Course 053. Bioarchaeological Fieldwork of an Underground Funerary Crypt of the San Mateo Church (Jerez, Cádiz, Spain)

Syllabus (Field School 2027)

Institution: Sanisera Archaeology Institute for International Field Schools, Ciutadella de Menorca (Balearic Islands), Spain. Non-profit association founded in 1993. Web: www.archaeology.institute. Email: info@archaeology.institute.

Course director and instructor of record: Fernando Contreras Rodrigo, BA in History (Classical Archaeology), Autonomous University of Barcelona; Director of the Sanisera Archaeology Institute and of the Sanisera excavations since 1993.

Teaching staff: archaeologists and biological anthropologists of the Sanisera Archaeology Institute; the names of the staff of each session are confirmed with the enrolment.

Location: Funerary crypt of the San Mateo Church and laboratory, Jerez de la Frontera (Cádiz), Andalusia, Spain

Language of instruction: English.

Sessions 2027: Session #1 May 03 – May 14 · #2 May 17 – May 28 · #3 May 31 – June 11 · #4 June 14 – June 25 · #5 June 28 – July 09 · #6 July 12 – July 23 · #7 July 26 – August 06 · #8 August 09 – August 20 · #9 August 23 – September 03 · #10 September 06 – September 17 · #11 September 20 – October 01 · #12 October 04 – October 15 · #13 October 18 – October 29 (2027)

Duration: 12 days per session, including arrival and departure days. Approximately 9 working days of 7 hours each (two days off for every seven course days).

Contact hours: approximately 63 hours of supervised fieldwork, laboratory work, exercises and lectures per session.

Recommended credit equivalence: 2 semester credits per session, calculated on the usual formula for field and laboratory courses (about 28 to 30 contact hours per credit); students who enrol in two consecutive sessions complete about 126 contact hours. The award of credit is the sole decision of the student's home institution; the Sanisera Archaeology Institute is not an accredited degree-granting institution and provides this syllabus, the certificate of participation with hours and activities, and an evaluation letter to support the student's petition for credit.

Maximum enrolment: 8 participants per session.

Prerequisites: None. Open to students with or without previous experience; designed for students interested in bioarchaeology and mortuary archaeology.

Course description

Field school in bioarchaeology and mortuary archaeology in the underground funerary crypt of the San Mateo Church, a Gothic parish church of the 14th and 15th centuries in Jerez de la Frontera. Students excavate for the first time the 17th-century burial niches of the crypt, exhume and record the skeletal remains and grave goods, and in the laboratory clean, inventory and catalogue the human bones and learn the basic methods of osteological analysis. Lectures cover the post-medieval burial system of Christian parishes and brotherhoods, skeletal anatomy, palaeodemography and palaeopathology.

Learning outcomes

On completion of the course the student will be able to:

1. Apply excavation techniques of biological anthropology to detect and excavate burial niches in a funerary crypt.
2. Exhume skeletal remains and record funerary structures, individuals and grave goods in drawings, elevations and context sheets.
3. Explain the principles of stratigraphy and the basic procedures for collecting radiocarbon samples.
4. Clean, inventory and catalogue human remains in the laboratory and apply basic methods to estimate age, sex and stature.
5. Interpret burial processes in post-medieval Christian funerary contexts (16th to 18th centuries).
6. Date contexts relatively from the classification of artefacts in stratigraphic sequence.

Course content and modules

- Excavation of the crypt: Detection and excavation of burial niches; exhumation; recording of structures, individuals and grave goods; drawings and context sheets; C14 sampling.
- Laboratory: Preparation, cleaning, inventory and cataloguing of human remains; skeletal anatomy; estimation of age, sex and stature; palaeodemography and palaeopathology.
- Lectures: Post-medieval funerary archaeology of parish churches, crypts and brotherhoods (16th to 18th centuries); physical anthropology and bioarchaeology; archaeological method.

Format and daily schedule

7 hours per day divided between excavation in the crypt, osteological study of the remains and laboratory work (laboratory time is shorter than excavation time). Staff pick up the students at the student residence and bring them back every day. Weekly rhythm: seven course days followed by two days off, which students may use for the visits to museums and heritage sites included in the course.

Outline of a session: day 1, arrival and orientation (residence, laboratory, safety briefing, equipment); days 2 to 11, fieldwork, laboratory and lectures as above, with the days off; final working day, closing session, return of equipment, submission of the study diary and individual evaluation; day 12, departure.

Assessment and grading

Students are evaluated continuously by the director and the staff. Components:

- Attendance, punctuality and participation in fieldwork and laboratory: 40%
- Practical competence in field and laboratory techniques (recording sheets, drawings, inventories, classification or osteological forms, according to the course): 30%
- Study diary kept throughout the session: 20%
- Final oral review with the director on the content of the lectures and the work carried out: 10%

Grades are reported on request of the home institution on a 0 to 100 scale, with the following equivalence: 90 to 100 A, 80 to 89 B, 70 to 79 C, 60 to 69 D, below 60 F. The certificate of participation states the hours and activities completed; students who perform exceedingly well may request a letter of recommendation.

Readings

Recommended before the course (not required for admission):

- White, T. D., Black, M. T. and Folkens, P. A. (2012). Human Osteology. 3rd ed. San Diego: Academic Press.
- Buikstra, J. E. and Ubelaker, D. H. (eds.) (1994). Standards for Data Collection from Human Skeletal Remains. Arkansas Archeological Survey Research Series 44.
- Larsen, C. S. (2015). Bioarchaeology: Interpreting Behavior from the Human Skeleton. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Roberts, C. and Manchester, K. (2005). The Archaeology of Disease. 3rd ed. Stroud: Sutton.
- Cherryson, A., Crossland, Z. and Tarlow, S. (2012). A Fine and Private Place: The Archaeology of Death and Burial in Post-Medieval Britain and Ireland. Leicester: Leicester Archaeology Monographs 22.

Additional readings on the Sanisera site and on the specific topics of each course are supplied by the Institute at the start of the session.

Course policies

Attendance: full attendance on all working days is required for the certificate; absences for illness must be reported to the director the same day. Health and safety: students follow the safety briefing and the instructions of the staff at all times, wear the protective equipment required for each task and are covered by the accident insurance included in the fee. Conduct: students are expected to respect the archaeological heritage, the human remains

under study, the local community and their fellow participants; any behaviour that endangers people or heritage may result in exclusion from the course without refund. Accessibility: students who need any accommodation are asked to inform the Institute before enrolment so that the tasks can be adapted where possible. Academic integrity: the study diary and recording forms must be the student's own work.

Contact

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