

Garbology Encyclopedia Article

Garbology

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The study of **garbage**, through either archaeological excavation of landfills or analysis of fresh garbage, to determine what the composition of **municipal solid waste** says about the society that generated it. The term is associated with the **Garbage Project** of the University of Arizona (Tucson), co-directed by William Rathje and Wilson Hughes, which began studying trash in 1973 and excavating landfills in 1987. They found that little degradation occurs in landfills; New York newspapers from 1949 and an ear of corn discarded in 1971 were found intact. Unexpectedly, the project also found that **plastics** make up less than one percent of the total volume of landfills.