

Archaeology And Ancient History (VVC4): Selected Module Descriptions 1

First year

This year you gain a firm grounding in the archaeology of Britain and the Mediterranean world through introductory lecture courses. You will also take an option in the history of either Greece and Rome or Egypt and the ancient Near East. Small-group project work will allow you to study a particular aspect of the ancient world in greater detail and to develop your research skills. You also gain practical experience through archaeological field training.

Module Descriptions

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

Early Civilisations: Egypt

This module provides an introduction to the culture and material remains of ancient Egypt from 3100-332BC. An account of the rediscovery of ancient Egypt is followed by a survey of its physical environment and of the different kinds of evidence to have survived. The Egyptian understanding of the world and the conventions which governed their society are described, as is the foundation of our knowledge of chronology. The textual, pictorial and archaeological sources are then used within a clear chronological framework, and with a particular emphasis on visual appreciation of the material remains, to encapsulate the major distinguishing features of each period.

Paired with:

Early Civilisations: Western Asia

This module provides an overview of the prehistoric cultures of Western Asia. In the historic period covered (c3000-300 BC) the principal civilisations taught are the Sumerian, Babylonian, Assyrian, Elamite, Hittite and Syrian Neo-Hittite (Luwian). Particular attention is given for each of these cultures, as appropriate, to social history, technological advances, architectural, artistic and literary achievements.

Greek Art and Archaeology

This module focuses on the art and archaeology of the Greek world between the Bronze Age and Hellenistic period. It has a broadly diachronic approach intended to provide students with a chronological framework within which specific themes and bodies of evidence will be examined, together with relevant theoretical and methodological approaches appropriate to the study of Mediterranean cultures.

Paired with:

Roman Art and Archaeology

This module focuses on the art and archaeology of the Roman world. It has a broadly diachronic approach intended to provide students with a chronological framework within which specific themes and bodies of evidence will be examined, together with relevant theoretical and methodological approaches appropriate to the study of Mediterranean cultures, with particular emphasis on Rome itself but also incorporating case studies drawn from other areas of the Roman Empire (which may include Roman Britain).

Greek and Roman History

The module provides an introduction to key aspects of Greek and Roman antiquity. In semester 1 you will examine Classical Greece, primarily Athens and Sparta, the development of hoplite warfare, the Persian wars, democracy, the role of women and Alexander the Great. In semester 2 you will examine the rise of the Roman empire, the relationship between Rome, Greece and the Carthaginians, changes in Roman society and class conflict, Roman religion, the destruction of the Republic and the creation of the Imperial system.

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.

Project – Light in the Dark Ages: the Sutton Hoo burials

The single most spectacular discovery in British archaeology was the excavation in 1939 of a ship-burial at Sutton Hoo in Suffolk, which dates to the early seventh century A.D. Within the ship was an unlooted burial with gold and silver jewellery, much of it also set with garnets; weaponry including a magnificent helmet; and other objects probably proclaiming the royal status of the burial. All this material is now in the British Museum, with the more splendid pieces on display. The excavation of further (if not so rich) burials in the nineteen-eighties gave further insight into the world of the Sutton Hoo ship-burial.

Since the discovery of the burial, there has been great controversy over who was buried and what the burial symbolises. Though the burial itself lies within an Anglo-Saxon kingdom, East Anglia, and some of the material is of Anglo-Saxon type, there is also material of 'Celtic' type from elsewhere within Britain, coins from Merovingian France and silver plate from the Byzantine empire. Some of the richest finds and the practice of ship-burial derive from Scandinavia, particularly what is now southern Sweden. So who was buried there, when, and what are the burial and the offerings trying to say about him?

The period is one when the kingdoms of Anglo-Saxon England were forming and which is described in the Venerable Bede's great Ecclesiastical History of the English People giving us some possible names for the man buried. It also means that the Sutton Hoo burial lies at the roots of English monarchy. It is also the period at which Anglo-Saxon England was being converted to Christianity, which may also shed light on the circumstances of this burial. As well as Bede, another great Anglo-Saxon literary work, the epic/heroic poem *Beowulf* may also cast light on the world of the Sutton Hoo burial.

Project – Britain's Best Archaeological Sites

This project considers the nature, history and importance of Britain's top ten archaeological sites. Each of these contains dramatic archaeology and loot. Equally each has fundamentally changed our understanding of the past. Amongst the sites to be studied are Creswell crags; Star Carr; the landscapes of the north sea Basin; The Severn-Cotswolds chambered tombs; Curcus monuments; the landscapes at Stonehenge and Avebury; The bush barrow and the Amesbury Archer; The Danebury hillfort; The Iron age Buildings at Goldcliff and Lindow Man.

Students will 'adopt' an archaeological site and will be expected to lead a class where it will be discussed in detail. Students will also be given the opportunity to criticise and review the main publication concerning each site before attempting the assessment at the end of the project.

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