

ARCH 330 | Archaeology Beyond Stones: Key Concepts in Modern Archaeology Fall 2026

Course Instructor: Hüseyin Çınar Öztürk
CYA Email: huseyin.ozturk@cyathens.org

Course Description

In the last quarter-century, the discipline of archaeology has undergone a dramatic transformation. While traditional practices such as excavating ancient sites and documenting and analyzing ancient art and architecture remain integral to the field, modern archaeology has drastically expanded its scope.

Today archaeology encompasses a wide range of topics, from the decenterization of academic discourse to food, from computer games to refugee studies. In this spirit, this course explores key themes and concepts in modern archaeology, moving beyond the traditional focus on ancient artifacts and monuments to examine how the discipline informs our understanding of critical issues in human societies, both past and present.

Through global case studies and class discussions, students will investigate how archaeological approaches illuminate diverse questions, including gender, social inequality, culinary customs, slavery, migration, climate change, and societal collapse.

The course will also encourage students to critically engage with archaeology's complex relationships with colonialism, nationalism, and the concept of "Western Civilization." Students will further delve into current debates surrounding the decolonization of the discipline, pseudoarchaeology, looted artifacts in Western museums, and archaeological ethics.

Learning Goals

Through lectures, class discussions, presentations, and written assignments, students will:

- no longer think of archaeology as a discipline that solely unearths ancient monuments and studies works of art, but rather an endeavor that aspires to understand and interpret the human condition in the past, based on material cultural evidence.
- develop a nuanced understanding of archaeology as a discipline that is deeply engaged in contemporary debates and issues, with a powerful ability to inform and challenge our views of both the past and the present.
- will acquire critical skills for evaluating archaeological evidence and claims, and for understanding the relevance of archaeology to a wide range of fields, including history, anthropology, political science, sociology, and modern cultural studies.
- assess the contributions and limitations of modern scientific methods (e.g., isotopic analysis, archaeogenetics, digital modeling) in reconstructing human behavior, migration patterns, and environmental interactions.
- be able to identify pseudoscientific claims in archaeological and popular discourse and develop evidence-based strategies to counter misinformation, emphasizing the societal implications of pseudoarchaeology.

Course Requirements and Assessment

40% - Take-home Quizzes

There will be 4 take-home quizzes throughout the semester to assess understanding of the course material. Students will have to prepare informative F.A.Q.s written for the non-connoisseur; create memes, haikus, song lyrics, recordings of Wednesday-night-open-mic-night-spoken-word-performance recordings, or any other creative work of their choosing; generate multiple-choice questions with at least one chuckle-inducing answer, and may need to analyze their friend's room archaeologically.

30% - Case Study Presentation

Students will give a 15-minute presentation on an archaeological case study of their choice related to one of the themes covered in the course or any sensible idea *beyond stones*. This assignment will be a progressively graded one:

5 points: A list of topics of interest chosen by the student and discussed with the instructor (deadline: **October 23**)

5 points: An annotated bibliography for the presentation topic about the object and its broader context (deadline: **November 20**)

15 points: Oral presentation (**December 5, 9, 11**)

5 points: A detailed case study F.A.Q. (deadline: **December 21**)

15% - Class Contribution

This is a discussion-based course. Students will be assigned different, complementary readings and will take turns leading class discussions. The class contribution grade is based on demonstrated reading knowledge, active participation in discussions, and attendance.

15% - Archaeological Public Outreach Group Poster

Divided into three-person groups, students will create an engaging poster aimed at the general public (your CYA peers) that highlights an aspect of the topics covered in the course. The posters will be printed in A0 size and then adorn the walls of the academic center until the end of the semester, for your peers to go "hmmm..." (deadline: **November 26**)

Policy on Assignments and Make-up Work

Details about quizzes and other assignments will be given in advance. I will accept no late assignments or make-up quizzes unless discussed with me in advance.

400 Level Upgrade Requirements: In order to upgrade the course level to 400, if you choose to do so, 25% additional academic work will be required. Please discuss the available options with the instructor.

CYA Attendance Policy

CYA regards attendance in class and on-site (in Athens or during field study trips) as essential, so attendance at all scheduled meetings is required. All absences are recorded and have consequences that may affect your grade. Illness or other such compelling reasons which result in absences should be reported immediately to the Student Affairs Office, via the form available in the Student Portal.

Academic Accommodations

Students are required to submit an official letter from the office at their school that handles academic accommodations (generally the Office of Disability Services), or to have that office send a letter. Students who have submitted such a letter to CYA should also talk to their professors individually to discuss how these accommodations will work in each specific course.

Accessibility

This course requires students to give a verbal presentation in front of the class as part of their assessment.

Policy on Original Work

Plagiarism is literary theft. As such, it is a serious offense that will not be tolerated either at your home institution or at CYA. Plagiarism on an examination or on a paper will result in an F for the course. You must cite the author of any and all ideas that you use that are neither common knowledge nor your own idea. If you are in doubt, it is safest to cite the source. Your work should be original and reflect your own ideas and thoughts. If you are unsure about what counts as original work, please consult your professor and check the Student Handbook.

Use of Laptops, Tablets, and Phones

In-class or on-site use of laptops and other devices is permitted if that facilitates course-related activities such as note-taking, looking up references, etc. Laptop or other device privileges will be suspended if they are not used for class-related work.

Class Schedule

Class Day	Topic	Readings & Other Sources
1	Archaeology and This Course Syllabus Introduction to Course	
2	Archaeology of Gender and Sexuality I Introduction to gender studies in archaeology <i>Case Studies:</i> Neolithic Çatalhöyük, ancient Maya, ancient Egypt, Viking burials, colonial Australia	Bolger 2012 Matić 2024 Middleton 2023 Zsolnay 2017
3	Archaeology of Gender and Sexuality II Archaeology of Gender in Ancient Greece Director Dudes: Gender & Power in Archaeological Fieldwork	Koloski-Ostrow and Lyons 2003 Leppard 2022 Olsen 2014

		Siekierka et al. 2021
4	<p>Archaeology of Food I <i>Tell me what you eat, I will tell you who you are!</i> Culinary customs and diet in the ancient world Current Approaches to <i>Foodways</i> Studies</p>	Dalby and Grainger 2012 Davidson 1998 Wilkins and Nadeau 2015 Twiss 2019
5	<p>Archaeology of Food II Archaeobotany and the plants Archaeozoology and the animals Archaeology of food garbage & bones</p>	Albarella et al. 2017 Madella et al. 2014 Pearsall 2015
6	<p>Archaeology and Pseudoarchaeology The Origins of Pseudoarchaeology <i>Ancient Aliens, Hunting Atlantis</i> and <i>Ancient Apocalypse</i> Archaeology in the Age of Post-Truth: Social Media and the Spread of Conspiracy Theories Pseudoarchaeology and Racism</p>	Card and Anderson 2016 Dibble 2022 Fagan 2006 Holtorf 2005
7	<p>Archaeology of Inequality I Emergence of State & Social Hierarchy Is Social Inequality Inevitable? The GINI Project and Wengrow's Critique Case Studies from Anatolia, Balkans, Americas</p>	Cerasuolo 2021 Graeber and Wengrow 2021 Green et al. 2023 Scott 2017 Wengrow 2024
8	<p>Archaeology of Inequality II - Slavery Archaeology of Slavery: Ancient Mediterranean Archaeology of Slavery: North America and the Caribbeans</p>	Forsdyke 2021 Joshel and Petersen 2015 Marshall 2015 Morris and Papadopoulos 2005
9	<p>Archaeology of Migration and Mobility I Out of Fashion and Back Again: Why Are Migration Studies Controversial? Migration And Mobility in The Archaeological Record aDNA and Isotope Analyses – A New Era</p>	Singleton 2016 Antony 1990 Daniels 2022 Hofmann et al. 2024 Reich 2018
10	<p>Archaeology of Migration and Mobility II <i>Case Studies</i> from Europe, Asia, & Americas Archaeology and Language Dispersals</p>	Bellwood 2014 Driessen 2014 Hofmann et al. 2023
11	<p>Archaeology of Music Archaeology of musical instruments The Iconography of Musical Practice Archaeology of Acoustics and Sound Archaeology of Musical Performance</p>	Both 2009 Kolltveit and Rainio 2020 Van Keer 2010
12	<p>Archaeology of Collapse I What is <i>Societal Collapse</i>? Introduction to Comparative <i>Collapsology</i> Detecting Social Change French Revolution vs The Collapse of the French Monarchy: Whose Collapse?</p>	Cline 2021 Cunningham and Driessen 2021 Faulseit 2016 Greenberg 2022 Riede and Sheets 2020
13	<p>Archaeology of Collapse II <i>Case Studies</i> from Europe, Mesoamerica, India, East Asia, Near East</p>	Middleton 2017 Middleton 2020 Schwartz and Nichols 2010 Wilt et al. 2013
14	<p>Archaeology of the 20th and 21st centuries I What is <i>Contemporary Archaeology</i>? Archaeology of the Spanish Civil War Archaeology of WWI & WWII</p>	Graves-Brown et al. 2013 Harrison and Scholfield 2010 Gonzalez-Ruibal 2024
15	<p>Archaeology of the 20th and 21st centuries II <i>The Tucson Garbage Project</i> <i>The Van Project</i> Archaeology of the <i>Occupy</i> Movement</p>	Martin 2023 McGuire 2020 Myers 2011 Rathje and Murphy 1992

	Archaeology of the Refugees in the Aegean Sea	
16	Archaeology and Colonialism History of Archaeology and Archaeology as a Tool for Colonialism Colonial Archaeological Practice and Looted and Stolen Artifacts in Western Museums Digital Cultural Heritage and Colonialism Today Decolonization and Decentering Debate	Cipolla and Hayes 2020 Diaz-Andreu 2007 Bruchac 2014 Effros and Lai 2018
17	Archaeology of Environment I What is Environmental Archaeology? How to Reconstruct Ancient Environments What Do We Learn from Environmental Studies About Ancient Societies?	Balaam and Racham 2017 Pollard et al. 2023 Turney et al. 2014
18	Archaeology of Environment II Archaeology of Climate Change Archaeology of Resilience: How Did Humans Respond to Climate Change?	Cooper and Sheets 2012 Davies et al. 2013 Fisher et al. 2022
19	Archaeology and Ethics of Burial Excavations The Contribution of Burial Excavations to Our Understanding of the Human Past: A Global Introduction <i>Sorry for Disturbing You, Friend: Ethics of Digging Up Eternal Resting Grounds</i>	Alex 2018 Sandis 2014 Squires et al. 2020
20	Archaeology and Nationalism Archaeology as A Nation-building Tool Archaeology, Nazism, & the 20 th century Fascism Archaeology and Contemporary Ethno-nationalists & White Supremacists: <i>Case studies</i> from Europe, America, Near East, and Asia	Chapoutot 2016 Diaz-Andreu 1996 Greenberg and Hamilakis 2022 Kohl and Fawcett 1995 Roche and Demetriou 2017
21	Archaeology and Popular Culture <i>You Are Digging the Dinosaurs, Right?</i> Cargo Pants and Fedoras: Public Perception of Archaeology and the Archaeologist Archaeology in Computer Games Archaeology in Film & TV	Cipolla et al. 2023 Moshenska 2017 Moshenska 2024 Reinhard 2018
22	Archaeology and Student Presentations <i>Case Studies on Course Themes</i>	
23	Archaeology and Student Presentations <i>Case Studies on Course Themes</i>	
24	Archaeology and Student Presentations <i>Case Studies on Course Themes</i>	

Bibliography

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