



# Archaeology Mātai Whaipara Tangata

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Lana Arun  
BA (Anthropology),  
Master of Indigenous Studies

## Bringing the past into the present

Archaeology seeks to understand earlier human communities through the study of material evidence from the past. This evidence can include assemblages of portable artefacts such as stone tools, larger monumental structures like Mayan temples, and entire human-modified landscapes. Archaeologists generate data through fieldwork and excavation, and use both laboratory science and interpretive theory to study that data. Archaeology is essentially a humanities discipline, since it studies human societies and their history, but it draws on a range of other fields, particularly from the sciences.

Archaeology is our primary source of knowledge about the deep history of humankind, and the gradual developments in culture and society that led to the present-day arrangement of human communities. Otago offers a range of stimulating archaeology papers, including opportunities for postgraduate students to carry out supervised field and laboratory research, particularly in New Zealand and the Pacific.

0800 80 80 98 | [otago.ac.nz](http://otago.ac.nz) | [university@otago.ac.nz](mailto:university@otago.ac.nz)



## Archaeology at Otago

Archaeology at Otago is taught as part of the broader discipline of Anthropology: the comparative study of humanity and culture. Students who wish to specialise in Archaeology major in Anthropology. The major normally takes three years and requires a minimum of nine papers in the subject, out of a minimum of 20 papers for a degree. Anthropology majors graduate with a Bachelor of Arts or with a BA(Hons) (an extra year). There is also an Anthropology minor option requiring a minimum of five papers.

Archaeology is introduced in the first year papers ANTH 103 Introduction to Anthropology and ANTH 106 Human Origins and Civilisations.

ANTH 103 is taught in two blocks with lectures on Archaeology and Social Anthropology (the study of contemporary culture). In the Archaeology block, ANTH 103 considers the history, techniques and ideas of archaeology with special attention to problems that have challenged archaeologists.

In ANTH 106 students are introduced to the archaeological evidence for the biological and socio-cultural origins and development of the human species. The course reviews the major changes in human society and culture from our earliest days up until the emergence of early civilisations around the world.

In upper-level papers students can study the regional archaeologies of New Zealand, the Pacific islands and Asia, as well as the archaeology of recent colonial societies. Other courses train students in the methods and practice of archaeology and the study of animal remains and artefacts. Students who specialise in archaeology are encouraged to carry out field or laboratory research for postgraduate theses (MA and PhD).

### Teaching style

Our staff are committed to providing high quality teaching through lectures and tutorial interactions, field instruction, and laboratory supervision and training. They are all active researchers who incorporate their research programmes and findings into their teaching.

## Double major/degree options

It is possible to major in Anthropology with Archaeology papers only, although students wishing to specialise in Archaeology are encouraged to take one or more lower-level Social Anthropology papers too (including the joint ANTH 103 paper). Archaeology students may also wish to take Biological Anthropology courses concerned in part with the study of human biological remains from archaeological sites. These courses are offered through the Department of Anatomy. Students with strong interests in archaeological science and lab techniques may wish to credit other relevant science papers in their degree.

Some useful double major options include History, Classics, Geography, Politics, Māori Studies and Languages. Students can also take archaeology papers in double degrees with Law, Sciences and Commerce.

### Why study Archaeology?

Archaeology is taught as part of the Arts degree at the University of Otago so our students receive excellent instruction in research, and are skilled in the construction and presentation of well-reasoned and articulated arguments – in both written and oral form. These are the fundamental skills necessary for a wide range of careers and our graduates are currently employed in many different professions. Those with a graduate degree in archaeology often elect to take up positions in archaeological research, heritage management, museum studies or in related fields.

In general, the study of archaeology will broaden your understanding of the development of human society and culture. At Otago you will learn about the methods and findings that have led archaeologists to understand how and why complex societies emerged throughout the world. Otago courses provide a unique 50,000 year perspective on early human colonisation and cultural change in Asia and the Pacific. Students gain novel insights into human social and material environments and interactions in the past. Students can also prepare for a career that promotes new and exciting research into our human heritage, and the care of archaeological sites today. Graduating archaeology students will have critical skills

in the systematic recording, analysis and interpretation of the cultural past.

## Background required

There are no formal secondary school prerequisites for enrolment in an Anthropology degree.

## Careers in Archaeology

In most countries, some and occasionally all archaeological sites are protected from modification under law. Government agencies responsible for archaeological site protection may employ archaeologists to help manage sites, or to respond to applications to modify sites for development or research purposes.

In New Zealand, some archaeologists are employed by Heritage New Zealand, the national agency responsible for site protection. Such archaeologists may process applications to modify sites and otherwise work to promote the identification, understanding and protection of archaeological places and areas.

The Department of Conservation also employs archaeologists.

Local authorities are increasingly assuming greater responsibilities for archaeological heritage in New Zealand and overseas, and may offer archaeological employment. Public museums may also employ archaeologists as curators, or for specific conservation purposes and research.

Many archaeologists work in a private consulting capacity, offering services and advice to local and national government and other public institutions. They may also be contracted to carry out investigations required during development work, or to advise on the management and care of particular sites and artefacts.

Archaeological skills and knowledge contribute usefully to other professions such as planning, surveying, museum management, history and tourism.

For more information about Archaeology



[otago.ac.nz/courses/subjects/arch.html](https://otago.ac.nz/courses/subjects/arch.html)

## PROFILE

### Lana Arun BA (Anthropology), Master of Indigenous Studies

"The University of Otago has the best archaeology department in Aotearoa. It has a strong focus on Pacific and New Zealand archaeology, and my main interest is in Māori archaeology.

"Archaeology provides a hands-on experience of learning about our history. I feel like I have a deeper connection with my tūpuna (ancestors) through touching the taonga that is uncovered in the programme.

"I found the studying environment and staff at Otago very educational and supportive. The specialised labs that contain archaeozoological, artefact and geological collections are easily accessible by students.

"The highlights of the programme for me were learning excavating techniques, including stratigraphy drawing, and artefact and bone analysis, and the research that I undertook.

"Doing archaeology has given me many skills, which range from practical skills such as excavation techniques, to research and writing reports. Learning about mātauranga Māori has given me a different perspective and an indigenous insight, which I feel creates more of a narrative, which is useful in my job at the Otago Museum. It has helped me to understand the taoka Māori in the collection and figure out ways to tell their stories."

