The Strengths and Limits of Archaeology

Data, Methods and Objectives
What are they looking for?
The constitution of the archaeological record
Epistemology: What do we want to know and how can we know it?

Defining the archaeological object and the archaeological subject
How do we go from this….

To this…

And then where?
Proposition 1: Archaeology as the study of past cultures
Proposition 1: Archaeology as the study of past cultures

- Archaeological cultures (pre-history)
- Assemblages and cultures
- The problem of Analogy
- The Comparative Project and evolutionary anthropology
Proposition 2: Archaeology as the study of Human History
Proposition 2: Archaeology as the study of Human History

- Rise and Fall of civilizations
- Bands, tribes, chiefdoms and states
- Supplement to the written record (text v. object)
Proposition 3: Archaeology as the study of systems
Proposition 3: Archaeology as the study of systems

- Natural systems v. Cultural systems
- General laws of culture
- Environmental determinism
- Do people even matter?
Proposition 4: Archaeology as the study of material culture
Proposition 4: Archaeology as the study of material culture

- Object biographies
- Consumption and Production
- Technology studies
- Material Analysis
- Taphonomy
- Art history and the study of aesthetics (it's all about beauty)
So where does this leave us?
Setting an agenda for Islamic Archaeology and this course

- Importance of historical and geographical contexts
- Relationship of artifact and text
- Avoiding essentialisms
- Challenging categories