

HUMANITIES

Ancient and Medieval Studies

Through a wide variety of subjects drawn from a number of disciplines, this program provides a curricular framework for exploring topics in ancient and medieval studies which range from the history of ideas and institutions to that of material artifacts, literature and certain of the original languages. The chronological span of the program includes some 6,500 years between 5000 BC and 1500 AD.

The goal of this program is to develop knowledge and understanding of the more distant past both for itself, in its uniqueness, and as an object of specifically modern questions and methods of inquiry. We are interested in the structure of institutions and social systems, and in relationships between the social order and learned traditions, values, ideologies and ideas. Ancient and medieval studies derive a special claim to our interest from the fact that the record is so full and multiform and that much of it is of exceptionally high quality at once in substance and form.

The program in Ancient and Medieval Studies is designed for students who are seeking a fuller understanding of the forces which shaped the ancient and medieval world. The geographical and chronological scope of the program is broadly conceived and is intended to be comparative. Subjects range in content from Classical Greece and Rome, and the ancient societies of Asia and South America, to medieval Europe and Japan. Students will be required to demonstrate intermediate level language proficiency in either Greek, Latin or a medieval vernacular, but they need not concentrate their other subjects on the area associated with that language. Students are also expected to have some distribution across the ancient and medieval time periods. We expect that students will consult closely with the program advisor in order to devise a coherent program of study.

As noted in the degree chart (<https://catalog.mit.edu/degree-charts/humanities-course-21>), the program includes a minimum of nine subjects (108 units) beyond the pre-thesis tutorial (21.THT) and thesis (21.THU). The nine subjects must include one language subject in Area I (or equivalent proficiency); the eight remaining subjects must be selected from at least two of the three other disciplinary areas (Areas II–IV), with at least one subject in both Ancient and Medieval periods. To satisfy the communication-intensive (CI-M) component of the program, students may select two subjects from among 3.990 Seminar in Archaeological Method and Theory, 21H.331 Julius Caesar and the Fall of the Roman Republic, 21H.240 The World of Charlemagne, 21H.390 Theories and Methods in the Study of History, or any Literature seminar with an ancient or medieval focus.

- Area I: Languages
- Area II: Arts and Architecture
- Area III: Literary Studies
- Area IV: Material and Historical Studies

Up to six subjects (72 units) may be used for both the major and the GIRs, but the units from those subjects may not count toward the 180 units required beyond the GIRs. No more than one subject that counts toward the distribution component of the HASS Requirement may also be counted toward the requirements of the Ancient and Medieval Studies program. In addition, at least eight of the subjects required for the program cannot count toward any other major or minor.

The list of restricted electives below is not exhaustive. Additional information can be obtained from the advisors for the program, Professor Eric Goldberg (egoldber@mit.edu), E51-290, 617-324-2420, and Professor Arthur Bahr (awbahr@mit.edu), 14N-424, 617-253-3616, or from the History Office, E51-255, 617-324-5134.

Restricted Electives

Area I: Languages^{1, 2}

Select one of the following for a total of 12 units:

21L.601[J]	Old English and Beowulf ³
21L.611 & 21L.612	Latin I and Latin II
21L.607 & 21L.608	Greek I and Greek II
21L.613 & 21L.614	Latin Readings and Advanced Latin Readings ³

Two intermediate-level subjects in Greek, Latin, Italian, Norse, or Arabic⁴

Select eight subjects from at least two of the following disciplinary areas. At least one subject must be taken in both the Ancient and Medieval periods.

Area II: Arts and Architecture

Ancient

4.605	A Global History of Architecture ⁵
21H.237	The City of Athens in the Age of Pericles
21H.239	The City of Rome in the Age of the Caesars

Medieval

4.614	Building Islam
4.635	Early Modern Architecture and Art
21M.220	Medieval and Renaissance Music (CI-M)

Area III: Literary Studies⁶

Ancient

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21L.001	Foundations of Western Literature: Homer to Dante ⁵
21L.021	Comedy ⁵
21L.455	Ancient Authors
21L.458	The Bible
21L.613 & 21L.614	Latin Readings and Advanced Latin Readings ^{3, 5}
24.200	Ancient Philosophy
Medieval	
21L.460	Arthurian Literature
21L.601[[]]	Old English and Beowulf ³
Area IV: Material and Historical Studies	
Ancient	
3.981	Communities of the Living and the Dead: the Archaeology of Ancient Egypt
3.982	The Ancient Andean World
3.983	Ancient Mesoamerican Civilization
3.986[[]]	The Human Past: Introduction to Archaeology
3.987	Human Evolution: Data from Palaeontology, Archaeology, and Materials Science
3.993	Archaeology of the Middle East
21H.007[[]]	Introduction to Ancient and Medieval Studies ⁵
21H.130	The Ancient World: Greece
21H.132	The Ancient World: Rome
21H.230	Barbarians, Saints, and Emperors ⁵
21H.331	Julius Caesar and the Fall of the Roman Republic (CI-M)
21H.333	Early Christianity ⁵
21H.336	The Making of a Roman Emperor
CC.117[[]]	Humane Warfare: Ancient and Medieval Perspectives on Ethics in War ⁵
Medieval	
21H.133	The Medieval World
21H.134[[]]	Medieval Economic History in Comparative Perspective
21H.160	Islam, the Middle East, and the West
21H.238	The Vikings
21H.240	The World of Charlemagne (CI-M)
21H.383	Technology and the Global Economy, 1000-2000
CC.116	How to Rule the World: The Promises and Pitfalls of Politics, War, and Empire

- ¹ Students are required to take at least 12 units in a pre-modern language. Two six-unit subjects in a pre-modern language may be combined to satisfy this requirement (e.g., Latin I and II or, for students who enter with strong Latin from high school, two different iterations of 21L.6xx Latin Readings). Greek, Latin, and Old English are currently offered at MIT, but students may substitute another pre-modern language taken elsewhere.
- ² Students with equivalent proficiency in a pre-modern language may substitute the Area I requirement with one more subject from areas II–IV.
- ³ Counts as Area I or III, but not both.
- ⁴ MIT does not offer these languages; consult with advisor concerning appropriate coursework at Harvard University or Wellesley College. Arabic is required for students proposing a specialty in the medieval Islamic world.
- ⁵ Counts as either Ancient or Medieval, but not both.
- ⁶ Any seminar-tier subject in Literature with a substantially ancient and/or medieval focus counts toward Area III and satisfies a CI-M.