

School of Archaeology Postgraduate taught-course modules 2024-25

Summary

Please note that all modules are taught over one term except Archaeological Science modules which are taught over two terms (MT and HT). ***This means if you choose an Archaeological Science module you must attend lectures from MT01 alongside any other module(s) already selected for that that term. This may not always be possible due to timetabling issues.***

- MSc Archaeology - you will need to choose
 - One Michaelmas term-taught stream specific module from MSc Archaeology; **AND**
 - One Hilary term-taught stream-specific module from MSc Archaeology; **AND**
 - One Hilary term-taught free-choice module (from any archaeology degree)

- MSc Archaeological Science
 - Typically students take all three Archaeological Science modules but you may swap one ArchSci module for **one free-choice module (from any archaeology degrees) taught in HT**

- MSt/MPhil Classical Archaeology – you will need to choose
 - One Michaelmas term-taught -taught module from MSt/MPhil Classical Archaeology; **AND**
 - One Hilary term-taught module from MSt/MPhil Classical Archaeology **OR** an approved free-choice module from any archaeology degree; **AND**
 - One Hilary term-taught period module from MSt/MPhil Classical Archaeology

A brief descriptor of all our modules can be found in the following pages:

	Michaelmas Term 2024 (all confirmed)	Hilary Term 2025 (confirmed subject to class sizes)	Trinity Term 2025
MSc Archaeology	Archaeological Method and Theory (Social)	Archaeology and Geographical Information Systems	Dissertation
	Europe in the Early Middle Ages: AD400-900 (Medieval)	Archaeology of Colonialism	
	Chinese Archaeology (Asia)	Archaeology of Late Anglo-Saxon England	
	Environmental Archaeology (Environmental)	Molecular Bioarchaeology	
	European Prehistory from the Mesolithic to the Bronze Age (Prehistory)	Cognitive Archaeology	
	Landscape Archaeology and Spatial Technology (Landscape)	Current Viking Archaeology	
	Maritime Societies (Maritime)	Discovering Cultural Heritage	
		Early human dispersals in Asia and the Pacific	
		Interdisciplinary approaches to Chinese Ceramics: Perspectives from the Asia-Pacific Region	
		Maritime Archaeology	
		Methods and Techniques in Maritime Archaeology	
		Practical Archaeobotany	
		The Emergence of Farming in Western Asia	
	The Medieval Body and Adornment		
Arch Sci	Materials analysis and the study of technological change	Materials analysis and the study of technological change	Dissertation
	Bio-archaeology	Molecular Bioarchaeology	
	Principles and Practice of Scientific Dating	Principles and Practice of Scientific Dating	
MSt/MPhil Classical Arch.	Archaeology of Greek Women	Aegean Bronze Age Trade	Aegean 2000-1100 BC
	Etruscan Italy	Archaeology of Greek Religion	Archaic, 800-480 BC
	Greek and Roman Landscape Archaeology OR Roman Urban Systems	Archaeology of the Northern Greek World, c. 600–30 BC	Classical, 500-300 BC
	Greek Coinage	Archaeology of the Roman Economy	Early Imperial, 30 BC -AD 120
	Greek Sculpture	Burials, settlements, and society in Iron Age Greece, 1200-650 BC	Early Iron Age Greece, 1200-800 BC
	Roman Architecture	Gandharan Art and the Classical World	Hellenistic, 330-30 BC
	Roman Provincial Art	Greek and Roman wallpaintings	Late Republican, 200-30 BC
	Topics in Aegean Prehistory	Greek Vases	Middle Imperial, AD 70-250
		Maritime Archaeology of the Greek and Roman Mediterranean	Middle Imperial, AD 70-250
		Pompeii and Ostia	
	Roman Coinage		

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MSc Archaeology modules running Michaelmas Term 2024/25

Archaeological Method and Theory (Social stream)

One of the most vital areas within archaeology over the last forty years has been the debate concerning method and theory. Archaeological theory has shifted from the attempts to generalise about human life developed by the New or Processual archaeologists from the 1960s onwards. In the late 1970s there was a reaction against grand theory and a greater concentration on local prehistoric sequences and the finer details of people's lives by the so-called post-processualists. Today there is a huge range of archaeological theories in use, focussing on issues of identity, gender, mind, material culture, art and aesthetics, as well as the more traditional questions of technology and subsistence. Archaeology has drawn on a huge range of theory from outside the discipline, ranging from evolutionary and ecological theories, post-modernist and post-colonial theories, feminist and gendered perspectives and theories of history and change. How relevant any or all of these theories are to archaeological subject matters and problems is debatable, but these are subjects that need debating if we are to decide the most profitable and productive directions for archaeology. Recently, archaeological method has become a source of intense debate, looking at how social and intellectual factors influence the ways in which archaeological sites are excavated and interpreted. Excavation and analysis are not purely technical matters, but have great influence on how we create our basic forms of evidence and make sense of them.

Loosely following a chronological line, this option will first survey later 20th century archaeological thought, starting with the notions of culture history, processual and post-processual archaeology. This survey of theories and methods will then form the backdrop to a more detailed engagement with theoretical developments since the late 1990s and leading up to the state of archaeological thinking today.

[Prof. Lambros Malafouris](#)

Europe in the Early Middle Ages: AD400 – 900 (Medieval stream)

This option examines the diverse societies of Europe from the end of the Western Empire in the fifth century to the Viking Age. It offers an overview of material culture change over a wide geographical region over a period of some 500 years, although the emphasis is on western and northern Europe, including Britain.

The objective of the course is to understand the social structure and economies of early medieval societies, the complex cultural interactions of in the period and the early stages of state formation. How did the influences of the late Roman Empire, the early Church, and the 'barbarian' Iron Age peoples of Europe together shape the culture, especially the material culture, of the early Middle Ages?

Although this is a period for which written sources are frequently scarce, it is essential to build up an historical framework from the reading lists provided.

The course is structured thematically and chronologically: the first two lectures provide an overview of 'Eastern' and 'Western' societies; Lectures 3-5 deal with social structure (as expressed in votive deposits and mortuary practices), and Lectures 6-8 with socio-economic development (the rural economy; the revival of towns and trade; the impact of the conversion to Christianity and of Viking incursions). The course also addresses the problems and potential of comparing written sources and material culture.

Convenor: [Prof. Helena Hamerow](#)

Chinese Archaeology (Asia Stream)

This course provides a survey of the archaeology of Ancient China from the Neolithic to the middle Bronze Age. Each lecture is arranged around a particular set of questions as well as a time period and/or region. In this fashion, this course explores the major cultural developments, focusing on the most important finds in greater detail, while at the same time discussing general archaeological questions and approaches.

The class commences by providing an overview of the environmental back ground as well as the history and organizational structure of archaeological work in China. After setting the stage in this fashion, the course will proceed chronologically, simultaneously covering questions of the emergence of agriculture, settlement patterns, burial practices, beliefs and ritual, complex societies, and early cities.

Convenor: [Dr Anke Hein](#)

Environmental Archaeology (Environmental Stream)

Lectures cover the principles of palaeoenvironmental reconstruction as well as exploring examples of how these data are used in archaeological site investigations, and in documenting broad shifts in past climates and landscapes and human behaviour. Examples are drawn from Old and New World settings. Teaching is based around seminars which consider the methods and theories relating to the discipline and its role within the field of archaeology. These themes are then further explored in the field or laboratory as appropriate.

Convenor: [Prof. Mike Charles](#)

European Prehistory from the Mesolithic to the Bronze Age (Prehistory stream)

In this module we critically examine the archaeology of Mesolithic-Bronze Age Europe with reference to a series of themes, including:

- the development of hunter-gatherer societies after the Ice Age
- the spread and nature of early farming and herding practices
- changing funerary practices
- the increasing application of scientific methods, including 14C dating, stable isotopes and DNA
- the long-term consequences of farming/herding
- shifting materialities and identities

This paper aims to engage the student critically with the evidence for human societies of Mesolithic-Bronze Age Europe and the history of thought informing their interpretation. The student should gain a critical grasp of key shifts and themes in European prehistory and their role in the development of archaeological method and theory. The student should also develop a good grounding in the chronology and culture-history of later prehistoric Europe, and recent advances in the application of scientific methods.

Convenors: [Prof. Amy Bogaard](#)

Landscape Archaeology and Spatial Technology (Landscape Stream)

This course provides an overview of the key issues in landscape archaeology, highlighting the approaches and methods employed in the recording, management and interpretation of the archaeological landscape. It will explore the theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches which have furthered our understanding of the development of the cultural and physical landscape.

Topics will include:

- space vs. place
- funerary landscapes
- designed landscapes
- landscape and identity
- aerial archaeology
- archaeological prospection
- historic landscape characterisation

This course will provide students with a robust understanding of the approaches that are used in landscape archaeology, enable them to critically evaluate the datasets that are used to study past landscapes and apply appropriate methods to their own research.

Convenor: [Dr John Pouncett](#)

Maritime Societies (Maritime Stream)

Approaches to maritime archaeology often concentrate on ships and their material remains and while this is an entirely legitimate approach, it can largely ignore the people and the communities that created, sustained and sailed on them.

This paper will provide an overview of key theoretical and conceptual issues relevant to maritime archaeology, and will explore a broad range of social, cultural, technological and environmental issues relating to the creation of maritime societies both on land and at sea. It will examine the development of maritime cultural landscapes and port towns, shipboard societies, and maritime subcultures, alongside themes such as maritime economies, warfare, technological change, and religion, ritual, and superstition.

The paper will stress archaeological perspectives on maritime societies, but will also draw upon anthropological, palaeoenvironmental, documentary, and other sources of information to offer a holistic approach. In covering this range of themes, the paper will address maritime societies and seafaring through time, from the earliest records of coastal subsistence and movement across the sea through to maritime activities documented in textual sources.

Convenor: [Dr. Damian Robinson](#)

MSc Archaeology modules running in Hilary Term 2024/25

Archaeology and Geographical Information Systems (Landscape stream)

This Module provides a practical introduction to the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) in archaeology. GIS has transformed the way in which archaeologists manage spatial data, think about spatial relationships and engage the public in research. The analytical, interpretative and communicative potential

of GIS will be explored within the broader context of spatial archaeology, highlighting the methodological and theoretical implications of GIS-based approaches with reference to key case studies.

This module introduces the concepts of space, tools of representation and processes of reasoning which underpin archaeological applications of GIS. Students will learn how to critically evaluate the methods employed by other researchers and apply appropriate methods to datasets created during practical classes and their own research.

Convenor: [Dr John Pouncett](#)

Archaeology of Colonialism (Social Stream)

Colonialism has been the dominant element of world history for the last five hundred years and an important aspect of world history for the last 5000 years. The legacy of colonialism is pervasive in today's societies and archaeology has much light to throw on colonial forms past and present, complementing written accounts and oral histories. A comparative approach to colonial past and present is taken in this module, drawing on perspectives from post-colonial theory, anthropology, world-systems theory as well as archaeology. Material culture from archaeological sites is an important source for the study of colonialism, but so too are museum collections and archival materials. Through its concentration on the material aspects of human existence archaeology has a unique perspective complementing those drawn from many elements of post-colonial theory which do not consider the material world in any great detail. The case studies considered cover diverse geographical areas and time periods. These range from (and are not limited to) early Mesopotamia, Greek settlements, the Roman Empire, the Incas and Aztecs, colonialism in Latin America post-1492, evolution of Swahili settlements in East Africa post AD900, European settlement along the Atlantic coast of Africa and colonialism in Africa post-Berlin Congress of 1884/5. (Please note, there may be changes to the content of this module).

Convenor: [Dr Ashley Coutu](#)

Archaeology of Late Anglo-Saxon England (Medieval Stream)

This course covers roughly the period from 450-750 and examines current debates in several areas of the subject, including migration theory and the nature of post-Roman Britain; death and burial; the links between material culture and identity; settlements and settlement patterns.

Convenor: [Professor Helena Hamerow](#)

Cognitive Archaeology (Social stream)

Cognitive archaeology is a fast-growing field of research dedicated to the comparative study of human cognition from a material culture-perspective. In particular, cognitive archaeology brings together three major related specializations: 1) the study of the biosocial origins and evolution of human intelligence (broadly known as Evolutionary Cognitive Archaeology ECA), 2) the study of the unity and diversity of the human mind (past and present), and 3) the anthropological and experimental study of the interaction between cognition and material culture. The proposed option integrates all three major specializations bringing together the archaeological, the anthropological and the evolutionary dimensions of cognitive archaeology. It offers a critical synthesis of major issues related to the social and bodily dimensions of human intelligence and especially the effects that the changing socio-material environment (artificial or natural) has on humans and upon their minds. The major aim of the option is to explore the nature of the relationship between cognition and material culture—what it is, how it changes, and what role observed transformations in human societies

play in forging those links. Using a variety of archaeological and anthropological themes and case studies the option will offer a comparative examination of the impact of material culture on the making and evolution of human intelligence (brain and body) from its earliest beginnings to the present day.

Convenor: [Prof. Lambros Malafouris](#)

Current Viking Archaeology (Medieval Stream)

As a discipline, Viking-Age archaeology has seen tremendous change over the last 20 years: a result of a wealth of new archaeological discoveries, the application of advanced scientific techniques (aDNA, stable isotope analysis, material provenancing techniques), and the field's embrace of new theoretical and geographic perspectives, all of which has developed alongside growing public engagement with the subject. These developments have challenged established narratives concerning the social structure, landscape and economy of the Viking Age. This course provides students with an opportunity to consider and debate the field's most dynamic and controversial topics.

Through a combination of lectures, small group discussion, and museum-based classes, students will discuss issues such as the timings and motivations of the Viking expansion, the construction of gendered and other social identities, the importance of trade in silver, fur and slaves, pre-Christian ritual activity and the nature of Scandinavian activity in Rus and the Eastern Baltic. We will evaluate evidence from urban and rural settlements, burials, monuments and portable antiquities, from within Scandinavia and the Scandinavian overseas settlements. We will assess the latest archaeological and scientific discoveries, developing a source-critical awareness of the limitations of different strands of evidence.

Convenor: [Dr Jane Kershaw](#)

Discovering Cultural Heritage (Social Stream)

This module provides a critical introduction to cultural heritage for archaeologists, offering an extensive and inclusive perspective. By delivering crucial theoretical frameworks and practical insights, the module aids students to situate archaeological discoveries and research within the broader social, cultural, and political contexts in which the processes of conceptualising and safeguarding cultural heritage take place.

Lectures and tutorials will explore the nature of cultural heritage (both tangible and intangible), its relationship to archaeology, what it means to people, and its more formal interpretation from a globalised perspective, such as in World Heritage. The module will also consider how cultural heritage contributes to the creation of individual and group identities, how it is valued by various actors and stakeholders over time, and how it is contested through colonial pasts, nation-building, armed conflict and ideological destruction, as well as minority and refugee identities. The role of heritage agencies, from UNESCO to national government agencies, museums, and civil society in heritage management will be assessed. Risks to heritage from factors such as climate change, development, tourism and conflict, including the weaponization of cultural heritage, will be discussed within the framework of risk management and heritage protection.

Students will create a professional practice portfolio collected during a real-life case study they have identified, normally contextualised around a site or museum/collection and focusing on one of the problems faced in managing/protecting/interpreting it – legislation, funding, community engagement, identification of key stakeholders, and threats.

While the module considers cultural heritage studies on a global level, it encourages a focus on the Global South.

Convenors: [Dr Bill Finlayson](#) and [Dr Bijan Rouhani](#)

Early human dispersals in Asia and the Pacific (Asia Stream and Prehistory Stream)

The Asia-Pacific zone today is home to over half of the world's population, and with it over half of the planet's human diversity. This course brings together the latest research in archaeology, palaeoanthropology, genetics, linguistics, and other historical disciplines to uncover how this diversity emerged in the deep human past. We begin the course by looking at the extreme ecological and cultural diversity that characterises the Asia-Pacific before turning to the history of archaeological research on early human dispersals in the region. Next, we go all the way back to the early Pleistocene period and examine the distribution of fossil primates and hominins in the region. We then move forward in time to explore the multispecies worlds of the Middle Pleistocene; a time when *Homo erectus*, Neanderthals, Denisovans, and the diminutive *Homo floresiensis* and *Homo luzonensis* overlapped and sometimes even interacted with our own species, *Homo sapiens*. Next, we follow the paths of *Homo sapiens* throughout the diverse environments of mainland Asia, as they moved into arid deserts, humid rainforests, high altitudes, and cold latitudes. Our focus will then shift to how our species dispersed into the islands of Southeast Asia and then continental Australasia. Finally, we venture to far-flung shores, uncovering evidence for the earliest dispersals of people out of Southeast Asia and into the remote Pacific Islands during the Late Holocene. Throughout the course — canvassing the human experience across millions of years and tens of thousands of kilometres — our focus will be on the expanding repertoire of novel ecologies that humans came to inhabit, as well as how humans began to change and reshape these spaces, creating new anthropogenic worlds in which to live.

Convenor: [Dr Dylan Gaffney](#)

Interdisciplinary approaches to Chinese Ceramics: Perspectives from the Asia-Pacific Region (Asia Stream)

The tendency, even today, to refer to high quality translucent white wares as 'china' harks back to a period where this rarefied material was only obtainable from the East. Yet, the production of Chinese porcelain, with all its global impact, is only one late episode in a complex social relationship between humans and clay that stretches back almost 20,000 years. This course focusses on the emergence and development of ceramics in prehistoric and historic China, providing both general training in ceramic analysis and the specific context needed by students wishing to specialize in the study of Eastern Asia.

From the first modern archaeological excavations in China—which uncovered remarkable prehistoric assemblages of elaborately painted earthenware—to long-standing research on Imperial kiln sites and the recent discovery of the earliest pottery in the world, archaeological ceramics research has played an important part in uncovering China's past. Traditional archaeological approaches will, therefore, form the foundations of the course. However, students will also be shown how archaeological interpretations of pottery in the past can be shaped within frameworks drawn from ethnographic, ethnoarchaeological, and historical research. In addition, by connecting Archaeological Materials component of the MSt course, students will be given a general introduction to suitable techniques for the analysis of both high- and low-fired ceramics.

The course will introduce China's early relationship ceramics and consider how geography and climate help us to contextualize early finds and understand the character of later production. Focusing on concrete examples from the Chinese Neolithic to the Qing Dynasty, the course will show how ceramics can help us to

explore innovation, specialization and centralization in production, to both define and transgress the boundaries of cultural units, and to investigate the character of long-distance exchange.

Convenor: [Dr. Anke Hein](#)

Maritime Archaeology (Maritime stream)

The course examines the development of seafaring through material cultural and maritime history. It will generally concentrate on the ancient cultures of the Mediterranean and connected regions, although other places and time periods can be investigated if there is sufficient interest.

The main trends in the historical development of seafaring cultures will be examined, including the technological development of both military and merchant ships and their cargoes, the growth of ports and nautical architecture, as well as more synthetic approaches to issues such as the maritime economy, naval warfare, the spread of knowledge, and the growth of polities.

The nature of the archaeological, textual and iconographic evidence will be discussed in order to understand the limitations and opportunities inherent in each form of evidence.

Convenor: [Dr. Damian Robinson](#)

Methods and Techniques in Maritime Archaeology (Maritime stream)

Maritime archaeology can be a very technical discipline and consequently the purpose of the course is to provide an up-to-date overview of the current methods and techniques in maritime archaeology and its allied sub-disciplines of maritime history and anthropology.

The module can include sessions on ethics, survey and excavation techniques, wetland archaeology, approaches to deepwater, interpreting nautical architecture, maritime object biographies, maritime ethnography, presenting maritime archaeology to different audiences. There are no temporal or geographical limits upon the examples of best and worst practise that will be used in this course.

Convenor: [Dr. Damian Robinson](#)

Molecular Bioarchaeology (Environmental stream)

Scientific methods are playing an increasingly important role in archaeological research, and this is particularly true of organic materials. Developments in the analysis of stable isotopes, lipid residues, trace elements and ancient DNA are providing new lines of evidence for a host of central questions, including past subsistence and environmental change, migration and genetic origins. This course provides a detailed, critical overview of these topics, both in terms of the techniques themselves, and their archaeological applications. More traditional bioarchaeological analysis of human, faunal, and plant remains also feature.

The taught element of the course involves lectures and seminars that are complemented by interactive sessions involving the investigation of plant, animal and human remains as well as the generation and analysis of isotopic data. It makes use of the ongoing research of both members of staff and researchers to present the latest approaches.

Coordinator: [Dr Amy Styring](#)

Practical Archaeobotany (Environmental stream)

Many current debates in archaeology, ranging from the origins of agriculture to the rise and collapse of urban centres and empires, rely on ideas concerning the production and consumption of plants. This paper introduces the theory and methodology that underpin the analysis of macroscopic plant remains from archaeological deposits. Core topics include the identification of charred and waterlogged plant remains, issues of preservation and recovery, analytical approaches to the interpretation of archaeobotanical data and presentation of results. The practical component of the paper consists of eight laboratory-based classes (2-3 hours each) and covers the key stages of archaeobotanical investigation, from on-site recovery to sample sorting, identification, quantification and data analysis. The tutorial component (five sessions) focuses on principles underlying analytical techniques and broader issues of interpretation.

Convenor: [Prof. Mike Charles](#)

The Emergence of Farming in Western Asia (Asia, Environmental and Prehistory Streams)

This module presents the latest (bio)archaeological research into the origins and establishment of agriculture in western Asia, focussing on the Epipalaeolithic-Neolithic but also considering case studies from subsequent periods to illustrate the long-term development of farming. Through lectures, tutorials and museum-based classes we set out the chronological and material culture framework to assess the direct archaeobotanical and archaeozoological evidence for domestication relationships and management ecology in different ecological settings and through time. Geographically we focus not only on the 'Fertile Crescent' (the arc of relatively high rainfall extending from the southern Levant in the south-west through Syria, SE Turkey and N Iraq in its central zone and down through the Zagros mountains of Iran in the east) but also on adjacent regions (e.g. central Anatolia) that are proving equally important to the origins story and/or to its longer term consequences.'

Convenors: [Prof. Amy Bogaard](#) and [Prof. Mike Charles](#)

The Medieval Body and Adornment (Medieval Stream)

This course investigates the material culture of mainland Britain, focusing on objects that were worn and adorned clothing during the period c.AD 1200-1600. Using archaeological material, and other sources of evidence, the course will examine how these artefacts were used in the daily lives of people, and how their context of use was affected by major social events, such as the Black Death, the Wars of the Roses, and the Reformation. Themes covered will include the history of artefact studies, fashion and consumption, courtship, sexuality, devotion and pilgrimage, magic and protection, and death and burial. A multidisciplinary approach will be taken to understand the themes fully, drawing predominantly on archaeological evidence, but also using material from history, art history, anthropology and related disciplines. Material from the Ashmolean Museum's medieval collections will be made use of, and how medieval material evidence is collected and disseminated will also be investigated.

Convenor: [Dr. Eleanor Standley](#)

Materials analysis and the study of technological change

This course explores the use of scientific analysis of archaeological artefacts to elucidate questions of archaeological interest. We will cover a broad introduction to the study of materials, and specifically materials in archaeological science. We will discuss the fundamentals of material structure for each of the major classes of materials exploited by people across the past (metals, stone, ceramics, glass, organics), the how, where and why of the sourcing of raw materials, as well as the complexity and variation of production processes. Through this, we will also cover the major techniques used in the analysis of archaeological materials, and their strengths and weaknesses, and their usefulness for different kinds of materials and question. At the heart of this course will be the *why* of analysis, and what it can bring to archaeology.

This course is taught through lectures, seminars and tutorials, as well as practical laboratory teaching and experimental archaeology.

Coordinator: [Prof. Shadreck Chirikure](#)

Molecular Bioarchaeology

Scientific methods are playing an increasingly important role in archaeological research, and this is particularly true of organic materials. Developments in the analysis of stable isotopes, lipid residues, trace elements and ancient DNA are providing new lines of evidence for a host of central questions, including past subsistence and environmental change, migration and genetic origins. This course provides a detailed, critical overview of these topics, both in terms of the techniques themselves, and their archaeological applications. More traditional bioarchaeological analysis of human, faunal, and plant remains also feature.

The taught element of the course involves lectures and seminars that are complemented by interactive sessions involving the investigation of plant, animal and human remains as well as the generation and analysis of isotopic data. It makes use of the ongoing research of both members of staff and researchers to present the latest approaches.

Coordinator: [Prof. Greger Larson](#)

Principles and Practice of Scientific Dating

We need to be able to put past events onto a timescale if we are to understand them properly. Scientific dating allows us to explore the relationship between different sites and regions. Furthermore, chronologies built up from dating and other evidence enable us to understand processes at work in the archaeological record. This course looks at the scientific dating methods most commonly applied, including the practical aspects of radiocarbon, luminescence, tephrochronology and dendrochronology. It also provides an introduction to the use of statistical methods for combination of information from direct dating and other archaeological information. There is a strong emphasis on the critical evaluation of dating evidence.

Coordinator: [Dr Rachel Wood](#)

Archaeology of Greek Women

This option will examine what archaeology can tell us about the life of women in the Greek world. The period covered is roughly from the 8th century BC to the end of the Hellenistic period. The close study of literary, archaeological, epigraphic evidence and the visual imagery regarding women will aim to appraise and occasionally challenge paradigms about women's life and position in ancient Greek society. Themes that will be explored are: the role of women in cult and festivals; women and burial; working women; the adornment of women; education of women; images of women in classical Athens (pottery, grave reliefs); Hellenistic statuary of women; terracottas.

Convenor: [Dr Anna Blomley](#)

Etruscan Italy

This course explores the development of Etruscan civilisation in the first millennium BC and its significance for understanding contemporary and later developments around the Mediterranean. Within a broadly chronological structure, subjects ranging from the rituals of daily life and death to the development of autonomous cities such as Veii, Tarquinia, and Caere are studied using a range of archaeological, artistic, scientific, historical, and linguistic evidence. Emphasis is placed upon close examination of sites and artefacts including, where practical, those held in local museums.

Convenor: [Dr Charlotte Potts](#)

Archaeology of Roman Urban Systems

In exploring the development of towns and their related territories in the first three centuries AD, this course provides an introduction to Roman urbanism and the lively modern debate over how it worked and whom it served. The study of the physical design of the city, its public and private buildings, and its infrastructure, along with the objects of trade and manufacture, is placed in the broader context of the types and patterns of rural settlement, agricultural production, transport and communications. This allows various themes to be investigated, including what it meant to live in a Roman town, and in its countryside, and what contributed to the remarkable prosperity of urban centres before the widespread retrenchment of the third century. Those taking the course will become familiar with the physical character of Roman cities based on representative sites, and with major landscape studies in Italy, Greece and North Africa. Particular attention is paid to problems and biases in assessing the character of the physical evidence; and in testing theoretical models against hard data.

Convenor: [Prof. Andrew Wilson](#)

OR

Landscape Archaeology in the Greek and Roman World

This course provides an introduction to the countryside and landscapes of the Classical world, and to archaeological means of investigating them. The study of past landscapes employs a range of aerial and surface techniques, and involves consideration of processes of landscape change through environmental and human factors. A large proportion of the ancient population lived in the countryside, and processes of colonisation in both the Greek and Roman worlds had a considerable impact on the structuring of rural

landscapes. In particular, Roman land allotment by centuriation divided up many areas in a manner sometimes still traceable through patterns of land tenure today. Greek and Roman large-scale drainage and land reclamation projects radically altered whole regions and brought new land under exploitation. Topics to be studied include: aerial photography; field survey; settlement patterns; centuriation and the organisation of landscapes; landscape changes - natural and human agency; deliberate transformations of nature; water management: irrigation, drainage and land reclamation.

Convenor: [Prof. Andrew Wilson](#)

Greek Coinage

The Greek Coinage option is open to anybody interested in learning about money and coinage in the Greek world - no experience with coins is needed. Through a series of lectures, tutorials, and coin-handling sessions, students will gain an overview of Greek coinage from the beginnings of electrum in the sixth century down to the period of Roman rule. The course will focus on how coins can be used as evidence for the study of classical archaeology and art, exploring themes such as how coins can be used to document patterns of trade, reflect developments in classical art, and provide examples of civic and personal iconography. The Coin Room of the Ashmolean Museum houses one of the finest collections of Greek coins in the world and is a key centre for the study of ancient coins. Students may gain experience of working with coins by participating in a range of volunteer projects based on the collection. The Coin Room also houses the numismatic section of the Sackler Library and maintains an extensive collection of plaster casts and auction catalogues.

Convenor: [Dr Volker Heuchert](#)

Greek Sculpture

Large statues and reliefs in stone and metal were among the most prominent public symbols in ancient Greek society, and surviving examples retain today a strong visual impact. Dramatic new discoveries, from excavation and shipwrecks, are constantly revising and sharpening our knowledge of this distinctive historical phenomenon. The course studies the sudden emergence of large marble statues in the archaic period, the revolutionary figures that embodied the new visual system that we know as 'classical' in the fifth and fourth centuries, and the major new categories of sculpture that were developed or invented in the third and second centuries -- such as honorific portraits, heroic groups, and genre statues. The course has an excellent resource in the Cast Gallery of the Ashmolean Museum, which contains a collection of some 600 plaster casts of Greek statuary and relief. Subjects include: archaic kouros; the Siphnian treasury; the early classical revolution; the Olympia and Parthenon sculptures; athletic statuary; grave reliefs; early Hellenistic portraits; the Great Altar at Pergamon; Hellenistic genre; the Laocoon and Sperlonga groups.

Convenor: [Dr Joshua Thomas](#)

Roman Architecture

Architecture is the quintessential Roman art and the well-preserved remains of Roman monuments, buildings and engineering works dominate our vision of the empire. Against a background of the development of Roman architecture from the second century BC to the Tetrarchy, presented in a series of lectures, this course comprises a series of seminars exploring what the Romans themselves thought about their built environment. Using the *De architectura* of the Roman architect Vitruvius as a starting point, the seminars will address: the nature of architecture and the training of architects; the relative merits of different construction methods and building materials; the design of temples; public buildings in their civic setting; urban and rural housing; and engineering works and machines. Throughout, the emphasis will be on the role of architecture in Roman

society, and on the varied ways that architecture was employed by individuals and communities to express and enhance their status.

Convenor: [Dr John Hanson](#)

Roman Provincial Art

This option explores the transformation of Graeco-Roman artistic traditions as they were disseminated through the provinces of the Roman Empire. It will concentrate on material from selected provinces, especially Britain, and seek to understand the technical, stylistic, and iconographical differences that emerged when 'Roman' sculpture was produced sometimes far from its Mediterranean roots. It will also consider the varying functions and usage of art in different parts of the Roman world. The themes examined may include: critiques of the concept of 'Romanization'; the meaning of 'provincialism'; the significance of local materials and economic factors in artistic production; gravestones in Britain, Germany and the Balkans; the stone portraits of Palmyra; funerary art in Roman Egypt; Romano-British mosaics; and the question of where 'provincial' art ends in the Near East and beyond.

Convenor: [Dr. Peter Stewart](#)

Topics in Aegean Prehistory

The course involves in-depth study of selected, specific topics in Aegean Prehistory. It is not a general overview of Aegean Bronze Age, but asks students for detailed treatment of specific issues lying in three main areas: application of theory and method to specific problems; study of an individual site or class of sites; study of an individual artefact or class of artefacts.

Coordinator: [Dr Lisa Bendall](#)

MSt/MPhil Classical Archaeology modules running in Hilary Term 2024/25

Aegean Bronze Age Trade: Identities and Interactions

This course examines trade, specifically focusing on issues of identity and interaction in the Aegean Bronze Age, both within the Aegean and beyond. The Aegean was a fertile ground of interaction for various societies and social groups, particularly through maritime activities as the sea formed a connector rather than divider. The rich archaeological record for such interaction includes imported and exported artefacts and raw materials found primarily in settlements, shipwrecks and burial assemblages, but also evidence for more intangible exchanges of ideas, craft techniques, and cultural knowledge.

Convenor: [Dr Lisa Bendall](#)

Archaeology of Greek Religion

Religion was central to ancient Greek life and culture. For the ancient Greeks, conceiving divine power as a multitude of deities, each with a specific field of influence over human affairs, religion offered a means of comprehending, systematizing and communicating with the unseen forces governing the human condition. The gods were omnipresent, and men appealed to them in their chosen residences, sanctuaries, cult places and holy sites. Large and small, urban and rural, places of worship existed in all parts of the Greek world and were the focus of travels, rituals, cultural exchange, political propaganda. The best in Greek art and the finest

architecture were made for gods. The course will explore the settings, spaces, shapes, and structures of ancient Greek cult places, the votive dedications and the rituals associated with them, in order to investigate broad theoretical and methodological issues. Through a number of selected case-studies, the students will approach issues such as the role of religion in the formation of the polis; classical/Hellenistic approaches to polis-religion; the nature of private cults; the foundation of new cults; the material evidence relating to royal cults.

Convenor: [Dr Milena Melfi](#)

Archaeology of the Northern Greek World, c. 600–30 BC

The proposed option aims to offer graduate students an opportunity to explore the archaeology of three regions in the northern Greek world (Epirus, Thessaly, and Macedonia), focusing on the timeframe from the Archaic period to the area's provincial reorganisation around 27 BC. Though today a thriving and vibrant field of research, this geographical region is served comparatively poorly by surviving ancient written sources, characterised by a challenging research history and divided by the present-day territorial borders of Greece, Albania, and North Macedonia. Consequently, the archaeology of Epirus, Thessaly, and Macedonia has thus far not been studied as comprehensively as that of southern Greece, and all three regions often continue to be viewed (either consciously or unconsciously) as passive, peripheral, or even "backward" zones within the ancient Greek world.

In response to these issues, the proposed option aims to

1. explore ancient local dynamics (political, social, economic, cultural and religious) within the regions of Epirus, Thessaly, and Macedonia on the basis of the surviving archaeological evidence.
2. examine the interrelation between the three regions diachronically (both before and after the period of Macedonian intervention across the area).
3. investigate the role of Epirus, Thessaly, and Macedonia in wider Mediterranean networks.

Key types of archaeological evidence that can feature in the proposed option include remains related to settlement organisation (e.g. site distribution patterns, site layouts, or civic structures), to funerary practices (e.g. funerary architecture, grave goods, or funerary iconography), to religious practices (e.g. sacred spaces, sacred architecture, or votive materials) and to economic activities (e.g. sites and materials related to agricultural production, relevant ceramic finds, or numismatic materials within particular archaeological contexts).

Through the discussion of these types of evidence, the option will furthermore explore the interrelationship between modern history and archaeology in the Northern Greek region, posing the question in how far 19th- to 21st-century political divisions and developments have affected the archaeological record, its dissemination and its interpretation.

Convenor: [Dr Anna Blomley](#)

Archaeology of the Roman Economy

According to some views of the ancient world, the Roman economy was stagnant and under-developed; according to others, the Roman empire saw economic activity on a scale unparalleled again until 16th-18th century Europe, with the mass-production of certain types of artefact, agricultural specialisation for export, and considerable amounts of long-distance trade. This course examines the contribution which archaeology can make to that debate, and where between these two extremes the truth might lie. Topics covered include:

coinage and the metal supply; the economic impact of technological progress; agricultural specialisation and investment; the use of ceramic data to illuminate trading patterns; the interpretation of shipwreck evidence; the effect of ancient transport technologies on the distribution of goods; urban crafts and the involvement (or otherwise) of elites in non-agricultural activities.

Convenor: [Prof. Andrew Wilson](#)

Burials, Settlements, and Society in Early Greece, 1200-650 BC

One of the most fascinating periods in the study of Early Greece is that which starts with the rejection of the palatial system and ends with the appearance of the city-states. The course examines the archaeological evidence from a number of sites (mostly cemeteries and settlements, with the addition of a few cult sites). Broad themes and trajectories in this period are studied through specific sites, such as Argos, Athens, Corinth, Knossos, Lefkandi, and Tiryns. The course also considers recent approaches to the period, with an emphasis on the archaeological study of regional societies and their political and social structures. The transformation of these early communities from their Late Bronze Age past is examined closely, highlighting aspects of continuity and discontinuity and elucidating survival or rejection of earlier social structures.

Convenor: [Prof Irene Lemos](#)

Gandharan Art and the Classical World

The option explores the relationship between Graeco-Roman art and the Buddhist art of Gandhara (roughly Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan and parts of Afghanistan) around the first to third centuries AD. This has been a central puzzle since systematic study of Gandharan art and archaeology began in the middle of the 19th century, and it remains largely unresolved, with much debate as well as new insights from fresh research and excavation. The subject casts light upon the global movement of classical art traditions in the Hellenistic-Roman imperial periods and on mechanisms by which images and ideas were transmitted. It is also inseparable from the modern imperial context for archaeology in South Asia, and Gandharan art has constantly been claimed as heritage by a spectrum of modern observers, from European imperial administrators to Pakistani curators to Indian nationalists... So the reception of this relationship between 'East and West' will also be touched on. In addition it raises particular methodological questions e.g. about chronology, looting, and the impact of forgeries.

Convenor: [Professor Peter Stewart](#)

Greek and Roman Wallpainting

The new pictorialism of the classical period and later was deployed in the surviving media of tomb paintings, floor mosaics, and domestic wallpainting, as well as in the lost works described by ancient authors. The course studies the following major topics: the beginnings of Greek painting in the archaic period and its relation to ceramic art; fifth-century painting through the oblique evidence of painted pottery and ancient texts on big names such as Polygnotos and Zeuxis; the new evidence of tomb paintings from Macedonia and Thrace in the fourth and third centuries; the redeployment and manipulation of the Hellenistic repertoire in wallpainting and mosaic floors at Rome and Pompeii in the second and first centuries BC; and the use of the different wall systems and categories of painted subject to decorate and articulate domestic and reception spaces in Pompeian houses. The emphasis of the course is on the continuity between the Greek and Roman periods, on the invention and continuous reformulation of a common pictorial repertoire.

Convenor: [Dr Joshua Thomas](#)

Greek Vases

Painted vases give the fullest visual account of life and mythology in ancient Greece, and provide important archaeological data for refining and adding to knowledge of various aspects of ancient Greek culture. The course looks at the techniques and styles, from the eighth to the fourth century BC. The Ashmolean Museum has a fine collection of painted pottery of the period covered by the course, and examples from the collection are used in classes and lectures.

Convenor: [Dr Thomas Mannack](#)

Maritime Archaeology of the Greek and Roman Mediterranean

The course examines the historical development of seafaring communities. It will identify the main trends in the technological development of both military and merchant naval architecture both at sea and on land and examine the changing attitudes of Mediterranean peoples through the development of larger political units and increasing international trade and exchange. The nature of the archaeological, textual and iconographic evidence will be discussed in order to understand issues such as the lack of warships in the archaeological record and the apparent collapse of trade after the 2nd century AD as seen by the evidence of wrecked merchant ships.

The paper can also be used to provide an up-to-date overview of the current methods and theory in maritime archaeology and its allied sub-disciplines of maritime history and anthropology. Contemporary issues in maritime archaeology can also be studied, such as the requirement for a robust legislative framework for the management and protection of submerged sites and the problems with treasure hunting. This area of the course can also draw widely for its examples of best practise and may include case studies from the ancient world of the Mediterranean as well as the medieval and modern periods where appropriate.

Convenor: [Dr Damian Robinson](#)

Pompeii and Ostia

Pompeii and Ostia are the best-preserved and most extensively excavated cities in Roman Italy, as well as being the most extensively studied after Rome itself. The twist of fate which meant that Pompeii was destroyed just as Ostia was expanding in the later part of the first century AD has led to them being considered as representing two separate and contrasting phases of urban development in Italy, and their different histories of destruction and excavation have often meant that they have been studied in very different ways. In this course the emphasis is on taking the two cities together, exploring the similarities as well as the differences, and using methodologies designed for one site to interrogate the other. The exceptionally rich data-sets available for each city allow detailed analysis of a very wide range of issues, and the course is designed to allow students to pursue topics of special interest to them. Topics covered in recent years include food supply and diet, religion, population and urban zoning, economic structures and commercial landscapes, and housing.

Convenor: [Dr John Hanson](#)

Roman Coinage

Numismatic evidence can shed light on a wide range of questions of historical and archaeological interest in the Roman period. This course, which covers the principal developments in Roman coinage from its beginnings c. 320 BC until c. AD 500, will explore the numismatic approaches to monetary, economic, political,

and cultural history, as well as numismatics as a branch of art history. Both hoards and site finds will be examined from an archaeological perspective. Since students are taught by means of tutorials, the course can reflect often individual interests, as well as covering the broad range of the subject. Lectures are normally also available and include an opportunity to handle some of the relevant coins. Students are also encouraged to make use of the collection in the Heberden Coin Room (Ashmolean Museum), which includes 60,000 Roman coins, and is one of the 'top ten' collections in the world.

Convenor: [Dr Jerome Mairat](#)

Aegean 2000-1100 BC

This course covers the Aegean world from ca 2000-1000 BC. We will consider a range of topics, such as: the emergence of palace-based societies in both Minoan and Mycenaean contexts, the 'collapse' of both societies, and various themes such as economy, feasting, how to approach ancient iconography, and how writing systems were created.

Convenor: [Dr Lisa Bendall](#)

Archaic, 800-480 BC

The eighth century saw the emergence of many of the fundamental aspects of later Greek culture - substantial settlements, impressive sanctuaries with a wide range of dedications, the re-emergence of writing, and the development of lasting settlements around much of the Mediterranean coastal region. But it was in the seventh and sixth centuries that the monumental arts of sculpture and architecture re-appeared, and the production of figure-decorated pottery developed, especially in Corinth and Athens. This course therefore covers the formative stages of the aspects for which ancient Greece is most famous. It looks at a range of artefact types from the huge temples to tiny gems and relates these to each other and to the history and culture of the period.

Convenor: [Professor Irene Lemos](#)

Classical, 500-300 BC

The main categories of buildings, monuments, and images most characteristic of ancient city life were developed in the fifth and fourth centuries BC. The course studies a full range of material of the period, from city plans and temples to statues, reliefs, and painted pottery. Emphasis is placed on their study in their archaeological and historical contexts, and questions and themes concern the relation of new forms of public building and representation to changing historical circumstances. The fifth century BC made a decisive break with the visual modes of the archaic aristocracy, and an area of special investigation within the course is the swift emergence and consolidation of this revolutionary way of seeing and representing that we know as 'classical art'. The wide deployment and modulation of this new mode of representation by Mediterranean neighbours is also examined in the context of monuments from, for example, Lycia and Phoenicia.

Convenor: [Dr Thomas Mannack](#)

Early Imperial, 30 BC -AD 120

Octavian's victory at Actium brought an end to civil war and ushered in a period of relative stability around the Mediterranean under the Principate. The extension of Roman hegemony to the entire Mediterranean, and wars of conquest in north-west Europe, brought a vast area under Roman control and enabled the state to exploit resources on an unprecedented scale. The foundation of many new colonies exported a model of Roman urbanism around the western Mediterranean and into northern Europe, and lavish building projects were embarked on at Rome and in the provinces. Growing wealth fuelled growing consumption, and the material record shows the rapid spread both of Italian and of eastern fashions and motifs, and the emulation of elite tastes right down the social scale. This course examines the material culture, architecture, art and settlement of the Roman world both in Italy and in the provinces, from Augustus to Hadrian. Topics include

(but are not limited to) colonisation, imperial relief sculpture, portraiture, public and private architecture, wallpainting, mosaics, minor arts (gems and coins), and pottery.

Convenor: [Dr Peter Stewart](#)

Early Iron Age Greece, 1200-800 BC

The period between the collapse of the Bronze Age civilisations of Crete and mainland Greece and the society based on city states ('poleis') which emerges from the earliest Greek historical sources is a complex one. It has traditionally been thought of as a Dark Age, but new evidence shows that contacts and achievements were many. The sources are almost exclusively archaeological and, although they show major changes in society and settlement organisation, they also reveal continuity and regional diversity in response to the Mycenaean collapse. The eighth century saw the most profound changes, including the emergence of more elaborate settlements, more impressive sanctuaries with richer dedications, new contacts with the eastern and western Mediterranean, and the re-appearance of writing. Among the subjects covered are: explaining the Bronze Age collapse, Early Iron Age population movements, developments in metallurgy, continuity and change in ceramic and other styles of material culture, early sanctuaries, settlements and their organisation, colonisation, and the birth of the 'polis'.

Convenor: [Professor Irene Lemos](#)

Hellenistic, 330-30 BC

The horizons of the Greek world were hugely expanded by Alexander's conquests. A vast new area was opened to Macedonian and Greek settlements, from western Anatolia to north-western India, and a new kind of charismatic kingship was introduced to the Mediterranean world. The course studies the material and visual culture of this dynamic period through its most important sites and its most characteristic buildings, monuments, and images. Particular attention is paid to the following: to recent discoveries at Vergina and Pella, where the excavated houses, tombs, silverware, and wall paintings have revolutionized our understanding of the early Hellenistic period; to Attalid Pergamon, the best preserved royal capital; to Athens and Priene, as two different examples of traditional city states; and to the well documented example of Egyptian and Greek interaction in Ptolemaic Alexandria and Egypt. Other important subjects include: the Hellenistic royal image on coins and in statues; colonial settlement, such as that at Ai Khanoum in north-east Afghanistan; changes in honorific and funerary representation; the invention of new kinds of visual narrative, allegory, and landscape. The course also looks at late Hellenistic Delos and the mass export of Hellenistic material culture to the cities of Campania and Rome in the late second and first centuries BC.

Convenor: [Dr Milena Melfi](#)

Late Republican, 200-30 BC

During the period 200-30 B.C. Rome progressively established itself as ruler of the Mediterranean world, ultimately absorbing the Hellenistic kingdoms of the Greek east. The archaeology of this period shows an increasing Hellenisation of Roman life, and at the same time the emergence of a distinct Roman cultural identity through the fusion of Greek and Italic models. This course covers the architecture, art and material expression of Roman culture and settlement in the late Republican period 200-30 B.C., including (but not limited to) such topics as portrait sculpture; wall painting and mosaic art; architecture; Republican temple sanctuaries; the development of Roman urbanism in Italy and the provinces, and of the city of Rome.

Convenor: [Dr John Hanson](#)

Middle Imperial, AD 70-250

The period from the Flavians to the mid third century saw both the apogee of the Roman empire's prosperity and volume of architectural and artistic output, and major social and political changes that also affected art and architecture during the turbulent events of the third century. This course examines the art, architecture and material expression of Roman culture and settlement of the period, tracking development and change over time in Rome and the provinces. Topics include imperial and private portrait sculpture, monumental reliefs, funerary art, mosaics, wallpainting, public and private architecture, coins, gems, pottery and the distribution of artefacts.

Convenor: [Professor Andrew Wilson](#)