AR3001  The Origins of Modern Humans

Academic Year: 2009-2010
Semester: 1
Time and location: Wednesday 10.00am-12.00 noon, Attenborough SB2.07
First meeting: Wednesday October 7th
Module coordinator: Dr Terry Hopkinson
e-mail: th46@le.ac.uk
Room: 123
Office hours: Thursday 13.30-15.00, 15.30-16.30
Your individual appointments (e.g. tutorials, seminars):

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Document prepared by: Dr Terry Hopkinson 21/09/2009
AR3001  The Origins of Modern Humans

**Weighting:** 20 credits  
**Coordinator:** Dr Terry Hopkinson  
**Other tutors:** None

**Module outline:** This module in Palaeolithic archaeology examines the evolutionary origins and cultural construction of our own species *Homo sapiens*. Contemporary archaeological, fossil and genetic knowledge, theory and understanding of this question will be critically examined. This will be global in scope, with particular emphasis on the European and African archaeological and fossil records. There will be sessions introducing the history of evolutionary thought and current evolutionary theories, and their application to long-term developments in human behaviour and culture. The concept of the ‘modern human being’ will be critically assessed against the evidence, both in terms of its archaeological value and visibility, and in terms of its relation with contemporary western cultural and scientific values.

**Aims:**  
- To develop students’ knowledge and understanding of the major events in the evolutionary emergence of modern *Homo sapiens* as currently understood.  
- To place these events in the context of biological and cultural evolutionary theory.  
- To develop students’ ability to synthesise, analyse and criticise multiple and often contradictory strands of evidence.  
- To consider the complex relationships between the evidence, theories of human evolution and contemporary cultural beliefs and value systems.

**Intended learning outcomes:** On completion of the module students will be able to demonstrate:  
- A broad knowledge of the archaeology, palaeontology and genetics of modern human origins.  
- A critical understanding of current issues and debates in the study of this question, and a critical grasp of the methodological and theoretical problems it raises.  
- An understanding of how, in this field, understanding of the past might emerge from and impact upon world outlooks in the present.  
- Skills of written and oral communication and of independent learning.

**Method(s) of teaching:** 12 hours of lectures, four one-hour seminars, one museum visit.

**Method of assessment:** One two-hour exam (50%); one assessed essay of 3000 words (50%).
Teaching schedule

All sessions will be conducted by Dr Terry Hopkinson

Week 2  Wed 7 Oct  10.00  Lecture 1: Introduction to the module
          11.00  Lecture 2: The rise of evolution
Week 3  Wed 14 Oct 10.00  Lecture 3: Evolutionary theory and taxonomy
          11.00pm Lecture 4: Europe – the Middle-Upper Palaeolithic transition.
Week 4  Wed 21 Oct 10.00  Lecture 5: Many origins or one? The genetic evidence.
          11.00pm Seminar 1
Week 5  Wed 28 Oct 10.00  Lecture 6: Africa – the MSA and LSA
          11.00pm Lecture 7: The demise of the Neanderthals
Week 6  Wed 4 Nov  10.00  Lecture 8: Modernity, meat and mobility
          11.00pm Seminar 2
Week 7  9-13 Nov  READING WEEK - NO TEACHING
Week 8  Wed 18 Nov 10.00  Lecture 9: Art, meaning and ‘modernity’
          11.00pm Seminar 3
Week 9  Tue 24 Nov From 8.30  Visit to Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge – TO BE CONFIRMED
Week 10 Wed 2 Dec  10.00  Lecture 10: Biological explanations for the emergence of modern human origins
          11.00pm Seminar 4
Week 11 Wed 9 Dec  12.00  Lecture 11: ‘Modernity’: condition or continuum?
Seminars

The class will be organised into four seminar groups in the first lecture. There will be four one-hour seminar sessions, in each of which one group will take the lead and give a short presentation on the issue in hand, followed by open discussion. Each group will take the lead in one seminar.

Assignments, deadlines and submission

All students on this course must submit one essay of 3000 words, which counts for 50% of the overall mark for the module. Essays should be word-processed and titles chosen from the list below. Please note that sources marked * are obtainable from Dr Hopkinson. Two hard copies of the essay, with a completed Third Year cover sheet, must be submitted by 4.30pm on Monday December 7th 2009.

NB: You are also required to submit an electronic copy of your essay via the Turnitin facility of the AR3001 Blackboard site. Full instructions as to how to do so are given there. Please make sure that you also read the Turnitin Personal Data and Intellectual Property section of your Undergraduate Handbook.

The electronic copy is to be submitted by the same deadline as the paper copy, i.e. 4.30pm on Monday December 7th. Please note that both hard copy and electronic submissions are compulsory. Late submission of either copy will result in the appropriate lateness penalties being applied to the final mark. Students failing to submit either or both will be deemed to have failed the assessment (i.e. a mark of zero will be recorded).

In addition, a two-hour examination in the summer examination period will count for the remaining 50% of the module mark.
Essay Titles

1. In Africa, did modern human behaviour emerge early in the Middle Stone Age, or only much later at the onset of the Late Stone Age?


2. What is the character of the ‘transitional’ industries in the passage from the Middle to the Upper Palaeolithic in Europe, and what are their implications for our understanding of the replacement of the Neanderthals by Homo sapiens?

Recommended Reading


3. How different or similar were the subsistence practices of Middle and Upper Palaeolithic peoples?


4. In what ways have archaeological conceptions of the emergence of humanity been influenced by changing fashions in taxonomy and evolutionary theory?


5. Is 'symbolism' the primary distinguishing feature of modern humanity?

Recommended Reading


Reading list

NOTE: References marked * are available from Dr Hopkinson, in either hard or electronic copy.

General Textbooks and Overviews


Quaternary Climate, Environment, Chronology; Dating Methods


van Andel, T.1998. Middle and Upper Palaeolithic environments and the calibration of $^{14}$C dates beyond 10,000 BP. Antiquity 72, 26-33
Evolution


Theoretical Problems in Human Evolution and Palaeolithic Archaeology


Laland, K. and Hoppitt, W. 2003. Do animals have culture? *Evolutionary Anthropology* 12, 150-159.

The Eurasian Middle Palaeolithic and the African Middle Stone Age


White, M. 2006. Things to do in Doggerland when you’re dead: surviving OIS3 at the northwestern-most fringe of Middle Palaeolithic Europe. World Archaeology 38, 547–75.


### The Origins of Modern Humans and the Transition to the Upper Palaeolithic/Late Stone Age


Gargett, R.H. 1999. Middle Palaeolithic burial is not a dead issue: the view from Qafzeh, Saint-Césaire, Kebara, Amud and Dederiyeh. *Journal of Human Evolution* 37, 27-90.


White, M. 2006. Things to do in Doggerland when you’re dead: surviving OIS3 at the northwestern-most fringe of Middle Palaeolithic Europe. World Archaeology 38, 547–75.


