



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY

ARCHAEOLOGY



Second Year Programme 2026-2027

Welcome to 2nd year!

Please note – this document may be subject to change.

2nd Year Archaeology Handbook

2nd Year Co-ordinator: Dr Michelle Comber

Welcome Back to Archaeology!	1
Contacts	1
Teaching and Learning	2
Courses, Class Times, and Venues	5
THE COURSES (2026-2027)	7
AR2107 Ancient Civilizations – the rise of complex societies.....	7
AR2103 Archaeology and Irish Identity – Celts, Christians, Vikings.....	9
AR2108 Space, Place, and the Irish Landscape	11
AR236 Interpretation in Archaeology	13
AR245 Archaeology in Practice.....	15
AR2106 Introduction to Excavation	17

Welcome Back to Archaeology!

The Department of Archaeology is situated in the Arts/Science Building overlooking the River Corrib on the north side of the main campus. Members of staff have a wide variety of research interests and expertise in different aspects of Irish, European, and World Archaeology. We are ready to help you out and glad to meet you, so contact us with any questions you may have.

- Our Head of Discipline is Maggie Ronayne maggie.ronayne@universityofgalway.ie
- Check out our courses and news updates at: www.universityofgalway.ie/archaeology



Contacts

Michelle Comber is the year co-ordinator for 2BA and is available to answer any queries you may have about the second-year programme at michelle.comber@universityofgalway.ie.

Our administrator, Fiona McInerney, can be contacted at fiona.mcinerney@universityofgalway.ie or on (091) 49 2167. Her office hours are from **9am to 1pm** (Room ARC217).

Teaching and Learning

This booklet contains a summary of the second-year Archaeology modules and the core readings that are recommended for each module. In the event of any changes during the academic year, you will be notified through Canvas and/or in class.

We are ready to help you out and glad to meet you, so please do contact us with any questions you may have.

Important Message: Student Attendance and Engagement

Attendance at on-campus lectures and labs is a core, mandatory, component of studying at university, and will be monitored and recorded. If you fail to attend regularly at class, you may not be permitted to take examinations and assessments. In addition, the Department reserves the right to restrict assignment choices in cases where a student attends only 50% or less of classroom hours in a module.

Enrolment on a full-time programme means a commitment of 40-50 hours of total student effort per week throughout all the weeks of each semester.

- Scheduled classes (lectures, tutorials, field classes) are only one component of the total effort that is required in order to succeed.
- Assessments and assigned coursework are designed on the basis that students are undertaking the full effort required and are not based solely on material covered in scheduled class time.
- Students should make sure that they timetable (in their own calendars) adequate time for study, reading, coursework, and revision across the semester. Success at university level is not possible through cramming at the last minute.

Medical & Other Absences

If you are absent from any lecture, you must inform the College Office (see details below) with a valid reason for your absence i.e. bereavement or medical issue. When absence is due to an illness, a medical certificate should be submitted as soon as possible to Ms. Catherine Mc Curry in the College of Arts, Social Sciences, and Celtic Studies. Her office is in the Arts Millennium Building – Room 217 on the first floor.

Policy on Recording in Lectures

Voice or video recording of lectures is prohibited. A student who is registered with the Disability Service may be permitted to record a lecture if it is deemed that they require the facility to do so. Should this be the case, please speak with the lecturer prior to the commencement of the lecture and **before** you start any recording.

Department Library

The **Archaeology Department Library** (Room ARC202) is available as a study space for students enrolled on any Archaeology course. It is typically open during normal daytime hours when staff are present in the Department. If it is locked, you can get the key from the Department administrator Fiona McInerney. However, the room is sometimes used for meetings or other purposes, so you need to check for notices on the door.

Exams and Assessment

The overall degree result at the end of your BA is based on 30% of the final 2nd year mark and 70% of the final 3rd year mark, so this year plays a significant role in the outcome of the final degree.

(See page 7 of Marks & Standards for all Fulltime Undergraduate Degree Examinations)

<https://www.universityofgalway.ie/media/registry/exams/policiesprocedures/QA228---Undergraduate-Marks-and-Standards-approved-Sept-2022-at-AC-Standing-EN&IR-Final.pdf>

All modules are examined by continuous assessment. Students who do not pass at first sitting will have the opportunity to take re-sit examinations/assessments in August. Instructions for re-sits will be posted on Canvas in May/June/July.

Please note: All examination results are provisional, and subject to change, until the official results are released by the Examinations office at the end of the academic year (June).

How Assignments are Assessed and Graded

Assignments are graded according to a combination of three criteria:

1. Intellectual content.
2. Research.
3. Preparation (including citation and bibliography).

If illustrations and the effective use of illustrations are relevant to the topic, this aspect is also assessed.

Intellectual Content:

Good assignments (i) have clear analysis; (ii) address the question/topic clearly and with assurance; (iii) make a clear, unambiguous and well-structured argument; (iv) make appropriate and skilful use of relevant evidence/sources.

Poor assignments typically (i) have little analysis; (ii) fail to address the question/topic; (iii) draw on irrelevant evidence/sources; (iv) lack argument, structure, and direction.

Research:

Good assignments (i) display knowledge of relevant sources; (ii) select and use relevant data/evidence/theories competently and with discernment.

Poor assignments show (i) poor knowledge of relevant sources; (ii) misunderstanding of data/evidence/ interpretations and theories.

Preparation:

Good assignments are (i) carefully prepared and revised; (ii) are carefully proof-read for spelling, grammar, punctuation and expression; (iii) are fully referenced in-text and have a complete and accurate bibliography or references section (including citation of sources of figures).

Poor assignments show little evidence of (i) careful preparation and revision; (ii) have not been properly proof-read, have spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors, and expression is poor; (iii) do not cite sources adequately. **The Department will spot-check by oral exam in cases of suspected plagiarism or non-permitted use of AI or similar services.**

Please refer to the Archaeology Stylesheet for in-text citation and bibliography:

<https://www.nuigalway.ie/media/collegeofartssocialsciencescelticstudies/schools/geographyarchaeology/archaeology/documents/Department-of-Archaeology,-University-of-Galway,-Guide-to-Referencing-and-Citation.pdf>

Grades reflect the following qualities:

100-70: exceptional performance; strong evidence of original thinking; good organization; capacity to analyze and synthesize; superior grasp of subject matter with sound critical evaluations; evidence of extensive knowledge base.

69-60: good performance; evidence of grasp of subject matter; some evidence of critical capacity and analytic ability; reasonable understanding of relevant issues; evidence of familiarity with the literature.

59-50: intellectually adequate performance; evidence of some familiarity with the relevant literature and techniques; limited focus and structure; basic analytic ability only.

49-40: minimally acceptable performance; minimal knowledge of relevant literature and techniques; lack of breadth; unsubstantiated statements; lack of thesis; poor structure.

39-0: inadequate performance; little evidence of even superficial understanding of subject matter; lacking critical and analytical skills; limited or irrelevant use of literature.

Submission of Assignments & AI/Plagiarism Policy

All assignments will be submitted in digital format through Turnitin or similar on Canvas. Your lecturers will explain to you how and when to do this.

Declaration of Authorship

All work submitted to the Department of Archaeology should have the following anti-plagiarism/AI etc. statement printed clearly on the Title Page:

I hereby declare that this submission is entirely my own work, in my own words, and that all sources used in researching it are fully acknowledged, and all quotations properly identified.

Note: this statement of authorship is a solemn declaration that you have observed the rules around plagiarism and academic integrity as set out by the University (see: <https://libguides.library.universityofgalway.ie/Plagiarism>), and that the work presented is your own.

The Department will spot-check by oral exam cases of suspected plagiarism or suspected use of artificial intelligence/related services to generate assignments.

Penalties for Late Submission

It is department policy that penalties will be applied to all assignments that are submitted *after* the appropriate deadline date. A deduction of **5%** will be applied for the first day late and **1%** for every working day thereafter. The penalties will not apply in cases where a medical certificate is submitted or in certain extenuating circumstances e.g. bereavement.

Capping of Marks

All exams or assignments that must be repeated will be capped at 40%, the pass rate for each module. This is a University regulation – see page 6 of Marks and Standards for all Fulltime Undergraduate Degree Examinations at

<https://www.universityofgalway.ie/media/registry/exams/policiesprocedures/QA228---Undergraduate-Marks-and-Standards-approved-Sept-2022-at-AC-Standing-EN&IR-Final.pdf>

Please be aware that this could have a significant impact on your overall degree result.

Courses, Class Times & Venues

Lectures begin on **Monday September 7th, 2026.**

There are six Archaeology modules this academic year (5 ECTS each), three in Semester 1 and three in Semester 2.

Students enrolled in the BA Joint Honours (GY101) or BA Global Experience (GY129) **must take six modules in each of two subjects (12 in total) to meet the required 60 ECTS per academic year.**

Students enrolled on a variety of other degrees such as BA Film & Digital Media (GY127), BA Children Studies (GY110), BA History (GY105), BSc in Psychology (GY104), etc. may also take some Archaeology modules (check the specific requirements of your degree).

Important note for BA Connect Students only

When registering your second-year modules, please remember to choose just **25 ECTS** from each of your two subjects, i.e. five modules per subject (and not six modules per subject as required with the BA Joint Honours), **plus 10 ECTS** in your chosen specialism – a total of 60 ECTS.

Archaeology Courses

Semester 1

AR2107 Ancient Civilizations: the rise of complex societies (Mesopotamia, Egypt, Indus Valley, Mesoamerica).

AR2103 Archaeology and Irish Identity – Celts, Christians, Vikings.

AR2108 Space, Place, and the Irish Landscape.

Semester 2

AR236 Interpretation in Archaeology.

AR245 Archaeology in Practice.

AR2106 Introduction to Excavation.

Lecture time and venues

Semester 1

TIME	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
11-12	AR2108 – Larmor theatre	AR2108 – AC213	AR2103 – AC213	AR2107 – AC202	AR2107 – Larmor theatre
1-2			AR2103 – Larmor theatre		

Semester 2

TIME	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
11-12	AR245 – AC214	AR245 – McMunn theatre	AR236 – AMB008	AR2106 – Dillon theatre	AR236 – AC204
1-2			AR2106 – CSB1005		

Canvas

Canvas pages are set up for each module/course, with resources that complement the lectures and field classes.

Typically, guidelines for assignments (announced in class) will also be posted on Canvas. Unless otherwise indicated, this is also where you will upload your assignments. Assignments are graded via Canvas.

Take a tour and familiarize yourself with the layout and contents; these will vary from course to course. **Set up/Allow notifications to make sure you don't miss important announcements.**

Field Classes

Some of the modules/courses include field classes. Dress appropriately, and be fully prepared for all weather conditions on the various planned field classes. Over the years we have experienced everything from blistering sunshine to driving blizzards, so prepare for the worst and hope for the best!

Always bring a few layers of warm clothing, a full set of waterproofs, a hat, gloves, and boots, snacks and drinks

All field classes are for the whole day unless otherwise stated.

For your diary:

Semester 1 Field Classes (2026)

AR2103 Saturday 26th September: field class to Poul nabrone and Caherconnell in the Burren, County Clare with Drs Michelle Comber and Noel McCarthy.

AR2108 Saturday 17th October: field class to the Burren with Maggie Ronayne.

Semester 2 Field Classes (2027)

AR2106 *Date to be confirmed*: field class to excavation site with Dr Michelle Comber.

AR236 Saturday 13th March, Lough Gur, Co Limerick with Maggie Ronayne



THE COURSES (2026-2027)

AR2107 Ancient Civilizations – the rise of complex societies. (Mesopotamia, Egypt, Indus Valley, Mesoamerica)

Semester 1

Course Co-ordinator: Dr. Carleton Jones

Lectures Commence: 10th September 2026

Lectures End: 27th November 2026

Lecture Times and Venues

Thursday 11-12, AC202

Friday 11-12, Larmor Theatre

Course Summary

As early as the 4th millennium BC people in some parts of the world began living in new forms of large-scale centralised societies characterised by dramatic social and economic inequalities but also by unprecedented civic, organisational, and artistic achievements. Archaeologists refer to these complex, state-level societies as civilizations. How and why did these ancient civilizations first emerge, and can we detect common processes involved in the emergence and development of different early civilizations? This course begins with a review of various theories of state formation with different emphases ranging from economic and environmental factors to social factors. The course then moves on to a more detailed consideration of four areas where some of the earliest civilizations developed: Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Indus Valley, and Mesoamerica.



Sphynx and pyramid at Giza, Egypt.



The 'Stele of the Vultures', an Early Dynastic Period carving from Mesopotamia.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this module, students will:

- Have a developed understanding of how and why early civilizations developed.
- Be able to compose an organized, logical argument.
- Have a developed understanding of key international archaeological sites and issues.

Module Structure and Delivery:

Twenty-four lectures, over twelve weeks, 2 hours per week.

Assessment:

Text comprehension exercise – 10%

In-class test – 20%

2,500-word final essay - 70%

Core Texts:

Scarre, C. and B. Fagan 2016, *Ancient civilizations*, 4th ed.

Available to students as an e-book via the Hardiman Library.

Additional readings will be provided via Canvas.

AR2103 Archaeology and Irish Identity – Celts, Christians, Vikings

Semester 1

Course Co-ordinator: Dr. Michelle Comber

Lectures Commence: 9th September 2026

Lectures End: 28th October 2026

Lecture Times and Venues

Wednesday 11-12, AC213

Wednesday 1-2, Larmor Theatre

Course Summary

This module introduces students to the archaeology of Ireland from the Iron Age to the 12th century AD. It comprises a cumulative exploration of identity both *during* those centuries and resulting *from* those centuries. The archaeology of Ireland's 'Celtic' Iron Age, its 'Golden Age' of Christianity and art, and its interaction with the Viking world, will guide discussions of what it was like to live in Ireland during those eras, and where elements of modern 'Celtic' identity have originated. This last touches on the role of archaeology in the development of identity.



Module Structure

Sixteen lectures and a full-day field class, over the first eight weeks of the semester.

Field Class

Poul nabrone and Caherconnell, Co. Clare, Saturday 26th September 2026.

Assessment

Two assignments over eight weeks:

1. Participation in online discussion board at start of module (weeks 1 and 2).
2. End-of-module in-class test (last lecture of module, Wednesday 28th October, 1-2pm).

Lecture Themes

- Irish identity: ancient Ireland.
- Celtic Ireland?
- Mythical heroes.
- 'Celtic' (?) Christianity: saints and scholars.
- The work of angels: scribes, metalsmiths, sculptors.
- The work of farmers.
- Viking raiders, traders, and settlers.
- Archaeology and Irish identity: the fact behind the fiction.

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this module the learner will be able to:

- Discuss the Celtic debate.
- Recognise the origins of certain elements of modern Celtic culture.
- Describe what life was like in Early Medieval Ireland.
- Outline the impact of the Vikings on Irish identity.

Core Texts

Note – additional readings and recordings will be provided on Canvas and/or recommended in class.

Raftery, B. 2000 *Pagan Celtic Ireland*. Any Ed. London, Thames and Hudson.

Edwards, N. 2002 *The Archaeology of Early Medieval Ireland*. Any Ed. London, Routledge.

AR2108 Space, Place and the Irish Landscape

Semester 1

Course Co-ordinator: Maggie Ronayne

Lectures Commence: 7th September 2026

Lectures End: 24th November 2026

Lecture Times and Venues

Monday 11-12, Larmor Theatre

Tuesday 11-12, AC213

Course Summary

This module aims to critically explore the historical and contemporary complexities of Irish culture, place and landscape through select concepts and case-studies, thematic and/or locational. The module engages with the key challenge of carefully contextualising and historicising understandings of landscape, heritage and environment, and exploring urgent contemporary questions of social and environmental sustainability, governmentality and management. The module will provide an introduction to the various ways in which human societies interact(ed) with their environment, and will be able to provide both chronological depth and thematically-specific case-study knowledge of key sites and spaces across the island of Ireland. Particular attention too will be given to the range of competing discourses on issues of environment, landscape and development and their implications for communities in the present and the future. Some of the case studies will be able to provide a long-term trajectory of developments, while others may choose to focus on other aspects of the physical or social environment.



Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of the module, students will be able to:

- Engage with the history of landscape through many different materialities.
- Differentiate between different sensory engagements that combine to make landscapes.
- Understand and critically engage with the constructed nature of landscapes through history.
- Analyse policies at a range of scales that impact upon the construction and maintenance of landscapes.
- Critically review the uses to which landscapes are being deployed in contemporary society.



Assessment

The assessment consists of an in-class test (40% of overall mark), approximately **half way through** the course and an assignment related to the field class (60% of overall mark) (or, alternatively, a second class test at the end of the course for those who do not participate on the field class). The field-class assignment deadline is **Tuesday 1st December 2026**.

Core Text

David, B. and Thomas, J. (Eds.) 2008. *Handbook of Landscape Archaeology*. Left Coast Press: Walnut Creek, California.

Additional readings will be made available on Canvas.



AR236 Interpretation in Archaeology

Semester 2

Course Co-ordinator: Maggie Ronayne

Lectures Commence: 13th January 2027

Lectures End: 24th March 2027

Lecture Times and Venues

Wednesday 11-12, AMB008

Friday 11-12, AC204

Course Summary

This course is an introduction to the different theories and frameworks archaeologists have used to interpret the past. The key question today is how our approach to our work as archaeologists can relate positively to communities whose heritage we are investigating. After a look at theories archaeologists used in the 19th and 20th centuries, we will examine recent and exciting work by archaeologists together with communities. Examples will be drawn from Ireland and all over the world – from the struggle to reclaim a district of Cape Town bulldozed in apartheid South Africa to explorations of Indigenous women's role in the development of agriculture in North America and Western Asia to the archaeology of maroons and opposition to slavery in the Americas. The course will provide students with an opportunity to engage in discussion about particular readings and issues.

Module Structure and Delivery

This module consists of 20 lectures as well as background reading and class discussion.

Learning Outcomes

This course will enable students to:

- Recognise a variety of approaches to interpretation in Archaeology.
- Place these approaches in their wider academic, historical and social context.
- Compare approaches to interpretation in different parts of the world.
- Understand the role of interpretation.
- Critically discuss and evaluate contrasting interpretations and current debates.
- Construct a clear, coherent argument.
- Assess the theoretical framework and social context of archaeological writing, projects or other work.
- Appreciate the need for professionals to work with communities in the development of interpretations.

Assessment

Assessment for this module consists of a class test which is worth 30% of the total mark for the module and an essay, worth 70%. The class test will occur at the **end of the module** and the essay deadline is **26th April 2027**.



Core Texts

- Gamble, C. 2001 Chapter 2: How Many Archaeologies Are There? In *Archaeology: The Basics*. London and New York, Routledge, 21 – 44.
- Hodder, I. and Hutson, S. 2003 *Reading the Past*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Orser, C. 1996 *A Historical Archaeology of the Modern World*. New York and London: Plenum Press.
- Trigger, B. 1996 [1984] Alternative Archaeologies: Nationalist, Colonialist, Imperialist. In R. Preucel and I. Hodder (eds.), *Contemporary Archaeology in Theory*. Blackwell, Oxford and Cambridge, Mass., 615 – 631.
- Trigger, B. 1989 *A History of Archaeological Thought*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

A detailed reading list will be provided in class and a good amount of this reading material will be provided on Canvas.

AR245 Archaeology in Practice

Semester 2

Course Co-ordinator: Dr. Carleton Jones

Lectures Commence: 11th January 2027

Lectures End: 23rd March 2027

Lecture Times and Venues:

Monday 11-12, AC214

Tuesday 11-12, McMunn theatre

Course Summary

This course teaches students about the wide range of ways in which archaeologists go about researching the past. Students learn about the nature of the archaeological record (formation processes, preservation conditions, etc.), different types of data collection and analyses used by archaeologists, dating methods, and different research foci. Case studies as diverse as Pharaoh Tutankhamun's tomb, Bronze Age houses preserved in the mud of the English fens, modern ethnographic studies used to interpret Ireland's prehistoric megaliths, shipwrecks in the Mediterranean, and long-distance exchange patterns in Mesoamerica are all used. The cutting-edge techniques of isotope analysis and ancient DNA analysis that are revolutionizing our understanding of ancient people and animals are a particular focus. Students will also be given hands-on introductions to topographical and geophysical surveying equipment.



Clockwise from top left: Uluburun Bronze Age shipwreck in the Mediterranean, Vessels from Must Farm England with food still in them, 'Ballynahatty woman' – first prehistoric Irish individual to have whole genome sequenced, Building a megalith in West Sumba Indonesia in the recent past.

Structure of Course

Lectures and a practical tutorial on topographical and geophysical surveying equipment.
Reading lists will be provided in class.

Assessment

In-class test (35%).

Survey-methods practical (25%).

Archaeological Science Assignment (40%).

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this module, students will:

- Have acquired a basic knowledge of the many diverse ways archaeologists go about researching the past.
- Understand how the new techniques of isotope analysis and ancient DNA analysis are shaping our understanding of the past.
- Have gained some hands-on experience with topographical and geophysical survey equipment.

Learning Outcomes

Reading lists will be provided in class.

AR2106 Introduction to Excavation

Semester 2 Core Course

Course Co-ordinator: Dr. Michelle Comber

Lectures Commence: 13th January 2027

Lectures End: 4th March 2027

Lecture Times and Venues

Wednesday 1-2, CSB 1005 (previously known as IT125)

Thursday 11-12, Dillon theatre

Course Summary

This module is designed to introduce students to various aspects of archaeological excavation, commencing with the historical development of such investigations. This will trace the main stages internationally, from the work of antiquarians right through to that of modern archaeologists. The methods involved in modern archaeological excavation will then be presented. In addition to all of this internationally relevant material, some Irish-specific content will be explored. This will include the legal framework governing archaeological excavation in Ireland, a practical account of the licensing system and a taste of how it works.



Lecture Topics will include:

- History of excavation.
- Planning requirements.
- Excavation grids and mapping.
- Equipment and logistics.
- Stratigraphy, contexts and features.
- On-site recovery of artefacts and samples.
- Marine/underwater excavation.
- Irish licensing requirements and applications.

Course Structure

Two on-campus lectures per week and a field class to an excavation site, date to be confirmed 2027.

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this module the learner will be able to:

- describe the main historical steps in the development of archaeological excavation.
- outline the processes involved in excavating an archaeological site.
- read/interpret a stratigraphic sequence.
- write an excavation-licence application (or parts thereof).

Assessment

One assignment, uploaded via Canvas, at the end of the module:

Students will select an archaeological site and will prepare a mock excavation-licence application. This will involve a little research into the site itself and then draw largely on the module content to outline the relevant processes required to successfully excavate such a site. **Attendance at lectures is essential in successfully completing this assignment.**

Due date: 8th April 2027

Core Texts

Note – additional readings and recordings will be provided on Canvas and/or recommended in class.

Renfrew, C. & Bahn, P. 2019 *Archaeology: Theories, Methods and Practice*. London, Thames & Hudson.

OR

Greene, K. 2010 *Archaeology: An Introduction*. London, Routledge.

Romer, J. 2000 *Great Excavations: John Romer's History of Archaeology*. London, Cassell.

