ICUB Student Materials

Archaeobotanical Contributions to Understanding the Non-/Human Past

Hybrid course | March-May 2026

Prepared from the teaching outline currently available to the organising team.

1. Call Announcement for Students

The Research Institute of the University of Bucharest (ICUB) invites students to take part in the hybrid course **"Archaeobotanical Contributions to Understanding the Non-/Human Past"**, taught by **Dr Dragana Filipović**. Running from March to May 2026, the course combines online lectures with on-site practicals, a museum-based class, and experimental crop planting in the Botanical Garden Bucharest.

The course is intended for students interested in archaeology, archaeobotany, and interdisciplinary approaches to past human-environment relations. It offers a structured introduction to how plant remains can be used as direct evidence in archaeological interpretation, while also addressing the methodological limits and interpretative challenges of the discipline.

What students can expect

- A clear introduction to archaeobotanical evidence, including macro-remains, micro-remains, preservation, and taphonomy.
- Training in sampling, recovery, taxonomic identification, quantification, and basic analytical reasoning.
- Hands-on work with carpological material, technical reporting, and publication-oriented workflows.
- Critical discussion of AI assistants in relation to research practice and scientific integrity.
- Interpretative sessions that link plant data to ecology, technology, agroeconomics, history, geography, and social anthropology.
- A museum excursion and an experimental planting component connecting archaeological reasoning to material and environmental realities.

Why this course matters

By the end of the teaching block, students should be better equipped to read archaeobotanical reports critically, draw elementary inferences from primary data, place archaeobotanical results into wider archaeological debates, and identify whether they may wish to pursue further work in this area.

Administrative note

The teaching plan below reflects the currently available academic outline. Room allocation, exact daily timing, enrolment workflow, and any formal assessment or credit arrangements should be communicated separately by the organisers.

2. Student Syllabus

Course identification

Course title	Archaeobotanical Contributions to Understanding

	the Non-/Human Past
Lecturer	Dr Dragana Filipović (University of Bucharest, visiting professor; University of Algarve, integrated researcher)
Format	Hybrid: online lectures, on-site practicals, excursion, and experimental planting
Teaching period	March-May 2026

Course summary and aims

- The course examines how evidence for plant production and consumption contributes to archaeological reconstructions and wider debates, from the origins of agriculture to inequality and climate change.
- It introduces the theory and techniques of archaeobotanical research, with emphasis on good practice in recovery, analysis, and interpretation.
- A major goal is to help students distinguish between plausible and weak interpretations in published archaeobotanical work, while also showing how primary data can be used to develop their own informed interpretations.
- The course consistently balances methodological potential with limitations and challenges, so that students leave with a realistic and critical understanding of the field.

Learning objectives

- Understand the main categories of archaeobotanical evidence and the conditions that shape their preservation.
- Recognise the role of sampling, recovery, identification, quantification, and taphonomic reasoning in reliable interpretation.
- Handle basic practical tasks involving carpological remains and understand the sequence from laboratory work to technical reporting and publication.
- Interpret archaeobotanical data within broader ecological, technological, historical, geographical, and social frameworks.
- Critically assess the opportunities and limits of AI-assisted workflows in research and publication.
- Appreciate the future methodological directions of archaeobotany and its potential role in public communication.

Teaching components

- Online lectures introducing key concepts, methods, and interpretative frameworks.
- On-site practical sessions focused on extraction, processing, identification, and reporting.
- Reading assignments and short student presentations tied to individual interests and areas of study.
- A museum-based learning activity on traditional agricultural tools and methods.
- An experimental planting session in the Botanical Garden Bucharest.

Weekly teaching plan

Week 1, 16-20 March

Format: Online lectures (3 h each, with two breaks)

20 March 2026 – 17:00-20:00

Core topics:

- The scope and aims of archaeobotanical inquiry.
- The nature of archaeobotanical evidence, including preservation and taphonomy (macro- and micro-remains).
- Practical archaeobotany: sampling and recovery strategies, identification and quantification, experimental archaeobotany.
- Analytical archaeobotany: numerical description of primary data and spatial distribution of plant remains at archaeological sites.

Learning focus: Students gain a foundation in the role, potential, and limits of archaeobotanical evidence, together with basic understanding of field and laboratory procedures for recovering and reading plant remains.

Week 2, 23-27 March

Format: On-site practical training (3 h each, with two breaks)

25 March 2026 – 13:00-16:00

26 March 2026 – 13:00-16:00

Core topics:

- Extraction and processing of archaeobotanical (carpological) remains.
- Taxonomic determination of crops and common wild plants.
- Writing a technical archaeobotanical report.
- Preparing an archaeobotany publication.
- Discussion on the integration of AI assistants in the publication process.

Learning focus: Students develop practical familiarity with archaeobotanical workflows, handling of carpological remains, problem-solving in laboratory or field settings, and the relationship between AI use and scientific integrity.

Week 3, 13-17 April

Format: Online lectures (3 h each, with two breaks)

17 April 2026 – 17:00-20:00

Core topics:

- Interpretative archaeobotany through multi- and cross-disciplinary approaches.
- Ecological, technological, ethnoarchaeological, agroeconomic, historical, and geographical perspectives.
- Reading assignments aligned with student interests.
- Short student presentations and guided discussion.

Learning focus: Students learn to interpret archaeobotanical data from multiple complementary perspectives and to critique scholarly work using the concepts introduced in class.

Week 4, 20-24 April

Format: Online lectures (3 h each, with two breaks)

23 April 2026 – 17:00-20:00

Core topics:

- Theoretical frameworks for reconstructing plant use and the social context of plant production.

- Social-anthropological perspectives on production, processing, distribution, sharing, consumption, and discard.
- Reading assignments aligned with student interests.
- Short student presentations and discussion.

Learning focus: Students refine their understanding of plant-related practices as social processes, not merely technical or economic activities.

Week 5, 27-30 April

Format: On-site activity (4 h, with breaks)

27 April 2026 – 11:00-14:00

29 April 2026 – 11:00-14:00

Core topics:

- Museum-based class focused on traditional agricultural tools and methods.
- Discussion of the historical and social context of agricultural practice.

Learning focus: Students connect archaeobotanical interpretation to historical material culture and long-term practices of cultivation and processing.

Week 6, 4-8 May

Format: On-site activity (6 h each, with breaks)

Core topics:

- Experimental planting of crops in the Botanical Garden Bucharest.
- Discussion on environmental impacts on, and of, agricultural land use.

Learning focus: Students acquire a basic understanding of the interplay between plant economies and environmental conditions.

5 May 2026 – 11:00-14:00

6 May 2026 – 11:00-14:00

Week 7, 11-15 May

Format: On-site lectures (3 h each, with two breaks)

12 May 2026 – 11:00-14:00

14 May 2026 – 11:00-14:00

Core topics:

- Future of archaeobotany: prospects and problems in archaeological science.
- Novel forms of analysis of plant remains and emerging methods for reconstructing agricultural land use and plant consumption.
- Archaeobotany for the public: links between archaeology, art, and public outreach.

Learning focus: Students gain critical awareness of current and emerging methods, together with a clearer sense of archaeobotany's place in science communication and interdisciplinary collaboration.

Student preparation and participation

- Students should be prepared to engage with both theoretical and practical content across online and on-site sessions.

- Reading assignments are built into the interpretative sections of the course and are followed by short presentations and discussion.
- Because the source outline does not specify formal grading, compulsory attendance thresholds, or written assessment, these elements should be clarified separately if required at programme level.

End note

This syllabus is a distribution-ready student version derived from the existing outline. It preserves the content, sequence, and instructional logic of the teaching plan, while presenting the material in a clearer student-facing format.