

International Study Day

Material Culture: Bridging Archaeology and Anthropology

Alma Mater Studiorum – University of Bologna,

June 9th 2026

Call for Papers

The doctoral programmes in History and Archaeology, Studies on Heritage, Memory and Cultures, and in Global Histories, Cultures, and Politics of the Department of History and Cultures of the Alma Mater Studiorum - University of Bologna announce a call for papers for the study day entitled *Material Culture: Bridging Archaeology and Anthropology*.

The call for papers arises from the desire to foster dialogue and reciprocal exchange between the two disciplines, cultural anthropology and archaeology, on the theme of objects, materiality and everything that is generally referred to as “material culture”.

While archaeology had traditionally been the «discipline of things par excellence» (Olsen 2003), anthropology had been concerned with objects since its origin (Turgeon 2009). In recent decades, renewed attention to material culture in a wide variety of disciplines (see Latour 1991, Miller 2010, Bennet 2010) sparked an assortment of studies exploring potentiality of the topic, developing into what is often referred to as the *material turn* in social sciences and humanities. Today, objects, far from being passive or merely symbolic matter, have gained agency in a dynamic and complex relationship with human interaction, taking on an active role in social, religious and political dynamics (Gell 1998; Desjeux, Garabuau-Moussaoui 2000, Warnier 1999). They have been dissected in all their components and dimension, revealing the assemblage of materials, ideas, histories that make up them; “things” as «flows of matter, energy and information» (Hodder 2012).

The intersection of archaeology and cultural anthropology is far more common in the anglophone academia, while in most of continental Europe these two disciplines originate from different intellectual traditions, thus often lacking interdisciplinary theoretical approaches. In light of the shared interests and affinities, including in terms of their historical origins and field-based research, there is a clear need to promote and strengthen the dialogue between archaeology and cultural anthropology, particularly in the field of material culture studies, a fundamental area of archaeology and, at the same time, the focus of much ethnographic research.

Of particular interest will be proposals that address the following themes, both within and across disciplinary fields:

- Histories and critical theory of the disciplines;
- Methodologies and practices: excavations, fieldworks, collecting;
- Material agency and new materialism: strengths and criticisms;
- Bodies as material culture, embodied knowledge and practices;
- The museum gaze: heritage and exposition.





Submission Guidelines

The call for papers is open to students, PhD candidates and early researchers. Proposals should be submitted in English and should include a title, an abstract of **300 words** and up to **5 keywords**.

Proposals must be sent by the **20th of April 2026** to the email address **congressmaterialculture@gmail.com**

The study day will be held in person at the University of Bologna on **9th of June 2026**, but online participation is permitted. Each presentation will be allocated a 20-minute time slot.

We strongly encourage all presenters to deliver their papers in English.

Scientific Committee

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Essential bibliography

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