

Archaeology of America

Code: 100731
ECTS Credits: 6

Degree	Type	Year	Semester
2500241 Archaeology	OT	3	0
2500241 Archaeology	OT	4	0

Contact

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Use of Languages

Principal working language: spanish (spa)
Some groups entirely in English: No
Some groups entirely in Catalan: No
Some groups entirely in Spanish: Yes

Teachers

Laura Mameli Iriarte

Prerequisites

Those that are considered in general procedure for the Grade in Archaeology

Objectives and Contextualisation

This course intends to provide knowledge of human history in the American continent, from the arrival of the first populations, millennia ago, to the emergence of state societies. It will emphasize the diversity that has characterized societies, as well as the processes of change, analyzing their causes and presenting the observable effects in the archaeological record, from which we know the dynamics of societies and their transformations. For this purpose, the course will be based on the presentation and discussion of archaeological evidence on the different hunting and gathering societies that inhabited extremely dissimilar environments with different economic and social strategies. Likewise, the economic, technological and social transformations that led to the sedentary lifestyle of some human groups will be discussed, documenting the origins of farming and herding. From the appearance of sedentary and life, new forms of social organization were established, becoming more complex until the appearance of ceremonial centers, kingdoms, States, and Empires, which co-existed in time with hunter-gatherer societies. In some cases, empires, complex societies, and hunter-gatherer societies coincided in time and space. A majority of sessions will be devoted to the study of complex societies of two areas: Mesoamerica and Central Andes, where highly complex societies developed until their end with the arrival of Europeans to the New World. In the chronological tour of the pre-Columbian history of America, we will emphasize the most significant causes, processes and social effects that gave rise to new forms of life over millennia.

The goal is to offer a panorama about the heterogeneity of those American societies from their very beginnings but also to the diverse approaches to archaeological research. Fundamental concepts and notions are expected to be learned, offering to students suitable methodological criteria and a critical and analytical capacity both. The objective is to know the American Indians social history and its social diversity, characterizing by means of concrete examples the different periods in its development throughout the continent and emphasizing the diversity of the historical processes.

Competences

Archaeology

- Contextualizing and analysing historical processes.
- Managing the main methods, techniques and analytic tools in archaeology.
- Providing a context for the concepts of archaeological theory and its origin and distinguishing the main epistemological and methodological debates in social sciences.
- Students must be capable of applying their knowledge to their work or vocation in a professional way and they should have building arguments and problem resolution skills within their area of study.
- Students must be capable of communicating information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialised and non-specialised audiences.
- Students must have and understand knowledge of an area of study built on the basis of general secondary education, and while it relies on some advanced textbooks it also includes some aspects coming from the forefront of its field of study.

Learning Outcomes

1. Applying both knowledge and analytical skills to the resolution of problems related to their area of study.
2. Applying proper techniques and analytical tools in case studies.
3. Communicating in oral and written form in the studied language, properly using vocabulary and grammar.
4. Critically assessing the sources and theoretical models.
5. Critically taking part in classroom oral debates and using the discipline's specific vocabulary.
6. Identifying the context of the historical processes.
7. Interpreting material sources and the archaeological record.
8. Knowing the main archaeological debates on Prehistory.
9. Mastering the diachronic structure of the past.
10. Mastering the processes of change produced in Prehistory.
11. Transmitting the results of archaeological research and clearly communicating conclusions in oral and written form to both specialised and non-specialised audiences.

Content

Block 1 : The first human presence on the American continent: Population, the Paleo-Indian period.

The history of America is more than 500 years old. General panorama of the American pre-Hispanic societies. Topics regarding America and the study of its history.

Archaeological context. Heterogeneity of the American archaeological record.

Geographical background and ecological diversity of the American continent. End of Wisconsin glaciation, advances and retreats of ice. Pleistocene-Holocene transition, paleoenvironments, oscillations and environmental change. Who populated America and when? Accepted theories. Diversity of research approaches; high and low antiquity, intermediate proposals. Hypotheses of accessing the new continent and expansion of groups. Archaeological evidence. Archaeological evidence for the first hunter-gatherers. The Paleo-Indian Period, representative sites throughout the American continent. Subsistence of first human populations; big game hunting of Pleistocene animals. Technology Clovis, Folsom, Fish tail. Paleo-American. Archaeological analysis of Pleistocene archaeological record in North, Central and South America. The extinction of the American megafauna; theories about the role of human groups in massive animal extinctions.

Block 2 : Transformation of resource management by evolved human populations: the Archaic period

The Archaic Period in America: Colonization of new habitats and use of new foods. Exploitation of marine and coastal resources, small game hunting, collection of coastal fauna, use of plant species. Technological innovation and diversification in subsistence systems.

The Chinchorro culture at the Atacama Desert.

Hunter-gatherers and hunter-fishermen-gatherers. Archaeological examples in North America. Ethnographic and archaeological examples in South America. The case of the Yámana society.

Block 3. Sedentary life. The Formative or neolitization process.

Towards food production. Colonization of new habitats and use of new foods. Plant and animal domestication centers. Problems, theories of the causes that led to agriculture and archaeological evidence in various regions. Cases from Mesoamerica, Central Andes and Amazon Lowlands.

The plant foods that America gave to the world.

The emergence of sedentary life.

Block 4: Ethnic Interrelations, Towards Greater Social Complexity

The expansion of agriculture in America. The first forms of urbanism.

The origin of ceramics and other technologies, textiles and agriculture. The case of Valdivia-Real Alto in the Northern Andes.

Social complexity in the two nuclear areas: Central Andes and Mesoamerica.

Block 5. Complex societies: chiefdoms, chiefdoms and states.

The emergence of complex societies in the Americas. The appearance of ceremonial centers, political, economic and social organization in Mesoamerica and the Central Andes.

Development in Mesoamerica: Olmecs, Zapotecs, Teotihuacan, urban life, writing, calendars and state cities. The Mayan States, the Aztec Empire.

Development in Central Andes: Caral, Chavín de Huantar, Paracas, Nazca, Moche, Tiahuanaco, Wari, Chimor, the Tawantinsuyu Empire. Alliances, subjugation, militarism and expansion.

The impact of the European conquest in Mesoamerica and the Central Andes.

Beyond nuclear areas. Heterogeneity in nomadic societies and the impact of the conquest.

Indigenous people from Colombia, Paraguay. Contact, destructuring, conquest, resistance and European colonization of the New World. Social consequences of the conquest.

Methodology

TARGETED ACTIVITY

Attendance to theoretical classes explained by the teacher.

SUPERVISED ACTIVITY

Preparation of oral presentations

SELF-EMPLOYED ACTIVITY

Personal study.

Comprehensive reading of texts.

Realization of reviews, works and analytical comments.

Activities

Title	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Type: Directed			
Theoretical sessions	50	2	4, 8, 10, 9, 6, 7
Type: Supervised			
Practical work and seminars	20	0.8	2, 1, 3, 7, 5
Type: Autonomous			
Text reading and understanding	64	2.56	2, 1, 4, 8, 10, 9, 6, 7, 5

Assessment

The subject will be evaluated through the following procedures:

1. Written and individual tests: each 35% of the final mark
2. Documentary research on proposed texts and research problems, already explained in class. 30% of the final grade

Evaluation activities delivered within the deadlines established by the teacher can be re-evaluated if failed; in no case a written essay can be delivered out of the deadline.

A student will only be considered "not presented" if he or she has submitted less than 40% of the evaluable evidence of the total subject.

Copies of written sources (internet, books, papers, etc.) imply a 0.

The student has the right to review the results of the tests carried out. The teaching staff will establish in due course the mechanisms for doing so.

Special cases requiring special treatment will be taken into account.

Assessment Activities

Title	Weighting	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Text commentary	30	10	0.4	2, 1, 4, 8, 10, 9, 3, 6, 7, 5, 11
Written essay for each thematic block	70	6	0.24	1, 4, 8, 10, 9, 3, 7, 5, 11

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