

SU402 THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE OF IRELAND (3 Credits)

COURSE OBJECTIVE: This course charts the evidence for human occupation in Ireland over eight millennia from the island's initial colonization by small groups of hunter-gatherers through to the Medieval period. The course addresses key themes such as 'Megalithic Tombs and the Age of the Ancestors', 'The Age of Metal', 'Iron Age Royal Sites', 'The Arrival of Christianity', 'The Vikings in Ireland', etc. The archaeology of the entire island of Ireland will be covered but there will be a particular emphasis on the archaeology of the Burren, a remarkable upland area just south of Galway where archaeological remains of all periods are well preserved and visible. The course includes two trips to the Burren to visit both prehistoric and historic-period sites.

COURSE OUTLINE:

- Week 1 **Archaeology:** Introductory Class
Understanding Material Culture. Lab Seminar – examination of artefacts.
The First Colonists. The Mesolithic period, c. 7000 - 4000 BC.
Hunter-gatherers in a forested landscape.
- Week 2 **The Age of the Ancestors.** The Neolithic period, c. 4000 - 2400 BC.
The first farmers.
Megalithic Tombs. Understanding the stone temples of the early farmers.
Field Seminar: The Burren in prehistory (Poulnabrone and Roughan Hill).
The Age of Metal. The end of the Neolithic and the start of the Bronze Age, c. 2400 - 1500 BC. The introduction of metal to Ireland is accompanied by profound social changes.
- Week 3 **Gold, Power and War.** Chiefdoms in the later Bronze Age, c. 1500 - 600 BC.
Hierarchical chiefdoms emerge with power and wealth concentrated in the hands of a minority elite.
From Bronze to Iron. The Iron Age, c. 600 BC - 400 AD.
Field Seminar: The Burren in the historic period (Corcomroe & Cahercammaun).
Iron Age Royal Sites. Rathcroghan, Tara, Knockaulin, Navan.
- Week 4 **The Arrival of Christianity.** The introduction of Christianity to Ireland and early monastic sites in Ireland, c. 400 AD - late 12th c. AD.
Early Medieval Settlement. The pattern of secular settlement across the landscape, c. 400 AD - late 12th c. AD (ringforts, crannogs, etc.)
Treasures of Early Medieval Ireland. Ornamental Metalwork and Illuminated Manuscripts.
The Vikings in Ireland. The impact of the Vikings on Ireland.
- Week 5 **Castles in Ireland.** The development of castles in Ireland from the first earth and timber examples through late tower houses.
Course summary.

COURSE TEXTS:

ESSENTIAL READING:

Ryan, M. (ed.) 1994 *Irish Archaeology Illustrated*. Dublin: Country House.

Jones, C. 2004 *The Burren and the Aran Islands - Exploring the Archaeology*. Cork: The Collins Press.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED READING:

Cooney, G. and E. Grogan 1994 *Irish Prehistory: A Social Perspective*. Dublin: Wordwell.

Edwards, N. 1990 *The Archaeology of Early Medieval Ireland*. London: Routledge.

Halpin, A. and Newman, C. 2006 *Ireland: An Oxford Archaeological Guide*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (Read Introduction, pg. 1-55)

O'Keefe, T. 2000 *Medieval Ireland: An Archaeology*. Stroud: Tempus.

Shee Twohig, E. 2004 *Irish Megalithic Tombs*. Princes Risborough: Shire.

Sweetman, D. 1999 *The Medieval Castles of Ireland*. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press.

Waddell, J. 1998 *The Prehistoric Archaeology of Ireland*. Dublin: Wordwell.

REQUIREMENTS FOR CREDITS:

1. Attendance and participation at all the scheduled lectures, seminars **and** tours.
2. One essay of 1,500 words minimum on subject assigned by the course tutor.
3. Written examination of the material covered in the scheduled lectures, seminars **and** tours.

COURSE PROFESSORS:

Professor John Waddell, M.A., Ph.D. (Director)

John Waddell was educated at NUI, Galway and the University of Glasgow. He worked in the National Museum of Ireland for a number of years and is a member of the Heritage Council. Author of several books and numerous articles on Irish prehistory, he has recently published The Prehistoric Archaeology of Ireland.

Carleton Jones, M.A., Ph.D.

Carleton Jones received his Ph.D. from the University of Cambridge and his research has focused on the prehistoric archaeology of Ireland. For several seasons Dr. Jones directed a survey and excavation project that concentrated on the prehistoric landscape of the Burren in Co. Clare. This work was supported by the Heritage Council and the Royal Irish Academy. He has published several papers on his research and also recently published two books: *'The Burren and the Aran Islands – Exploring the Archaeology'* and *'Temples of Stone: Exploring the Megalithic Tombs of Ireland'*.