none of whom have training in archaeology, preservation, or heritage management. At the end of each field season Melmac is required to store her finds in the LCT "collections room," a large closet packed with 200 decaying cardboard boxes stuffed with uncatalogued artifacts collected by previous archaeologists or donated by island residents. The majority of materials were never studied or published after their initial recovery. Given the cramped, humid, and dusty conditions in the storage room, Melmac has taken extra care to package her finds neatly in durable, clearly-labeled containers. She has also provided the LCT with a document explaining her organizational procedure, in the event that they or other researchers wish to work with the materials her team recovered.

A few months after the summer field season, Reynolds Rivers, Director of the LCT, calls Melmac at Shady Knoll University to express concern that the storage room is becoming overcrowded and that the LCT is experiencing a curation crisis. Another one of Melmac's field seasons will produce more boxes of materials than the LCT can possibly handle. As a solution to this problem, Rivers proposes discarding 20 boxes of artifacts that appear to the LCT staff to be in either the worst condition or from sites of lesser cultural value. Site assemblages to be discarded include several recovered from colonial European sites or remains from industrial facilities. Rivers emphasizes that the islanders especially value the histories that Melmac's investigations are bringing to light and the care that she takes to inventory, archive, and publish her project's finds. He promises that she need not worry about the future of her work – he will make room available for her collections before she arrives for her annual summer fieldwork.

## Case 7

Joe Peng is a local history buff and graduate student in archaeology at Detroit University. He was thrilled when the professor of his field methods class arranged for them to excavate a 19th-century tavern buried underneath a modern city park. This would be the first time that archaeologists had the opportunity to examine this neighborhood, which was an important refuge for European and African-American immigrants in the 19th century. Armed with historic maps and architectural plans, the students' excavations successfully identified the exact location of the tavern and a massive assemblage of historic artifacts, ranging from butchered bones and medicine bottles, to personal items, such as shoes and keys.

Located on a main thoroughfare, the excavations at the park attracted many visitors, including local members of the community whose families once lived in the neighborhood, children on their walks home from school, and tourists. Media attention was quick to follow, with stories of the excavation's finds appearing in local newspapers and magazines.

Several weeks into the class students arrived at the park and were greeted by the sound of jackhammers and a backhoe working on an empty, privately-owned residential lot directly across the street from the city park. According to the historic maps, at least two houses, one store, and their outbuildings stood on this lot during the 19th century. The backhoe slowly moved to reveal a film crew shooting three men as they aggressively tossed aside shovels full of dirt and threw handfuls of ceramic and brick fragments across the lot. The men cheered and jumped for joy as they yanked intact bottles and other artifacts from the ground. Standing across the street, Joe screamed in horror when he realized that these men were the cast of the TV show "History Hunters". They were searching for artifacts to sell for a profit – just feet from the students' excavation site.

As the History Hunters' unscreened backdirt piles grew and the backhoe crunched building foundations underneath, Joe, his professor, and some of his fellow students were paralyzed by a wave of panic and frustration. Britney, another student in the class, pointed out that technically what the History Hunters were doing was not illegal, so long as they had permission from the landowner. Perhaps, she suggested, the class could quietly wait until they left and then see what they could salvage from the remaining backdirt piles.

Joe disagreed – he could not stand by and watch the destruction that the History Hunters were causing. Just as he mustered the courage to cross the street one of the History Hunters, Big Ray Al, star of the show, turned and headed towards the class, holding up two intact blue medicine bottles. Big Ray Al thanked the class – telling them that the show's producers heard on the news that this neighborhood was a "hot spot" for finding treasure. Waving the bottles, he turned to Joe and asked, "Say, how much you think these are worth? Did you find any like these in your dig?" Before Joe could answer, Big Ray Al saw a similar bottle protruding from the side wall of an excavation unit. "There's one right there! You didn't see it?! Now, who's the expert here? Let me make you a deal – you let me grab that bottle and I'll send that backhoe over here to give you a hand. Then y'all can get on with finding some real treasure! What do you say?"



## Case 8

Surrounded by mountains and having a narrow coastline, the little-known Republic of Suveria has a landscape dominated by the powerful River Suva. While the uplands have been relatively unexplored, floodplains in the Suverian lowlands, which are annually replenished by sediments carried by the River Suva, have historically been favored by settler societies. Today, the uplands are a checkerboard of state-sponsored Natural Preserves and Indigenous Territories.

As part of her duties, Gabrielle, the chief archaeologist and geographer for the Middle Suva Uplands Preserve, is in charge of conducting quarterly rounds of preserve trails. After a particularly rainy spring, Gabrielle notices a landslide around a bend of the Suva. The recently exposed bank shows basketry protruding from the lower strata – basketry that bears a striking resemblance to funerary baskets known from two-thousand-year-old sites. Colonial-era reports of small-party exploratory missions contain detailed drawings of these baskets, showing these were still in use during that time.

Gabrielle knows this area is currently a disputed territory; a local tribe has filed for native title rights. However, archaeological data and oral traditions speak to a complex history of shifting political alliances and fuzzy boundaries throughout the Middle Uplands. An 18<sup>th</sup>-Century report of a lost early colonial expedition also appears, for all intents and purposes, to be describing this precise location as the final landing of the dwindling expedition. Siddique, the gifted linguist that first mapped the region, reports that “having understood the limits of their own knowledge, the Colonists had adopted all the customs of the native peoples. My informants further report that, though they had forged an alliance with the ‘visitors’, the ‘pale men’ succumbed to a fever, and were buried according to local rites. Today, centuries later, the precise location of this cemetery is unknown.”

Gabrielle’s initial report, a publicly available document, sparks immediate debate among multiple parties. Prominent scholars and government officials clamor for the recovery and identification of their forebears, hoping to turn the locale into a historical park. Others, including the local tribe and purported descendants of the colonial explorers, insist on respecting the remains where they lie. In the meantime, the dry summer winds are fast approaching, which Gabrielle knows will only compromise the remains – which, based on the current exposed section, cannot be affiliated with any specific group.

## Case 9

The country of Baranes has been under dictatorial control for decades. Although the people have suffered under the regime, with frequent shortages of food and other necessities, study and preservation of the nation's archaeological past has been well-funded by the regime. This is due to the regime's glorification of the country's past and use of it as a legitimizing force for their political power.

After decades of hardship and political suppression, the people of Baranes have had enough. With the help of the national armed forces, the people of Baranes successfully overthrew the dictatorial regime, putting in place a transitional government. This development is lauded worldwide.

Gabe, an archaeologist stationed in Baranes as part of a foreign "peacekeeping" mission, is called upon to assess and prioritize local cultural heritage sites. As part of the uprising, Baranese people have begun defacing sites that the regime had used to prop up their power. Though the global community supports what they see as a grass-roots uprising, they are appalled at the destruction of monuments they regard as world heritage sites. In defense of their people, the temporary military government announces that it will support these "acts of patriotism, which are crucial to erasing our oppressive past and paving the way for a new future."

While Gabe sympathizes with the Baranese desire to start anew, he is also keenly aware of his responsibility toward global sites of cultural heritage.

## Case 10

Tammy works at Waldruff University, a large research university in the U.S., and conducts archaeological research in her birth country, Namboa, a small developing nation. Tammy's Namboan colleagues have recently come to her with a pressing concern. They have learned that archaeologists employed at the University of Chilton, another research institute in the U.S., have taken artifacts out of the country and back to their facilities. The Namboan archaeologists are outraged because the University of Chilton had not requested permission to remove artifacts from Namboa. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Namboa was filled with European and American archaeologists unscrupulously removing priceless artifacts which now fill museums worldwide. Namboa is in the process of trying to repatriate many of these items. Dr. Zarate, head of the Namboan Ministry of Culture, has asked Tammy to take the lead drafting a letter to the archaeologists at the University of Chilton to immediately return the artifacts or face revocation of their permits.

Tammy is torn because she has partnered with other American archaeologists on other projects in the past and feels that it would damage her relationship with them. In addition, the removal of objects from the project is not expressly forbidden in the Namboan archaeological permit, although it is in conflict with the spirit of the permit. Lastly, although government officials express a great desire to protect their cultural heritage, Tammy has wondered Namboa has the facilities to properly curate all artifacts uncovered during archaeological research.