

4 Making Your Mind Up: Module Option Advice from Staff and Current Students

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Still struggling to decide which module options to apply for, or simply interested to find out what people are doing on other courses? This is something that many first and second year students experience every spring term. Below is a review of all of the options on offer for next year from many of the staff leading them and current students taking them, in the hope that you will be able to find the ones that interest you the most. The decisions you will have to make will be quite important ones so it is advisable that you do not rush into them. One of the great things about archaeology is that the range of fields you decide to pursue can be as narrow or as broad as you wish; which although making any decision more difficult, can also help keep your degree highly enjoyable and refreshing.

Unfortunately, Jon Finch is currently away on sabbatical and so we are not able to share any information about his new Assessed Seminar option, 'The Modern Landscape'. If you are interested to learn more about it, or indeed any of the options, the 'Choosing Options' page, accessible from the 'Undergraduate Modules' page on the intranet contains much more detailed information (the URL is at the end of this article). Your supervisors and the staff running the options will also be able to provide any information if you require it. All that remains to be said is... if any of the third year Assessed Seminar options do not currently guarantee cake, they will do soon!

World Archaeology

Early Medieval Towns – Soren Sindbaek and a current student

Urbanism is a great divide in the history of humanity, second only, perhaps, to the adoption of agriculture. It is not a one-off event, but a process that has kept emerging in new places and in new forms ever since the Neolithic. Early medieval towns are a crucial and surprising case. European historical tradition has identified urbanism with Graeco-Roman walled cities or medieval fortress towns. By this yardstick the early medieval period, with almost no towns of this form, has come to be seen as a devolution, a crisis, a bad mistake, which was luckily overcome. But archaeology has introduced a new storyline. Early medieval people developed different models of complex societies – a wealth of cultural diversity, which is nowhere more apparent than in their towns. Early medieval urban sites are some of the richest and most intriguing archaeological sites of the period, an extraordinary record of artefacts, monuments or biofacts, and hubs of cultural innovation and exchange, identities and social roles.

My idea with the course on 'Early Medieval Towns' is to use urban sites and excavations as a way of introducing early medieval archaeology more generally, and also to illustrate contrasts, common themes, and surprising convergences across the old world. The course is mainly focussed on Europe and the Near East, but strikes off on occasion into Africa, India, and China. Almost by default, it also rehearses a good chunk of archaeological theory and methods – not least, of course, as relates to urbanism. It is a demanding option in some

ways, but it can give you new perspectives on archaeology, and a solid steer on the early middle ages.

“I took ‘Early Medieval Towns’ taught by Soren, and the whole thing was really interesting. The module is perfect for someone wanting to study archaeology that is away from the norm. Unlike most other options, its focus is away from England and more on Asia Minor, India, China and parts of Europe, which I found a refreshing change. The course is challenging – LOTS of reading for lectures and the essay! It also has some heavy ‘theory’ at points; for instance, the theory of towns and town planning – although Soren did try and make it a bit easier. I would definitely recommend this option as I cannot stress enough how engaging it was, especially to Historical Archaeologists.”

The Emergence of Mediterranean Civilisations – Kevin Walsh and a current student

For most people who have not studied archaeology, the Mediterranean is the one region that comes to mind as the centre of the great early civilisations. This module is an opportunity to study the emergence of Mediterranean societies. As a survey module, we cover the entire Mediterranean, from the Palaeolithic to the end of the Roman Period. This module considers the development of the earliest complex agricultural societies, followed by the great Bronze Age cultures of the Minoans and the Mycenaeans just to name two. As we move into the Iron Age, we consider the emergence of the Etruscans, the Phoenicians, and other groups then dominated much of the region. A number of themes run through the module, in particular, we assess the ways in which these different groups developed their economies, and their religious and ideological systems. Just as importantly, we will also assess how these peoples related to, and engaged with the incredible range of natural environments that characterise the Mediterranean. One reason for doing this module is that if you ever go on holiday to the Mediterranean, you will be able to look beyond the sun, sea, and sand, and engage with the rich range of sites and cultures that made the Mediterranean what it is today. Such knowledge might even help those who are interested in a career in tourism. . .

“I would recommend this course to anyone who is interested in learning about the huge number of ways in which the unique natural environment of the Mediterranean was largely responsible for the development of unique cultures, from the Palaeolithic to the Roman Era, and still today. Kevin was excellent at demonstrating how interconnectedness of different populations and environments around the Mediterranean encouraged major developments in society, from the dispersal of modern humans out from Africa in the Palaeolithic, to the innovation and spread of agricultural practices in the Neolithic, to the Roman’s ‘stamp’ of control over the landscape with field systems and increasingly complex and diverse towns. Everything imaginable about the prehistoric and classical Mediterranean is succinctly covered and interrelated – Minoan palaces, Maltese temples, ‘Ain Ghazal statues, southern French cave art, and much more. It was particularly useful having Kevin’s experience of survey work in the southern French Alps for covering that region in addition to the large number of sites and other examples that were used for other parts of the Mediterranean.”

Historical Archaeology and the Modern World – James Symonds

In this module we will consider the historical archaeology of the modern world (AD1500 to present) through the study of material culture, buildings, and landscapes. The module will focus upon developments in global 'modern-world' archaeology and will explore the materiality of European colonization, and responses by indigenous peoples within the over-arching grand narratives of capitalism, economic improvement, and consumerism. The theories and research methods employed by international historical archaeologists will be examined in a series of case studies from the UK, North America, South Africa, and Australasia, and we will consider how textual and artefactual evidence can be combined to recover evidence of subaltern lives, and how historical archaeology may be regarded as a form of political action that informs contemporary debates on issues of race, class, gender, and poverty.

Mummification – Jo Fletcher



Figure 1 – Image copyright J. Fletcher/University of York Mummy Research Group

This course looks at mummification in its widest sense, focussing on human remains retaining their soft tissue by either natural means or artificial preservation. And although usually associated with ancient Egypt, the course covers mummies discovered in environments ranging from dry deserts to rain forests, mountain ranges to peat bogs over the last 8,000 years. Within the lecture framework will be discussion of the work undertaken by the university's Mummy Research Group based at BioArch, the ethics surrounding the acquisition and display of human remains, and our current project involving the mummification of a human body donor (above).

NB: Any students considering this option must be aware that a significant amount of reading is required.

Practical Skills and Team Project options

Animal Bones – Terry O'Connor and a current student

This bony and rather grubby module introduces the study of the copious animal bones that we dig up from archaeological deposits. Its aim is to show what sort of information we can recover from old bones, and at least some of the practical techniques involved, so that you can read the academic literature on this subject with a fair critical understanding of what they are going on about. The module is delivered as three seminars and five practical sessions, and assessed by a highly entertaining practical exam at the end. Apart from giving you an insight into one of the most abundant of archaeological 'finds', the module enables you to take on a more hands-on dissertation topic.

Like all of the Team Projects, this follows on from the Practical Skills module. In this module, you are divided into (normally) three groups, each of which is set a task to complete. We aim to record, report and explain a small but interesting animal bone assemblage, usually one that has never been studied before. The assemblages are chosen to be within your capacity (assuming you paid attention during the Practical Skills module!), with regular help during the lab sessions and while working up your results. The module is thus a natural follow-on from the Practical Skills module, putting those skills to work, and a valuable exercise in teamwork and time management.

"It was basically one big set of puzzles, and I like puzzles."

Artefacts – Steve Ashby

The Artefacts class is a great choice for anyone who fancies getting their hands on real artefacts, and learning how to record and interpret them. We work with material from the Yorkshire Museum, so you get to experience a real mixture of the bread-and-butter of the finds specialist, and some real treats as well. We cover everything from Palaeolithic hand axes to post-medieval coins, with a lot of objects of bone, stone, pottery and metal along the way. You will probably come in with no specialist finds knowledge at all, but you will go out of it knowing how to recognise some of the key artefact types for a range of time periods, and, more importantly, you will know what to record about them, and why. This will also open your eyes to the problems with a lot of artefact reports, and how we might improve the dissemination of information to researchers and the public. You will build on all this in your team project, when you will get to record and interpret a real artefact collection from the museum, with the best reports actually being used by the museum in their displays and other materials. So, if you fancy working in a museum, for the Portable Antiquities Scheme, or in a finds unit (either as a finds specialist or a digging archaeologist), then this is a great option. If you are thinking of looking at artefacts for your dissertation, it is also an ideal choice. And if you have no intention of staying in archaeology after you leave, it is still a lot of fun, you will be able to make your housemates jealous with the things you got to look at, and you will learn the art of recording complex information in a consistent, transparent, and reproducible manner, which is a vital transferrable skill.

NB: This module will be taught by Stephanie Wynne-Jones in 2012-13

Biomolecular Archaeology – Matthew Collins and a current student

The course is a pre-requisite for anyone wishing to conduct a laboratory based project in S-Block. The course introduces you to good laboratory practice and laboratory health and safety. You will learn to conduct collagen isotope analysis and ZooMS (peptide mass spectrometry) of medieval bone.

In ‘Biomolecular Archaeology’ you will learn how to work in a lab and carry out some common analytical techniques on bone. I have really enjoyed this module as doing practical work in the lab has helped make the subject much more ‘real’ and easier to understand. The lecturers are very good at explaining how to do things in the lab and provide some useful advice on how to write a good critique of an archaeological science article, which is the formative and summative assessment for this module. For the course it is helpful to have a bit of knowledge of chemistry even though you are brought up to scratch with lectures.

In the summer term you get to test what you have learnt in the lab by carrying out an isotope analysis of human and animal bones in teams and producing a report on the results, serving as an excellent preparation for anyone planning to do a lab-based dissertation. I would highly recommend Biomolecular Archaeology not only to bioarchaeology students but to anyone interested in how the field actually works and how it can contribute to archaeological study of the past.

Buildings History – Kate Giles and a current student

‘Buildings History’ is all about getting students familiar within finding and using historical (archive) sources to study historic buildings. The module is based partly at KM and partly at the Borthwick Institute for Archives, which is attached to the JBM library. We alternate sessions at King’s Manor, where we have a brief presentation on types of sources for studying buildings, followed by an analysis of a range of monographs and sites reports for the ways in which they have used historical sources in the analysis of buildings. This is designed to train students in the skills of the report critique, which is the formative and part of the summative assessment. Each KM session ends with an online quiz, full of useful hotlinks to online resources.

At the Borthwick we spend our time looking at a range of primary sources, from medieval wills to church Faculties, 19th and 20th century architects’ plans, maps and diaries, photographs and sketchbooks relating to the type of building we have discussed the previous week. These sessions include churches, houses, industrial and institutional buildings. This is excellent practice for the second part of the summative assessment, which is a kind of slide test in KM, where students are given copies of sources to analyse with a set rubric of questions, just as they have done in the Borthwick Sessions. These archive sessions are great fun, with lots of discussion and original analysis generated by the students themselves.

This module feeds into the Year 2 Buildings History Team Project, where a set of archives studied in class, or a similar collection at the Borthwick is chosen as the focus for the team project. Existing examples from last year include a rather

splendid Edwardian house in Filey by the architect Walter Brierley, a study of early hospital buildings, including the Purey Cust (recently made famous by ITV in *Eternal Law!*) and an analysis of preparation of factory buildings for air raids in WW2. We have regular weekly meetings with each group in the first four weeks of term, to help with the analysis and structure of the report. Students then complete the report together for the summative deadline. The marking criteria are decided by the group and last year seemed to work really well.

Several of last year's students went on to take my third year Historic Interiors course (running again in 2013/14) and are now applying for MAs with us in buildings archaeology.

“For anyone with even a passing interest in buildings, this is a fascinating module choice. The Team Project aspect is a challenging but rewarding experience and you will learn much from it, not only about yourself but also your fellow team members.”

Conservation and Planning – Sophie Norton

Conservation and Planning will give students a practical insight into the management of heritage assets at a local level. We will discuss the roles of DCMS, English Heritage and the Local Planning Authority and think about the need for compromise in conservation. We will also look at the documentation that both the Local Planning Authority and the site owner need to produce so that informed and positive conservation decisions are made. Site visits to current development sites around York supplement the classroom based sessions so that we can see the tools we have discussed being put into action. The module culminates in a team project, where students have the opportunity to produce a professional document that could guide future development.

Environmental Archaeology – Kevin Walsh and Allan Hall

As with all of the group practical modules, the underlying aim is to develop your ability to collaborate on a particular project; a skill that is essential in any future career. In the Environmental Archaeology module, you will first consider the rationale and broader aims of environmental research in Archaeology. This is followed by a series of hands-on sessions where you are taught key tests and analyses that allow us to characterise soils, and then archaeobotanical remains. Whilst specifically useful in archaeology, the study of these different forms of environmental evidence have a relevance for a number of related fields of study; from Physical Geography to Botany, and the wider field of Environmental Studies. Even if you just have a desire to learn more about the “natural world”, this module can inform such an interest. The group project element in the summer term is an opportunity for you to collaborate with one another and execute all of the tests and analyses learnt during the spring term on a series of samples from archaeological sites. This component is not merely about the “appliance of science”, but an experience in carrying out collaborative research, a skill that is fundamental not just in the academic world, but in many walks of life.

Heritage – Cath Neal and a current student

In the Practical Heritage course we will be looking at the relationship between archaeology and heritage by visiting some museums and heritage sites in York. We will consider the way that sites try and appeal to a variety of audiences, how successful this is, and the way that they market themselves. Part of the challenge of the course is to take a very practical visit experience and consider it in relation to the wider academic reading. We enjoy getting out and about and even manage to role play a Viking family at the museum, all in the name of participative study! The assessments take the form of critiques of sites or websites and the follow-on module is Team Heritage where the groups write an Audience Development Plan for a museum in York. You should really take this module because we get out and about, and have some good discussions about the wider public dimension of archaeology.



Figure 2 – Students doing research for their Heritage Team Project last year (Image Copyright – Gill Savage)

“A well structured module with a good balance of both document/web-based study and practical research combined with interesting individual seminar presentations. We visited several heritage places in the city (Castle Museum, Yorkshire Museum, Jorvik and Clifford’s Tower) to look at their effectiveness as visitor attractions. Working together as a team to produce a report was a particularly rewarding, and enjoyable experience.”

Human Bones – Malin Holst and a current student

The Human Bones Practicals and Team Projects in the second year provide the unique chance to work with actual human remains and gain the opportunity to learn about anatomy, how the skeleton develops and changes with age, the effects of the environment on the human body and about different diseases. Although this is classed as a science subject, the topic is accessible to everyone. Those of you who will stay in archaeology will be confronted by human remains sooner or later and it is therefore fundamental to have some experience with human remains. However, the knowledge you gain in the course can also be useful for many other professions.

“Human Bones is a brilliant practical module that I would highly recommend to anyone, even those who are embarking upon a BA in Archaeology or Historical Archaeology. I personally felt that I learnt a substantial amount, and was able to put theory into practice. It truly is amazing how much information can be retrieved from human remains, from age, sex and stature of an individual to diseases that may have affected them during their lifetime, to name but a few examples. Overall, a highly recommended module with excellent teaching, you will not be disappointed.”

Professional and Management Skills – Penny Spikins

Interested in a career involving management in commercial archaeology or other spheres? Then this course may be just right for you! We develop key skills in understanding management concepts, writing project designs, dealing with finances and health and safety, and other professional issues within archaeology and beyond. The course involves a series of lectures and practical sessions which include ‘interviews’ with key figures who have managed large archaeological projects or teams, as well as tutorials and group and individual tasks. In the team project you have an opportunity to work in a ‘real’ situation developing project designs or funding bids such as with community groups. This course is unique within Britain in giving you this opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding to set you in good stead in future work.

Special Topics

Ancient DNA – Michelle Mundee

The study of ancient DNA (aDNA) is rapidly becoming one of the most exciting areas of scientific enquiry in archaeology! This special topic in ancient DNA aims to give you an idea of the background and development of aDNA techniques from their early beginnings, through the dark days to the new, sophisticated technologies available to us today. The module aims to assess how studies of aDNA have impacted our understanding of past societies and contributed to big archaeological questions such as human evolution, domestication of plants and animals and palaeopathology, while discussing some of the pitfalls that the field has encountered and, most importantly, what potential studies of aDNA have for archaeology in the future – and the future is bright!

Archaeology of Colonialism (Paul Lane) -a current student

“I really enjoyed the Archaeology of Colonialism; it gave me a different perspective on colonialism, as there is more to the debate than just coloniser versus colonised, and how archaeology can be utilised in colonialism. The module is broad but not too broad as it looks at different historical periods and places and also themes you might not originally consider to be part of the colonisation debate (colonisation of consciousness). Dr. Lane is fantastic and talks about his own archaeological research which gives the course depth and puts into perspective the archaeological case studies. This module engages in lively debate and if you want a reconsideration of colonialism then the Archaeology of Colonialism is the module for you.”

Battlefield Archaeology (Tim Sutherland) – a current student

“Battlefields is an interesting module that looks at a mixture of different disciplines; bone analysis, landscape archaeology, geophysical survey, among others. Tim Sutherland, the module leader, is hugely enthusiastic and knowledgeable about his subject, which holds the interest of the student through lectures and seminars.”

Human Evolution – Terry O’Connor and a current student

What are we; where have we come from; what is so special about having a chin; what were hand axes for anyway? These and many other fundamental questions about being us are explored in this module. We begin back in the mists of the Miocene, before there actually was anything recognisably human, and follow the story of our clade all the way forward to the present day, with the emphasis very much on quality and quantity of evidence. After a couple of introductory lectures, the module takes one topic at a time in roughly chronological order, giving each a lecture and a student-led seminar. The module is team-taught, with contributions from colleagues in the Hull-York Medical School who are world-renowned specialists in human evolutionary anatomy.

“I was certain from the moment I saw the module options that the Human Evolution Special Topic was going to be for me, and having now completed it I know it was definitely the right choice. As a BSc student who had taken modules in Human Bones the year before, I found the study of human evolution extremely rewarding. The module content is both challenging and intellectually stimulating and helps you to really demonstrate what you have learned over the course of your degree. The staff are amazing and despite how much work they have on themselves, are always willing to talk to you about anything that is on your mind. To anyone considering making this one of their choices, I heartily encourage you to do so.”

Neolithic and Bronze-Age Britain – Mark Edmonds

This module follows a sequence from the end of the Mesolithic to the end of the Bronze Age. It explores the changing character of society between the later fifth and later second millennia BC. Using the evidence of landscape, architecture and artefacts, the course tracks important changes in the material conditions of people’s lives; domestication, the appearance of monuments and

technological transformations such as metalworking. It also explores changes in the relationship between the living and the dead, in people's perceptions of the world around them and in the social dimensions of material culture. Go on... You know you want to...

Roman Landscapes – Steve Roskams and a current student

Many approaches to the Roman World study particular aspects of Antiquity, especially matters such as towns and architecture, and then mostly in terms of its upper echelons in isolation from other levels of society. This option aims to avoid this trap by focusing instead on the diverse ways in which the Empire impacted on different landscapes in order to support itself. We will look at how landscapes were controlled and exploited and, more generally, at the relationship between environment and culture. Lectures will introduce different interpretative frameworks and methodologies in this sphere, and seminars will be used to discuss particular themes such as water, oil and food in detail.

Taking things forward in this way necessarily requires that we consider a wide range of places; from North Africa in the south, to Britain in the north, and from Spain in the west, to Syria in the east. It also needs a wide chronology in order to understand the pre-Roman contexts on which the Empire impinged and the post-Roman trajectories which flowed from it. Finally, to ensure that you have contact with a variety of perspectives, the course incorporates members of staff who have researched some very different regions and from different points of view – Helen Goodchild, Cath Neal, David Roberts and Kevin Walsh. If you are interested in Rome, but turned off by the traditional ways in which it has been studied, this may be an opportunity for you to expose yourself to a range of alternative approaches.

If there is anyone who has a fascination with or is thinking of doing a Roman based dissertation then Roman Landscapes is the module for you. Throughout the module you will develop a greater understanding of how the Empire functioned and get the opportunity to explore some less well known provinces such as Syria, Libya and Beirut.

This module will demonstrate how Rome managed to control and alter the landscapes in its respective provinces and assimilated them into the growing empire but also how despite common opinion, the process of Romanisation was sometimes simply a facade where Rome was not the sole influence on certain provinces.

You will also learn how early Christianisation of the Empire and some of the key commodities that travelled within it, such as Olive Oil, affected different landscapes. I was particularly excited to study this – not only because it is part of my dissertation – but because it is such an interesting area which you would never get to study otherwise.

Visual Media in Archaeology – Sara Perry

Visual Media in Archaeology aims to explore the application of visual media (photos, maps, illustrations, diagrams, film, TV, digital renderings, museum

displays, temporary and permanent exhibitions, and related 2D and 3D presentations) to the creation and interpretation of the archaeological record. The lectures and seminars will focus on assessment of the widespread visual studies scholarship (both in and beyond archaeology), historical review of the use of visual media by antiquarians and archaeologists from c. the 16th century onwards, and critical analysis of a series of case studies of different visual media in action in various recent archaeological contexts.

We will look at the theory and practice of archaeological visualisation not only from the perspective of public engagement, but in terms of its consequences for academic knowledge-making and the long-term funding and sustenance of the discipline.

This is a provocative topic of study that has relevance for any archaeologist regardless of disciplinary sub-speciality. Visual tools help us to think through our research, articulate our ideas, and communicate with our colleagues and others. They can facilitate or hinder our work. We will interrogate examples of this relationship between images and scientific practice, looking both at historical cases and up-to-the-minute research on new media forms in archaeology.

Assessed Seminars

Animals and Archaeology – Terry O’Connor

One of the remarkable things about human beings is our tendency to develop affiliative relationships with other species. We do not just eat them; we make household companions, deities and symbols out of them. These assessed seminars take a wide range of topics around the general subject of past inter-relationships between people and other species, including reviews of how some things came into domestication or taming, how the archaeological record may or may not reflect specific activities and processes, and questions about our own interpretation of the zooarchaeological record. Like all the assessed seminar groups, the Animals group become a lively and mutually-supportive forum for exchanging ideas, information and (often) cake.

Debates in Archaeological Science – Matthew Collins and a current student

The course offers students the opportunity to explore how science is transforming archaeology. We are living in strange times when the Gadget Blog ‘Engadget’ sees fit to report on a genome sequencer. The MinION is a tiny disposable genome sequencer that could sequence 150 million base pairs of DNA, costs less than two radiocarbon dates, and simply plugs into a laptop to gather the data. What do the rapid advances in bioscience technology mean for archaeology? The Assessed Seminar encourages you to consider the way in science is shaping the future of our discipline, and how science has been used and misused in the past.

“Debates is an awesome module because it is wide open. You can pick basically anything as a seminar topic so long as it is remotely science related and there is some kind of controversy. And, to be fair, when is there not controversy in the world of science?! This makes science a great topic for a seminar because there are just so many things to discuss!”

Environmental Archaeology: A Landscape Perspective – Kevin Walsh

This module offers an opportunity for students to think more broadly about human relationships with landscape. Therefore, this option is particularly aimed at anyone with a broader interest in landscape development and human relationships with the environment. Although this is a BSc option, many BA students have taken this in the past and have considered a range of landscapes from around the world, and addressed the wider issue of how cultural and environmental archaeology can inform our interpretations of past understandings of, and engagements with the natural world. The issue of humankind's response to changes in climate is one common theme running through this module, and is particularly important today with the debate surrounding how modern society should respond to climate change. This option is also a useful springboard for those interested in pursuing an MA in landscape archaeology, or for those who think that they might wish to make a “sideways” move into environmental studies.

Medieval Africa – Stephanie Wynne-Jones and a current student



Figure 3 – The 14th Century Great Mosque at Kilwa Kisiwani, Tanzania (Image Copyright – S. Wynne-Jones)

Medieval Africa is a fascinating topic as it allows us to explore some familiar archaeological themes – of power, urbanism, religion and material culture – among societies that challenge some of the expectations built up through studying European archaeology. The course covers roughly the period AD800 – 1500, which was a time of incredible growth in sub-Saharan African civilisations.

At this time, we can chart the emergence of much more complex hierarchical societies across the continent. In particular, though, the period is one of amazing interconnectedness, with links across the continent and with Europe and the Indian Ocean world becoming more intense and visible archaeologically. The assessed seminar format is a great one for exploring this time period, allowing students to run with their own interests, and to get involved in some emergent debates in the archaeology of a region that they probably had little experience of previously.

“Medieval Africa is a new module that is being run for the first time this year. The period that will be studied is from 800-1500 AD, encompassing a wide range of themes from trade to religion. As you will be expected to run your own seminar, you are able to specialise in any aspect of Medieval Africa. I have particularly enjoyed the module thus far, as it is something that I have not had the opportunity to study before, and if I am honest, knew nothing about until now.”

Neanderthals – Penny Spikins

Whatever image the word ‘Neanderthal’ conjures up for you, these archaic humans never fail to inspire, challenge and fascinate us. In these seminars we consider the world of the Neanderthals and what happened when they met modern humans such as ourselves. The seminars unite scientific and arts based approaches in considering such topics as perceptions of Neanderthals and portrayals in the media and fiction, diet and subsistence, settlement and mobility, social relationships, art and symbolism and burial. A great source of lively debate, guaranteed to challenge and always enjoyable (I love teaching this module). In looking at our closest cousins we ultimately explore what it means to be human.

Palaeodiet – Ol Craig

You should choose this course as after all palaeodiet is the ‘bread and butter’ of archaeology – from scraps of animals and plants, fireplaces, broken potsherds, flint scrapers to medieval banquets and pineapple pits. Food transcends all periods and contexts; it is multidimensional, ritual and mundane, ecological and cultural. We will look at scientific methods and cultural approaches to food studies whilst eating our way through the term (with cakes and other delicacies).

Public Buildings – Kate Giles

My 2012/13 third year Assessed Seminar module is concerned with historic ‘public buildings’, built between the medieval period and the present day. These include guildhalls and town halls, assembly rooms, leisure buildings and institutional buildings including law courts, museums, schools, prisons etc. In each seminar we will explore the idea of ‘the public’ and explore who built these buildings and how they worked using spatial analysis and drawing on archaeological and architectural sources, historical sources, pictorial and even fictional accounts. Students will be encouraged to structure seminars around a series of case studies, and be provided with plenty of support and guidance to make these seminars really interesting – and fun!

This is a new module for 2012/13, replacing a more generic buildings archaeology module last run in 2010. In the past this has also had a great track record of students doing really well and progressing to MA and even PhD study thereafter!



Figure 4 – The Merchant Adventurer's Hall, one of York's Guildhalls (Image copyright – Mark Simpson)

Sustaining the Historic Environment: Issues in Conversation – Gill Chitty

'Sustaining the Historic Environment' is an opportunity to engage head on with the issues that climate change – and societal response to it – brings to conservation of the historic environment: the way we think about change, the intentional and unintentional impacts of adaptation, from denial to disaster scenarios. Sustainable practices are cultural not environmental. Adaptation is about behaviours as much as technical responses. We will look at case studies, campaign issues for the environmental and heritage sector, and get involved in some very contemporary debates. This will challenge you to work with a rapidly-changing area of policy and practice, where positions are contested and there are no easy solutions.

Viking-Age Britain and Ireland – Steve Ashby

The breadth of this topic really does give you scope to find something you are interested in. Death and burial, hoarding, power and conflict, identity and culture contact, religion, landscape and settlement, craft and industry, trade and economics: the choice is yours, providing the context is Britain and/or

Ireland between the late 8th and mid-11th centuries. There is a lot of scope to work with documentary sources, place names, and art history, as well as archaeology (which may include bones, artefacts, or biomolecular science, for instance), and theoretical debates. So if you fancy something early-medieval, something with a bit of controversy, or just something that offers a lot of choice within its spatial-temporal parameters, then give it a shot. If you are curious as to what Viking Britain and Ireland is all about, you could do worse than check this out: <http://tinyurl.com/7pmc2o6> (or go to YouTube and type in 'Blood of the Vikings').

Useful Web Links

The intranet page for students choosing module options, with links to information on all of the options <http://tinyurl.com/6rckw7q>

Information on Jon Finch's Modern Landscapes course <http://tinyurl.com/7323n8k>

Many thanks to all staff and students who have contributed towards this article.