MA Archaeology (Bioarchaeology)

The programme is made up of both compulsory (100 credits) and optional modules (80 credits). You are required to select at least 40 credits from the Bioarchaeology Options and carry out your dissertation research in a related area. You need to take a total of 180 credits. Our current modules are:

**Compulsory Modules (100 credits)**

- **Dissertation**: 80 credits
- **Issues and Debates in Bioarchaeology**: 10 credits
- **Research Skills and Career Learning**: 10 credits

**Optional Modules (80 credits)**

**Bioarchaeology Options (select at least 40-credits)**
- Human Bioarchaeology (20)
- Food and Culture (10)
- Zooarchaeology (10 or 20)
- Applications of Micromorphological Analysis (10 or 20)
- Vegetation History and Archaecobotany (20)
- Climate Change and Human Communities (10 or 20)
- Our Closest Cousins? Archaeology of the Neanderthals (20)
- Theoretical Approaches in Archaeology (10)

**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)
- Theoretical Approaches in Archaeology (10)

**Old World Archaeology Options**
- Interpreting Neolithic and Bronze Age Britain (20)
- Themes and Approaches in the Study of Mesopotamia (20)
- Material Cultures and Identities in the Roman Empire (20)
- The Archaeology of Money: Coins, Power and Society (20)

**Placement and Career Options**
- Archaeological Graphics (10)
- Research and Enterprise Placement (20)
- Research and Enterprise Micro-Placement (10)
- Management of Heritage Assets (20)
- Quantitative Methods (10)
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.

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 analyses 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.

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

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

**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

**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.

**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 palaeoclimatic 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

**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

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, oral 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