

**Ancient Britain, Spring 2022**

Fred Christensen

**COURSE OUTLINE:**

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**Feb. 2 — Introduction / Geology and Geography / Earliest Human Species**

—The class will begin with the British landscape's geological foundations including both plate tectonics and glacial topography, the foundation of all later cultures. Current findings of the earliest human inhabitants (pre-Homo Sapiens) will be described, including Happisburgh, Boxgrove and Swanscombe.

**Feb. 9 — Ice Age and After: Paleolithic and Mesolithic Cultures**

—Modern humans appear in the late Pleistocene, with finds at Paviland Cave, Cheddar Gorge, Creswell Crags and elsewhere. After the ice, Mesolithic hunter-gatherers appear at sites such as Star Carr, and the connection with Europe through "Doggerland" ends as Britain becomes an island.

**Feb. 16 — Neolithic Ways of Life: Shaping the Landscape**

—The most recent findings about the transition to farming and herding c. 4000 BCE will be described, including DNA analysis. Flint mines at Grimes Graves and Langdale Pike and earthworks like Windmill Hill provide information about this fundamental change in lifestyle.

**Feb. 23 — Monuments in Earth and Stone**

—Neolithic farmers marked their presence in the land with impressive structures: earthen long barrows like Belas Knap, megalithic tombs such as Tinkinswood in Wales and Kits Coty House in Kent. Theories of how and why they were constructed will be discussed.

**Mar. 2 — Sacred Landscapes: Stonehenge and Avebury**

—The best known megalithic structures at Stonehenge and Avebury are the subjects of continuing study, and new findings appear regularly. These and other sites must be seen as part of "sacred landscapes," not as isolated structures.

### **Mar. 9 — Bronze Age Ways of Life**

—Metallurgy and its impact on society can be seen at sites like Flag Fen in Norfolk and Arthur's Seat in Scotland. These will be discussed, and exhibits in the British Museum shown as well.

### **Mar. 16 — The Iron Age**

—The last millennium BCE sees the appearance of Celtic-speaking peoples and of ironworking. Spectacular hillforts like Maiden Castle and farming communities like Glastonbury provide evidence of this period.

### **Mar. 23 — Celtic Kingdoms and the Coming of Rome**

—Written history and classical culture shed light on the final century of Celtic Britain, from Caesar's raids in 55 and 54 BCE to Claudius' invasion in 43 CE. The class will conclude with a portrayal of the ways of life of that period, and their continuity with previous eras.