

# Introduction to Archaeology: Past, Present, and Future

MIT - ESP Spring HSSP 2022

Saturdays 1:00-2:30PM EST

## Instructor Information

Alba Menéndez Pereda: I am a PhD student in archaeology working on the Inca empire (Peru). I love researching pilgrimages, funerary rituals, and oral history. I love to travel and frequently do so as I live in LA, work in Peru, and my family is back at home in Spain.

Maryan Ragheb: I am PhD student in ancient Egyptian archaeology. I love anything related to jewelry and tattoos as I study ancient crafts and technologies. I spend my time traveling back and forth between Egypt (my home) and Los Angeles where I study.

You can get in touch with us emailing [S14912-teachers@esp.mit.edu](mailto:S14912-teachers@esp.mit.edu)

---

## Course Description

How do archaeologists unravel the stories of the people of the past? Which evidence do they employ? What does the scientific method look like in archaeology? What impact does archaeology have in the present and in the future? What role do museums play in preserving and presenting cultural heritage to the general public? How are archaeologists viewed in pop culture and how does that impact the public understanding of archaeology?

In this class, you will learn about the process of archaeology, from survey to excavation to museum display. Through a combination of *lectures, discussions, and activities* covering a variety of worldwide case studies, by the end of the course, you will be familiar with key archaeological theories and methods, and be able to connect the modern world to the past. Students will be encouraged to think critically about historical “facts,” and analyze different understandings of material culture.

## Course Policies

Students are not required to search for / buy any readings, **all required materials will be provided by the instructors.**

**Students are expected to be active participants** during our meetings, both as speakers and listeners. This course encourages critical thinking. As such, be open to differing perspectives whether they are coming from the instructors or peers but feel free to, respectfully, challenge those arguments.

**Make sure to come to class prepared.** That means students should complete all assigned readings and homework in advance. No coursework in this class will be graded. Instead, assigned work is designed to solidify students' knowledge so that we can all actively participate during in-class discussions and activities and make the most of our time together. If you do not understand terms, make sure to look them up. If after completing the readings, you have questions, make sure to note them down and bring them up at the next meeting (most likely other students will have the same questions as you!).

Given the **remote nature of the Spring HSSP 2022** programs, students should have access to a technological device with camera and microphone (desktop, laptop, tablet, smartphone) and reliable internet connection that allows joining and participating in Zoom meetings. Remove potential distractions from your surroundings. During the duration of our class meetings, you should use your computer only for class-related activities. **No video or audio recordings are allowed.**

## **Course Schedule**

### **Class 1, Feb 26 | The Basics: Archaeology 101**

In this first class we will discuss our understanding of archaeology prior to joining the class. How does this understanding differ from the work professional archaeologists undertake?

Key concepts: archaeology, artifacts, material culture, dating, context, survey, looting

### **Class 2, March 5 | From the Ground to the Museum**

Where do objects exhibited in museums come from? What are the ethics of collecting and displaying material culture? In which museums can we find archaeological objects?

Key concepts: heritage, preservation, reconstruction, UNESCO, NAGPRA

**Class 3, March 19 | Themes in Archaeology: Death and Landscape. Case Study: the Inca empire.**

**Class 4, March 26 | Themes in Archaeology: Identity. Case Study: ancient Egypt.**

### **Class 5, April 2 | Archaeology: Past, Present, and Future**

As the program comes to a close, we will reflect on how archaeology remains present in our modern lives. We are creating history everyday. We will discuss some of the current challenges in the field of archaeology, and how we can improve our practices in the future.

Key concepts: heritage, community archaeology, contemporary archaeology (garbology)