

COURSE PROPOSAL

Objects and Time Power and Memory

**The History of Archaeology as the History of Humankind
(from Ancient to Middle Age)**

Subject area

History, Historiography, History of Archaeology and History of Collections.

Brief syllabus

What is the connection between Khaemwaset, son of Ramses II; Nbonidus, king of Babylon in the sixth century BC; Cicero; Saint Augustine; Petrarch; Rabelais and Boucher de Perthes, the founder of prehistory?

What the relation between the Time, the Power and the Objects treated as a signifier?
What role have these objects in the transmission of History; and, more generally, in the reconstruction of even very remote ages and events?

Moreover, by what authority does archaeology exist, and how is it justified? Who benefits from its practice, and what is its purpose?

Here are sites, monuments, statues, jewels – all kinds of artifacts – but also much less spectacular remains, from tiny pieces of flint down to concentrations of phosphates in the soil, visible only in a laboratory.

In a fundamental and provocative book the philosopher and historian Krzysztof Pomian remarked that the archeology is no more than a presumptuous branch of collecting, and that collecting, in so far as its history can be traced, is part of being human.

Human beings, from the moment of their emergence as a cultural and biological entity, have in one way or another collected, preserved and hoarded items which have no other significance than as carriers of messages from a more or less remote past. However, that which connects archaeology to collecting is not the actual or perceived antiquity of the object, for one may collect contemporary items, nor is it the act of collection itself, for archaeology may be purely descriptive and need not involve the physical extraction of an object from the ground.

The vital link between the two is the status accorded to an object which has been isolated, conserved, displayed, associated with or distinguished from others as a result of certain traits observed through its analysis.

This course, in this sense, is focused not on a history of discoveries but of their reception.

Throughout our investigation, we seek to penetrate the mystery of the continuity of mankind in its pursuit of the past.

History, such as it is still practiced today, is a product (amongst others) of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. For over millennium in Europe (from Saint Augustine until Darwin), specialists, learned societies and the ruling powers in particular, refused to allow that human history ran to hundreds of thousands of years, and that it was the heterogeneous prolongation of the still older venture: the History of Nature.

At the heart of this course the Student will discover the “handful” of creative minds who, over the centuries, championed and finally established the idea of the great antiquity of mankind. So it is that history of archaeology is a part of the history of humankind confronted by nature, or by the ideal which we create for ourselves.

Goals/Objectives

This course seeks to familiarize its participants with the relation between the History, History of Archaeology and the history of Humankind. These will be approached in light of the following themes:

- Clear idea of interrelation between objects and history.
- Clear idea of interrelation between power and memory.
- An understanding of how objects represent cultural, historical, and political values.
- An appreciation for the function/use of the object.

Proposed methods and materials

This course will be based on analysis of material (imagines and documents) from the most important Libraries and Museums in the world.

Amongst: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris; British Library, London; Vatican Library, Vatican city; Warburg Institute, London; Pierpont Morgan Library, New York; National Library of Copenhagen; Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Florence; and British Museum, London; Musée du Louvre, Paris; Musei Vaticani, Vatican city; Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples; Royal Institute of British Architects, London; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

Observed on the evaluation of the intercultural influences, and based on continuous dialogue between teacher and student, this course would propose an interpretative line of many phenomena related to the “invention” of History, the relationship between Empires and Archeology, and more generally to the interpretation of the Past, the worship of the Ancient and Memory, from ancient Persia to Europe of the Eighteenth century.

At the beginning of each section of lessons will be distributed an topic Anthology - documents and literary works (always offered in English translation, for easy understanding) - necessary for a deeper understanding of art and archaeological monuments presented during the lesson. Other materials will be distributed through e-reserves and pdf.

At the end of each section will be discussions on the literature used in the classroom, on the Anthology distributed, with a student presentation of a subject or topic agreed with the professor.

Class Work

As this class is a seminar, it is critical that all participants attend every class meeting having read the assigned readings and being prepared to discuss them. Two to three students will be in charge of leading the discussion (which will include a brief presentation and the introduction of discussion questions) each section.

Assessment:

Attendance, participation, and final presentation: 50%
Papers (one) : 25%
Exam: 25%

Paper topics:

Paper topics will be announced at the introductory seminar meeting.

Suggested background reading:

Rossi, P., *The Dark Abyss of Time. The History of the Earth and the History of Nations from Hooke to Vico*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago-London, 1984.

Core Readings:

Sklenar, K., *Archaeology in Central Europe" the First 500 Years*, Leicester University Press, Leicester, New York, 1983.

Taylor, F.H., *The Taste of Angels, a History of Art Collectiong from Rameses to Napoleon*, Boston, 1948.

Additional Readings:

Cardinal, R. (eds), *The Culture of Collecting*, London, 1994.

Haskell, F., *History and its Images. Art and the Interpretation of the Past*, New Haven and London, 1993.

Momigliano, A., "Ancient history and the antiquarian", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 13, 1950, pp. 285-315.

Momigliano, A., *Essays in ancient and modern historiography*, Middletown, Wesley University Press, 1982.

Week 1

Introduction: Archaeology and the presence of the Past.

- *History, Images, Taste and Culture of Collecting.*
- *Assigination Paper topics.*

Week 2

Glory, Love and Memory

- *Memory needs the earth. The sands of Larsa, the mound of Xi'an, the site of Retoka.*
- *A science of objects. The interpretation of the past.*
- *The Medieval Persia.*
- *The discovery of Archaeology. A stormy sea.*

- Anthology:
 - Khaemwaset, restorer of Memphis. The discovery of the statue of Kawab, second millennium BC.
 - The holy discovery of Nabu-apla-iddina. The discovery of the statue of the god Shamash, ninth century BC.

Week 3

Empires and Archaeology

- *Continuity. The evidence of past empires legitimates the new*
- *The invention of the History. Herodotus.*
- *Observation of the ruins. Pausanias and Thucydides.*

Anthology:

- Prayer for the Obscure Masters. The excavation of a tomb in China, fifth century AD.
- Hippias teach "History". 'Archaeologia' according to Plato, sixth-fifth centuries BC.

Week 4

The Archaeology of the sacred: the Cult of Relics.

- *Plutarch and the transfer of the bones of Theseus.*
- *The Greece-Roman world and Archaeology. The taste for the art and the taste for the Antique. Pausanias, Pliny, Tacitus and the misadventures of a treasure-hunting emperor.*

Anthology:

- Lucretius. On the origins of mankind, first century AD.

- The persistence of pagan cults. A letter from the Emperor Julian, fourth century AD.

Week 5

Archaiologia and Antiquitates.

- *Hippias, Varro and Polybius*
- *Graeco-Roman Prehistory. Diodorus Siculus.*
- *Chinese and Japanese Antiquaries in the search for the Past.*
- *Students presentation.*
- *Paper n. 1.*

Anthology:

- The protection of heritage under the Emperor Augustus. A Senatorial decree, first century AD.
- Respect for the past. A text of Cassiodorus, sixth century AD.

Week 6

The Middle Ages confronted by the ruins of Antiquity

- *The collapse of the Greece-Roman model and the Crisis of History. The era of hagiographers.*
- *A Civilization of Ruins? Gregory of Tours, Saint Ruprecht and the discovery of Iuvavum.*

Anthology:

- The search for treasure. The discovery of the treasures of Octavian, twelfth century.

Week 7

Reconstruction and Recovery of the Past

- *Charlemagne's clerks.*

Week 8

The exhumation of the Past

- *The discovery of Arthur's tomb at Glastonbury.*

Anthology:

- The megaliths of Brittany in the year 1000. A survey by land-surveyors and lawyers, eleventh century.

Week 9

The forerunners of the Renaissance confront the neglect of things ancient

- *Northern Europe and the wholesale destruction of Roman monuments.*
- *The Italian precursors: Petrarch and Boccaccio.*

Anthology:

- The protection of antiquities in the fourteenth century. A treatise on the conservation of ancient buildings in Rome, fourteenth century.

Week 10

- *Students presentation*
- *Paper n 2.*
- *Exams*