

MA Archaeology

The programme is made up of both compulsory (90 credits) and optional modules, arranged into six thematic streams. You may select modules from any of the streams and mix-and-match to suit your interests. Students are required to take a total of 180 credits. Our current modules are:

Compulsory Modules (90 credits)

Dissertation	80
Research Skills and Career Learning	10

Optional Modules (90 credits)

Theory Options

Theoretical Approaches in Archaeology (10)

Issues and Debates in Medieval Archaeology (10)

Issues and Debates in Bioarchaeology (10)

Quantitative Methods (10)

Old World Archaeology Options

Our Closest Cousins? Archaeology of the Neanderthals (20)

Interpreting Neolithic and Bronze Age Britain (20)

Themes and Approaches in the Study of Mesopotamia (20)

Climate Change and Human Societies (20)

Material Cultures and Identities in the Roman Empire (20)

The Archaeology of Money: Coins, Power and Society (20)

Medieval Archaeology Options

Viking Interactions in the West (20)

Colonisation and Cultural Transformation: the archaeology of crusading (20)

The Medieval Landscape (10)

Analysing the Medieval Townscape (20)

Bioarchaeology Options

Human Bioarchaeology (20)

Food and Culture (10)

Zooarchaeology (10 or 20)

Coastal and Maritime Geoarchaeology (20)

Applications of Micromorphological Analysis (10 or 20)

Vegetation History and Archaeobotany (20)

Climate Change and Human Communities (10 or 20)

Placement and Career Options

Archaeological Graphics (10)

Research and Enterprise Placement (20)

Research and Enterprise Micro-Placement (10)

Management of Heritage Assets (20)

Dissertation

Module Convenor: Prof Grenville Astill

Comprises a series of Dissertation workshops, a Masters Conference and a sustained period of independent supervised research in the writing of a Masters Level Dissertation. Develops advanced high-level skills in critical evaluation and understanding of current research problems, and method and theory, and in designing, planning and implementing a major independent research project, through writing a dissertation of 15,000 words. You may opt to submit part of their dissertation in the form of a peer-reviewed journal article.

Assessment: Research design, conference presentation, Dissertation.

Research Skills and Careers Learning

Module Convenor: Dr Rob Bachelor

Provides a comprehensive knowledge of the resources, techniques and skills required for conducting independent research and critical analytical writing at Masters Level, and for future study and employment within and beyond the discipline. Topics include: presenting conference posters and papers, writing an academic paper, writing professional report, CV and Interview skills, applying for a PhD.

Assessment: Article critique, Mock job application

Theory Options

Theoretical Approaches in Archaeology

Module Convenor: Dr Duncan Garrow

Focusses on different approaches to archaeological theory, their strengths and weaknesses, and how they are relevant to the interpretation of archaeological evidence. As well as presenting and discussing these approaches, we examine the kinds of inferences about human behaviour in the past that archaeologists make on the basis of this material evidence. These inferences extend from basic productive activities to social organisation and practices, larger scale social and political structures and symbolism, cognition and ideology.

Assessment: Essay

Issues and Debates in Medieval Archaeology

Module Convenor: Dr Gabor Thomas

This module provides an in-depth grounding in the methods, approaches and perspectives which define medieval archaeology as a discipline. The module explores the relationship of medieval archaeology to history, art-history, and developments in archaeological theory, and draws upon case studies from across Europe to examine how archaeologists have enriched understanding of key aspects of medieval life including religion, gender, ethnicity and human life course.

Assessment: Report, Presentation

Issues and Debates in Bioarchaeology

Module Convenor: Dr Mary Lewis

This module aims to provide students with a deeper understanding of the approaches used to analyse human skeletal remains from archaeological contexts, and a critical awareness of central issues within bioarchaeology that can be applied to both the optional modules and the dissertation.

Assessment: Article critique, Presentation.

Old World Archaeology Options

Our Closest Cousins? Archaeology of the Neanderthals

Module Convenor: Dr Rob Hosfield

This module provides you with a comprehensive knowledge of the evolution and behaviour of the Neanderthals (*H. neanderthalensis*) as reconstructed from the archaeological and fossil records. You will develop your knowledge of the methods used for analysing and interpreting evidence from the early

prehistoric archaeological record, and will examine how different sources of evidence are used in combination to reconstruct Neanderthal technology, subsistence, environments, lifestyles and cognition. You will also acquire an understanding of the history of Neanderthal studies and appreciate how issues involved in Neanderthal palaeoanthropology and archaeology encapsulate general problems and challenges relating to the study of human evolution. The module is taught through a combination of introductory lectures, directed reading-based discussion and presentation seminars, practical artefact-based sessions, and field trips.

Assessment: Essay, Critique, Presentation

Interpreting Neolithic and Bronze Age Britain

Module Convenor: Dr Duncan Garrow

This module will introduce students to, and enable them to develop their understanding of, the archaeology of Neolithic and Early Bronze Age Britain. It will focus in particular on how we interpret the archaeological record of this period, looking at how theoretical ideas have developed especially over the past twenty years. The module is taught through a combination of introductory lectures, directed reading-based discussion seminars, and a field trip to Wessex.

Assessment: Essay

Themes and Approaches in the Study of Mesopotamia

Module Convenor: Prof Roger Matthews

Provides a systematic understanding and critical awareness of current knowledge and issues in studies of changes in Mesopotamian during this period. It also aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the theoretical and methodological approaches to study of early urban settlement and society in this region.

Assessment: essay (100%)

Climate Change and Human Communities

Module Convenor: Prof Dominik Fleitmann

Provides an understanding of the climatic changes and events that took place during the Holocene. You will learn how palaeoclimate data can be obtained from various geological (sediments, stalagmites), physical (ice cores) and biological archives (trees, corals), and how these records can be used for the interpretation of archaeological findings. Furthermore, by presenting and discussing examples for climate-human relationships students will be encouraged to engage more fully with interdisciplinary research.

Assessment: essay, specialist report, oral presentation

Material Culture and Identities in the Roman Empire

Module Convenor: Dr Hella Eckardt

This module combines detailed research on specific Romano-British artefacts with a broader discussion of current archaeological theory on consumption, identity and material culture. The key theoretical issue to be addressed is the relationship between the consumption of objects and the expression of social and cultural identities.

Assessment: essay, oral presentation, seminar participation

The Archaeology of Money: Coins, Power and Society

Module Convenor: Dr John Creighton

This module provides you with a working knowledge of Celtic and early Roman coinage. This will be in the context of learning ways numismatists have used coin data to create narratives about the past. By the end of the course all students should be able to critically evaluate these narratives, and the methodologies behind them.

Assessment: Essay, Seminar presentation

Medieval Archaeology Options

Viking Interactions in the West

Module Convenor: Dr Gabor Thomas

This module covers the period of Viking cultural expansion across north-west Europe between the late eighth and eleventh centuries. You will evaluate the particular character and quality of the archaeological evidence available for the period against the background provided by historical and Saga sources. The module will be structured around the geography of Viking colonisation in the West commencing with the Scandinavian background and progressing to Britain, Ireland, Iceland, Greenland and North America. A special concern of the module is the contribution archaeology is making to an understanding of ethnic identity and cultural interaction during the Viking Age. Major nested themes include religion and burial, the silver economy, towns, rural settlement, craft and industry and art and artefacts.

Assessment: essay, oral presentation

Colonisation and Cultural Transformation: The Archaeology of Crusading

Module Convenor: Dr Aleks Pluskowski

This module reviews the archaeological approaches to the crusading movement and the related processes of colonisation, religious conversion and inter-cultural exchange at the fringes of medieval Christian Europe – covering the years AD 1095-1492. It is taught in seminars.

Assessment: essay and seminar performance

The Medieval Landscape

Module Convenor: Prof Grenville Astill

This module provides you with a critical knowledge of the range of techniques used to study how people shaped and responded to their environment during the Middle Ages. Through close examination of diverse case studies, you will be able to integrate these techniques within a robust theoretical framework, as well as consider the contribution of written sources to understanding past environments.

Assessment: Essay, Presentation.

Analysing the Medieval Townscape

Module Convenor: Prof Grenville Astill

This module will develop your understanding of medieval urban archaeology and how it is used to understand the process of town development. This will be achieved by detailed case studies of particular towns using the available evidence and site visits. You will also gain a wider appreciation of how such evidence is used to contribute to our overall ideas about the character of towns in Europe. How contemporary redevelopment is managed in the historic cores of our towns will also be considered.

Assessment: Desk-top Survey, Illustrated Report

Bioarchaeology Options

Food and Culture

Module Convenor: Dr Gundula Müldner

This module introduces the theoretical framework of nutritional anthropology and its application to archaeology. We will discuss the methodology, strengths and drawbacks of various approaches to reconstructing past diets, including artefactual, osteological (human and animal bones) and biochemical evidence. In a series of seminars you will become acquainted with and discuss key issues and debates in palaeodietary analysis, including the role of diet in human evolution, the Mesolithic-Neolithic transition, feasting and conspicuous consumption, cannibalism, migration and colonisation (Roman Britain), social status and social change (medieval period), gender and taboos.

Assessment: essay, oral presentation.

Human Bioarchaeology

Module Convenor: Dr Mary Lewis

This highly practical module will introduce the key methods employed in the examination of human remains from archaeological sites and utilise skeletal collections held by the Department of Archaeology. The theory and application of estimates of sex, age, stature and pathological indicators will be explored and the way in which such information has been used to understand past populations, using the biocultural approach, will be identified and discussed.

Assessment: essay, professional skeletal report, practical test

Zooarchaeology

Module Convenor: Dr Aleks Pluskowski

This highly practical module will develop your understanding of the study of animal remains recovered from archaeological contexts. Fundamental identification and recording techniques, including ageing, sexing, osteometric recording and quantification methods will be covered, providing a working knowledge of the value of faunal assemblages recovered from archaeological sites, with a focus on historical periods. You will also develop an understanding of skeletal modifications resulting from pathology, processing and taphonomic factors. The module focuses on mammals, but introduces the identification of bird, fish, and reptile and amphibian skeletons.

Assessment: Short essay (20-credit option), practical test, specialist report

Applications of Micromorphological Analysis

Module Convenor: Dr Wendy Matthews

Description: Provides in-depth practical knowledge and critical understanding of the application of micromorphological techniques to the study of landscapes and settlements. Themes include: human-environment inter-relations; plant taphonomy and use; early agriculture; material culture, architecture and the built environment; and site formation processes, post-depositional alterations and management.

Assessment: Essay, specialist report, practical laboratory test

Vegetation History and Archaeobotany

Module Convenor: Dr Nick Branch

Provides a detailed account of the theoretical and practical approaches used to reconstruct vegetation history, climate change, and past plant economies and diet, using sub-fossil micro- and macroscopic plant remains. Taught through lectures, laboratory practical classes, seminars and a field trip demonstrating how palaeobotanical and archaeobotanical records provide information on the human environment, resource exploitation and subsistence.

Assessment: Field notebook, oral presentation, laboratory report.

Coastal and Maritime Geoarchaeology

Module Convenor: Prof Martin Bell

Develops an understanding of the distinctive nature of coastal archaeology and its contribution to our understanding of the past. This includes the main types of site and evidence, the geomorphological and sedimentary contexts in which that evidence occurs, the methods employed and how archaeology relates to other aspects of coastal zone management.

Assessment: essay, specialist report, oral presentation

Career and Placement Options

Research and Enterprise Micro-Placement

Module Convenor: Dr Rob Batchelor

Helps students apply their academic training within a research and/or enterprise environment. Research placements will provide the opportunity of working with a member of staff on a current project based in the

UK or internationally. Enterprise positions would allow students to work with a developer-funded archaeological unit/specialist, consultancy or government organisation to gain experience of professional commercial archaeology.

Assessment: Grant application/tender document, Presentation

Archaeological Graphics

Module Convenor: Sarah Lucas

Provides an overview of the role of graphic communication in archaeology, and practical experience in Adobe software and the technical issues involved in producing different types of illustration. Themes include: the layout of display material and the preparation of illustrations for academic publication.

Assessment: Practical skills assessment, Illustration Project

Quantitative Methods

Module Convenor: Dr Rob Hosfield

Teaches quantitative analytical methods appropriate to environmental archaeological techniques and approaches. The module is designed to familiarise you with univariate and multivariate statistical principles and a range of core statistical analytical methods and techniques, prior to undertaking Masters degree-level dissertation work. The practical sessions will also familiarise you with standard statistical software packages (Microsoft Excel, SPSS and PAST). In addition you will learn how to prepare environmental archaeological statistical data-sets for analysis and presentation/publication, primarily through the assessed project.

Assessment: Project Report

Management of Heritage Assets

Module Convenor: Dr Ashley Dabson (Henley Business School)

This module is a joint module between Real Estate and Planning and Archaeology. It is about understanding the cultural, architectural and historic importance of a site and its management in terms of protection, conservation, presentation, education and commercialisation. It is about understanding the issues and tensions between competing interests and identifying creative and sustainable solutions. The module is a mix of site visits, lectures, seminars and self-directed learning.

Assessment: Heritage Assessment Project