

My current disciplines are Archaeology and Ancient History. Both subjects function well independently from one another and are unique in their subjects of study; however, this specific combination of both together is arguably more effective than other combinations of humanities with archaeology. This essay aims to discuss the separate nature and direction of each field, and lastly, how they can both be essential to each other, almost symbiotically, in their combined directions.

Archaeology

To begin, without archaeology, much of what we have and know today would not have been found. Its nature is inherently rooted in uncovering the past in all of its forms throughout all periods, mostly through material remains. Its definition in areas of study has been highly debated over the years, and only recently found its home within the 'humanities', previously being bounced around as a social science. Its nature and purpose are always to increase the knowledge of humanity itself, or benefit our knowledge from before humanity in some way, shape, or form. By being a study primarily about all history through material remains, it has strong connections to an enormous amount of subject areas in the humanities and sciences, thanks to its techniques and methodology. Many areas within archaeology require the science to analyse material remains and advance the techniques, equipment and efficiency used in finding them through geographical surveillance. The debate has never ceased about where it belongs, but it's arguable that the humanities are the best fit for it, given how often and effectively it contributes to all other fields within it, thanks to its growing recognition from governments.

Archaeology is the only field in the humanities that has its focus on recovering artefacts of a variety through surveillance, excavation and analysis. The sheer amount of subsectors within it as a field career-wise is astounding, again, due to the level of involvement it has with an increasingly large range of studies. To give a few broad examples, careers and specialisms are separated by historicity, time periods, geography, culture, theory and method, with even more sub-disciplines.

In terms of the direction of archaeology, its relationships with other fields of study are constantly supplying it with new advancements. Technologically, drones are becoming an integral addition to the surveillance of sites aerially. They are extremely useful when sites are unsafe to reach up close or completely closed off, and only remote equipment can be used to safely gain photographic information. 3D scanning is also becoming utilised to recreate models of artefacts and virtual environments in museums and archaeological work sites; TLS, or Terrestrial Laser Scanners, generate models to a real scale and fill in lost areas, and work well without light.¹ Many such forms of laser technology are becoming widespread within the field to provide more easily accessible models, as well as usage being seen to create 3D models or holograms in museums that increase the understanding of visitors' perception of how the model looks in real life, and in some cases, lived-in environments.²

¹ Arias, Francisco, et al. "Use of 3D Models as a Didactic Resource in Archaeology. A Case Study Analysis." *Nature News*, Nature Publishing Group, 18 July 2022, www.nature.com/articles/s40494-022-00738-x.

² Xu, Zhan, et al. "A Review of Holographic Technology in Museums: Enhancing Visitor Perception and Engagement." *Nature News*, Nature Publishing Group, 10 Oct. 2025, www.nature.com/articles/s40494-025-02051-9.

Immersion is key when conveying the purpose, importance and usage of an artefact. Archaeology is only ever moving forward with new technology, research, and community interest.

Ancient History

Ancient History is another discipline of mine, which is one that covers a large area of study that centralises humans at its core from around 10,000 BC.³ this also involves three systems: the Stone, Bronze, and Iron Age - when hunter-gatherers began to domesticate animals, plants, and develop permanent communities - and its end is largely debated within academia, depending on who was asked. Most answers fall in the period of the 5th to 7th century, which is roughly around the transitional period from 'Ancient' history to the Middle Ages, known as Late Antiquity⁴. My speciality is Sparta throughout their three main periods of Ancient Greek history, which includes: Archaic, Classical and Hellenistic - well before Late Antiquity began.

To follow on from this, my understanding of ancient history's nature is to discover the past of each ancient civilisation that existed within the rough given timeframe, alongside attempting to piece together the truth of their establishment and fall. Through experience, a primary example of this would be Sparta and the concept of the Spartan Mirage. It is becoming a precedent for new ancient historians with a focus on Greece to have a deep understanding of when consulting any relevant sources. Due to Sparta's self-inflicted isolationism and xenophobia as a result of the Great Rhetra, which led them to only have records written by non-Spartans, many of which were Athenian and provided a vastly different perspective on the Spartans than what may have been true.

Ancient history is also unique in its nature, as it involves the exploration of every region that has existed and the beginning of written and recorded history, with the first written language we currently know of being the Sumerian cuneiform script from 8,000 BC⁵, and a wider spread of recorded history popping up around the Bronze Age, a little over 3000 BC.

Many fields share the relationship sentiment to ancient history thanks to the development of the bases of several humanities during ancient times - some of the most well known are that of philosophy, where sophisticated philosophical thought in Ancient Greece arised from great minds like Socrates, Pythagoras, (although he is more popular as the man who invented the Pythagorean Theorem in maths, but he was present in many spaces) Plato and Aristotle. The latter two were also integral in the development of political theory, with their respective

³ "Ancient History Timeline: A Journey through the Ages." *Imaginary History Invites History Enthusiasts, Dreamers, and Curious Minds Alike to Embark on an Intellectual Journey, Challenging Conventional Wisdom and Inviting You to Ponder the Infinite Possibilities That Lie within the Uncharted Territories of the Past.*, 23 Mar. 2025, imaginaryhistory.com/ancient-history-timeline-a-journey-through-the-ages/.

⁴ "Timeline of Ancient History - End of Ancient History in Europe." *Timeline of Ancient History - End of Ancient History in Europe* | *Ancient History Europe*, www.liquisearch.com/timeline_of_ancient_history/end_of_ancient_history_in_europe. Accessed 25 Oct. 2025.

⁵ "Sumerian." *Sumerian Language and Cuneiform Script*, www.omniglot.com/writing/sumerian.htm. Accessed 25 Oct. 2025.

books of 'The Republic' and 'Politics' setting the foundations of political structure, governance and laws. Literature was shaped originally by poetry, such as choral and epic poetry. Sparta was heavily religious, and the two potential poets we have with partially surviving poems are those of Tyrtaeus and Alkman, who wrote poetry for the girls' choruses for religious festivals, and Homer wrote the famous 'Iliad' and 'Odyssey', alongside Virgil's 'Aeneid', that convey the historical perspectives of their time, as well as their belief systems and relevance of religion. These books are also a study for linguistics, how languages have evolved in ancient times and how alphabetic and non-alphabetic languages were written - the Phoenician alphabet, the hieroglyphs of ancient Egypt, and the cuneiform of Sumer - to later translate and interpret for our understanding today.

Religion is always a large theme for many societies, even today, and as such, it is no surprise that it has its own sectors in a number of humanities, such as religious studies and (example being polytheism and monotheism) religious philosophy - religion is one big part of both sociology and anthropology, and the understanding of the rituals and customs present in societies. Ancient history often has the best examples of different types of god worship, thanks to the many religions that have multiple gods, one god or none at all, and it benefits heavily from all of these fields because of the variety available in each society during its time span, especially in accordance with their governance, class systems, political and religious spheres.

Archaeology and Ancient History

Archaeology and Ancient History are a powerful combination, and offer an abundance of opportunities in discovering the remains of civilisations that still leave echoes today. Whilst both areas are a part of the humanities, they work better together - ancient material remains, and specifically the records that hold a higher value, are highly unlikely to be found without the assistance of archaeology. As a discipline that has started to gain more attention from governments across the globe with an interest in increasing local heritage and, potentially, patriotism, archaeology is an area that can bring in the necessary funds for research, equipment, and the added benefit of analysis of any relevant written or recorded remains. Alongside this, because of the unique opportunity and local heritage archaeology can provide often ends with volunteers from the community taking part in assisting in uncovering their local pasts - due to this, the attention from local news outlets and from the community as a whole is piqued, the traction of the projects will pick up, and leads to the need for ancient historians to begin garnering work by giving information where needed.

Ancient history could potentially be described as dependent on archaeology, because of this, however, it is more fitting to suggest that they are co-dependent; while archaeology can gain support grants from the government, it is conditional, in that the work they are commissioned to do is of enough weight to earn the grants. The costs can be largely expensive, in that individual projects outside of commercial work (i.e. PPG 16⁶) require the hire of machinery, construction vehicles and/or teams, advanced technological and geophysical equipment⁷, wages for employed archaeologists, payment to recruiters of volunteers, and much more.

⁶ "PPG 16 at 30." *Federation of Archaeological Managers and Employers*, famearchaeology.co.uk/ppg-16-at-30/. Accessed 26 Oct. 2025.

⁷ "Prescot Dig." *Back to Main Page*, prescot.lparchaeology.com/learning/what-tools-do-archaeologists-use. Accessed 26 Oct. 2025.

Without a lot of monetary support, many excavations regarding ancient history have to gain funding for the project through funding pages, which can take years. (for example, whilst not ancient history, a recent example of this would be the excavation and recovery of Richard III's body from under a Leicester car park after the raising of money over 10 years by Philippa Langley⁸).

Despite the similarities, both archaeology and ancient history look at and reconstruct the past through different scopes; archaeology prefers to use the material remains - including structures and artefacts - of its various excavated finds from surveillance and analysis to figure out the past of societies, alongside dating them, whereas ancient history (and history) utilise and interpret any written records of relevant societies and human affairs to piece together, support or dispute previous arguments about the past. Ancient history and history are also heavily involved in sociopolitics; in each, you need to learn how to formulate and support arguments towards your own interpretation, leading them both to be viable subjects to take as gateways into political/law spheres.

Conclusion

To conclude, the natures of both archaeology and ancient history are enveloped in the humanities, being that their purposes individually are to assist and increase the knowledge of our ancestors all around the world. Separate or together, they are monumental in their own rights towards the purpose they have, and their cohesion when utilised as one only serves to emphasise this fact - they are integral parts to furthering and improving one another in methodology and political landscapes, garnering the other's attention in their field and earning funding to continually update resources and research. Focusing on their contribution together, ancient history has a reliance upon archaeology to uncover the resources they need to study and the increase in funding of technology can only do more good; therefore, the direction of the two is a constant irony, in that whilst both serve to increase our understanding of the past, only the future can entail what limits they can overcome; together, they are only stronger.

⁸ *Philippa Langley*, philippalangley.co.uk/. Accessed 26 Oct. 2025.

