

Degree programme	Type	Course
History	FB	1

Contact lecturer

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Teaching staff

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Group languages

You can consult this information at the [end](#) of the document.

Prerequisites

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Objectives

The main aim of this course is to introduce students to the analysis of human societies from a broad, critical, and non-Eurocentric perspective, addressing the diversity of historical experiences across different regions of the world. It seeks to foster an understanding of what characterizes a human society, considering aspects such as social organization, subsistence strategies, beliefs, material culture, and dynamics of power and resistance.

The course also includes an introduction to human evolution from its origins, with particular attention to the different species within the genus *Homo* and the biological and cultural processes that culminated in the emergence of *Homo sapiens*. It explores the relationship between biological evolution and cultural behavior, as well as human adaptation to diverse environments in Africa and other continents, highlighting the central role of Africa in the history of humanity.

Another key objective is for students to identify major long-term processes of change, such as the transition from hunting and gathering economies to food production systems, the development of permanent settlements, labor specialization, and increasing social complexity. These processes will be examined comparatively across different world regions, emphasizing the emergence of early state forms in areas such as the Near East, the Nile Valley, the Indus region, and China.

The course also aims to familiarize students with archaeological methodology as a fundamental means of understanding non-literate societies. It will introduce research techniques and approaches, as well as the critical interpretation of material remains.

Finally, the course seeks to promote critical thinking, awareness of cultural diversity, and the ability to understand the multiple historical trajectories that have shaped human societies.

Learning outcomes

- CM09 (Integrate archaeological research methods and their relationship with other techniques in the global study of human history.) Integrate archaeological research methods and their relationship with other techniques in the global study of human history.
- CM10 (Integrate into the global vision of human history from Prehistory and the first Mesopotamian civilizations a non-androcentric or Eurocentric perspective that contemplates the gender perspective.) Integrate into the global vision of human history from Prehistory and the first Mesopotamian civilizations a non-androcentric or Eurocentric perspective that contemplates the gender perspective.
- KM14 (Describe the main historical processes in the emergence and development of the first human societies in Prehistory and the Ancient Age, recognising their respective geographical and temporal scopes, as well as the main situations that derived from these processes.) Describe the main historical processes in the emergence and development of the first human societies in Prehistory and the Ancient Age, recognising their respective geographical and temporal scopes, as well as the main situations that derived from these processes.
- KM15 (Identify the different study methodologies and different types of sources in prehistoric societies.) Identify the different study methodologies and different types of sources in prehistoric societies.
- KM16 (Identify the different methodologies and sources for the study of the societies of the Ancient Near East.) Identify the different methodologies and sources for the study of the societies of the Ancient Near East.
- KM17 (Recognise the potential of prehistoric and ancient archaeological remains for the dissemination of heritage.) Recognise the potential of prehistoric and ancient archaeological remains for the dissemination of heritage.
- SM14 (Apply research methodologies for the construction of initial representations about the first human societies in Prehistory and in the Ancient Age.) Apply research methodologies for the construction of initial representations about the first human societies in Prehistory and in the Ancient Age.
- SM15 (Interpret in a general and synthetic way the main economic and social processes of prehistoric and Ancient Near Eastern societies, as well as their succession over time.) Interpret in a general and synthetic way the main economic and social processes of prehistoric and Ancient Near Eastern societies, as well as their succession over time.
- SM16 (Explain through written works or oral presentations the intra- and extra-community social relations, gender relations and cultural diversity in Prehistory and in the first Mesopotamian civilisations.) Explain through written works or oral presentations the intra- and extra-community social relations, gender relations and cultural diversity in Prehistory and in the first Mesopotamian civilisations.

Contents

1. Human societies: concepts and diversity

- Definition of society from historical and anthropological perspectives
- Basic elements: social organization, subsistence, culture, and power
- Diversity of social forms across time and space
- Non-Eurocentric perspectives and critique of linear models
- Introduction to the variability and complexity of human experiences

2. Knowing without texts: archaeology as a method

- Archaeology as a key discipline for studying the human past
- Types of evidence: material culture, landscapes, bioarchaeology
- Field techniques: survey, excavation, and recording
- Dating and analytical methods
- Interpretation of the archaeological record

- Scope, limits, and current debates in archaeology

3. Human origins: evolution and expansion

- Introduction to human evolution
- Main species within the genus *Homo*
- Emergence of *Homo sapiens*
- Africa as the central locus of evolution and global dispersal
- Adaptation to diverse environments
- Relationships between biological evolution and cultural development

4. Stateless societies: diverse ways of life

- Characteristics of hunter-gatherer societies
- Subsistence strategies and environmental interaction
- Social organization, mobility, and territoriality
- Material culture, symbolism, and early cultural expressions
- Diversity of non-state social models

5. Changes in subsistence and ways of life

- Transitions toward food production
- Origins of agriculture and herding in different regions
- Sedentarization and new forms of social organization
- Demographic, technological, and environmental changes
- Diversity of trajectories in these transformation processes

6. Inequality, power, and social complexity

- Emergence of social hierarchies
- When does patriarchy begin?
- Labor specialization and social differentiation
- Exchange networks and circulation of resources
- Emerging forms of power and authority
- Dynamics of conflict and resistance

7. Early states in comparative perspective

- Definition and characteristics of early states
- Processes of urbanization
- Administration, territorial control, and political organization
- Emergence of writing and record-keeping systems
- Ideology, religion, and legitimization of power
- Diversity of state forms in comparative perspective

Learning activities and methodology

Title	Hours	ECTS	Learning outcomes
Seminars	15	0.6	CM10, KM14, KM15, KM17
Personal learning and study	50	2	CM09, CM10, KM14, KM15, SM15
Lectures	20	0.8	CM09, CM10, KM14
Individual and group tasks supervision	25	1	CM09, CM10, KM14, KM15, KM16, SM14
Archaeological practicum	15	0.6	KM15, KM16, KM17

The course is based on an active learning model in which students do not merely receive knowledge passively, but progressively construct it through the formulation of historical problems and direct engagement with evidence. It promotes an approach to the discipline of history that combines theoretical reflection with analytical practice, placing particular emphasis on the role of material culture and archaeological evidence as key sources for understanding the past. Throughout the course, students develop core skills of the historical method, such as critical analysis, source interpretation, evidence-based argumentation, and an understanding of the diversity of human societies from a global perspective. This approach also aims to foster active participation, collaborative work, and learner autonomy, particularly in an introductory context to historical studies.

Methodological axes

- Case-based learning
- Structured debates
- Practical work in archaeological methods, experimentation, and analysis of archaeological materials

Annotation: within the schedule set by the centre or degree programme, 15 minutes of one class will be reserved for students to evaluate their lecturers and their courses or modules through questionnaires.

Assessment

Continuous assessment activities

Title	Weight	Hours	ECTS	Learning outcomes
Case studies	40	10	0.4	SM14, SM15, SM16
Exams	40	5	0.2	CM09, CM10, KM14
Participation in discussion seminars and practical sessions	20	10	0.4	KM15, KM16, KM17

Continuous Assessment

Students must actively participate in class discussions and seminars, as well as in practical sessions (20%).

Students will be required to develop and present two case studies (40%).

Written Exams (40%).

Evaluation Calendar

At the beginning of the course, students will be informed of the deadlines for completing/submitting the

different assessment activities.

Assessment dates can't be changed unless there's an exceptional and well-justified reason.

Erasmus students who need to leave before the scheduled assessment dates must provide an official document from their home university, addressed to the Degree Exchange Coordinator, confirming a calendar conflict (an overlap with academic activities at their home institution).

Requirements for Passing the Course

Submission/completion of assessment exercises within the established deadlines. Achieve an average score of 5 or higher on a scale of 10 for the assessment exercises.

A student will be considered absent if they fail to complete one or more assessment modules within the established deadlines.

Revision of Marks

At the time of completion/submission of each assessable activity, the instructors will inform students (via Moodle, SEA) of the procedure and date for grade review.

Retake System

Students who have completed/submitted the supervised and independent activities within the established deadlines and have a minimum grade of 3.5 will be eligible to take the retake.

Conditions for a 'Not Assessable' Grade

Students will receive a "Not Assessable" grade if they have not failed more than 30% of the assessment activities.

Timetable for Retakes

The dates for retakes are set by the Faculty of Arts. These dates are published on the faculty website in July of the previous academic year. It is the students' responsibility to know the date of their scheduled resit for the course. The final continuous assessment test will be scheduled at least one week before the resit date.

Plagiarism and Artificial Intelligence (AI)

This course allows the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies exclusively for bibliographic research or information retrieval tasks and for proofreading or translating texts.

Students must (i) identify the parts generated using AI; (ii) specify the tools used; and (iii) include a critical reflection on how these tools influenced the process and the final result of the submitted work.

If the instructor detects obvious plagiarism at any point during the evaluation of a piece of work, the assignment will be marked as "Not Submitted." Lack of transparency regarding the use of AI will be considered academic dishonesty and will result in the assignment receiving a grade of 0.

Bibliography

General bibliography of the course

Childe, Vere G. (1984). *Los orígenes de la civilización*. Fondo de Cultura Económica.

González-Ruibal, Alfredo (2023). *Tierra arrasada. Un viaje por la violencia del Paleolítico al siglo XXI*. Editorial Crítica.

Graeber, David; Wengrow, David (2021). *El amanecer de todo: Una nueva historia de la humanidad*. Editorial Ariel.

Harari, Yuval N. (2014). *Sapiens: de animales a dioses: breve historia de la humanidad*. Editorial Debate.

Higham, Tom (2023). *El mundo antes de nosotros*. GeoPlaneta Ciencia.

Patou-Mathis, Marylène (2021). *El Hombre prehistórico es también una mujer: una historia de la invisibilidad de las mujeres*. Editorial Lumen.

Sánchez Romero, Margarita (2022). *Prehistorias de mujeres: descubre lo que no te han contado sobre nosotras*. Ediciones Destino.

Teyssandier, Nicolas (2024). *Nuestras primeras veces. 30 (pre)historias extraordinarias*. Editorial Periférica.

Prehistory and Archaeology handbooks

Burenhult, Göran (1995). *Atlas culturales de la Humanidad* (10 vols.) Editorial Debate

González-Ruibal, Alfredo; Ayán, Xurxo (2018). *Arqueología. Una introducción al estudio de la cultura material*. Editorial Akal

López García, Pilar (coord.) (2017): *La Prehistoria en la península Ibérica*. Ed. Istmo.

Muñoz Ibáñez, Francisco (coord.) (2021). *Prehistoria II. Las sociedades metalúrgicas*. Editorial Universitaria Ramón Areces-UNED (3ª edición).

Renfrew, Colin; Bahn, Paul (2022). *Arqueología: teorías, métodos y práctica*. Akal (edición revisada y actualizada)

Ripoll López, Sergio (coord.) (2020). *Prehistoria I. Las primeras etapas de la Humanidad*. Editorial Universitaria Ramón Areces-UNED (3ª edición)

Rosas, Antonio (2019). *Los fósiles de nuestra evolución: Un viaje por los yacimientos paleontológicos que explican nuestro pasado como especie*. Ariel

For each syllabus topic, specific bibliography and webgraphy will be provided.

Software

Moodle (Campus Virtual)

Course groups and languages

The information provided is provisional until November 30. After this date, you will be able to consult the language of each group through this [link](#). To access the information, you will need to enter the course CODE

Type of teaching	Group	Language	Semester	Shift
(TE) Theory	1	Catalan/Spanish	first semester	morning-mixed
(PAUL) Classroom practices	1	Catalan/Spanish	first semester	morning-mixed
(TE) Theory	2	Catalan/Spanish	first semester	morning-mixed
(PAUL) Classroom practices	2	Catalan/Spanish	first semester	morning-mixed