Archaeology And Anthropology (LV64): Selected Module Descriptions Year 1

World Archaeology

This module provides an introduction to human physical evolution, society and cultural life from the Palaeolithic to the Middle Ages. It combines a developmental evolutionary narrative with comparative cross-cultural analyses of past social systems, material culture, transformative technologies and forms of symbolic communication. Key themes include: the emergence and nature of modern humans; the origins and spread of farming technologies, complex societies and urbanism; state formation; the nature of 'civilization' and complex symbolic and artistic representation; imperialism and hegemony; and large-scale systems of trade and political and cultural interaction. A major theme throughout the module is the unique character of archaeological enquiry as the primary source of knowledge for understanding humanity at a global scale over the last three million years.

Practical Archaeology

This module provides an introduction to the theoretical, methodological and practical constitution of Archaeology, focussing on the unique set of field data collection techniques and related analytical and interpretative methods at the heart of the discipline. The module includes: a brief overview of the history of archaeological thought and methodological development; lectures on key fieldwork methods, analytical techniques; dating methods and chronology, practical classes on the identification, analysis and interpretation of material and environmental evidence; and a field training course in which students gain core practical skills, first-hand knowledge of archaeological fieldwork methodology and an understanding of reflexive on-site interpretation

Project - Archaeology as Anthropology: cultural lives in the past

Archaeology explores the lives of people in the past through their material culture and the social, cultural and material conditions of their existence. This is not a dry ‘artefacts and bones’ encounter with the dead, but rather an encounter with the social actions of living people who created the material worlds – artefacts, bodies, structures, landscapes – we see archaeologically. This kind of archaeological enquiry draws on an anthropological understanding of social behaviour and of the cultural rationales and beliefs that give meaning to people’s lives.

This project focuses on major interpretative themes in current anthropological archaeology, such as violence, death ritual, architecture, technology, social identities, journeying, gift-giving and consumption, and will examine the relationships between social practices, meanings and material culture. Case studies are drawn from ethnography and archaeology, including topics such as tombs, mines, houses, animals and environments, rich graves, boats, chiefly symbolism, exotic artefacts and mind-altering substances.

Project – Bog Bodies

In the Bog Bodies course we will be exploring some of the exceptionally well preserved human remains that have come from peat bogs, trying to understand who these people were and how they died. In addition to learning about some of the best examples of bog bodies, we’ll also be looking into the ways in which they have been interpreted using a variety of different archaeological and historical sources.

The survival of these bodies can include hair, skin and even the contents of their stomachs telling us what they ate for their last meal! We’ll therefore also be looking into why they are so well preserved compared with human remains buried in other environments.

The subject matter of the course will be used as a focus for developing and embedding core skills that will help you throughout your time in higher education. This will include sources of information, critical assessment of these sources and their correct documentation.

Project - Mycenae.

Mycenae is one of the best known sites of Greek Myth, the home of Agamemnon leader of the Greeks in the Trojan War, fabled as Rich in Gold and Well Built. With its astonishing golden grave goods found over a century ago in the Shaft Graves by Heinrich Schliemann and massive fortifications with blocks reputedly too large for human hands to shift, Mycenae is a complex archaeological site and the focal point of a civilization whose influence stretched from Egypt to Italy.

In this project you will explore the real achievements of the Mycenaeans over a 700 year time span and compare these with the accounts of the Heroic Age given in Homer’s Iliad and Odyssey; you join in compiling a referenced account of an aspect of Mycenae and its civilization and publish this to the internet.

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