On 21 November, Assoc. Prof. Serena Sabatini, Department of Historical Studies, Göteborg University, will lecture in the class of Textile Archaeology – a Hands-On Approach. You are welcome to join the class for this lecture.

Archaeological, iconographical and written sources from the Near East and the Aegean show that powerful Bronze Age wool economies involved considerable specialised labour, large-scale animal husbandry and trading networks sometimes stretching over very long distances.

During the second millennium BCE, a number of evidence suggest that a wool economy emerged across continental Europe as well. Resting only on archaeological evidence, detailed knowledge of wool economies in Bronze Age Europe is limited and strongly depending on the study of animal remains from sheep and of textile tools from archaeological contexts. Strontium isotope analyses on some of the clothing from the incredible collection found in the Danish Bronze Age oak-coffins suggest that at least during the second half of the second millennium BCE wool trade took place.

A series of recent investigations at the Terramare site of Montale, in Northern Italy, documented, among other things, a high density of spindle whorls that strongly supports the existence of village-level specialised manufacture of thread. Production must have been at an almost industrial scale, but does not appear to have been attached to an emerging elite nor was it fully independent of social constraints. It has been therefore argued that, although probably managed by local elites, wool production was a community-based endeavour oriented towards exports aimed to obtain locally unavailable raw materials and goods. Was Montale an exception or could it be used to more broadly envision the characteristics of wool economies in continental Bronze Age settings?