Sanisera Archaeology Institute for International Field Schools

# Course 006: Dig in the Roman City of Sanisera

*Course Syllabus · 2027 season*

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| **Course ID** | SAI 006 · Dig in the Roman City of Sanisera |
| **Country / Location** | Spain · Sanisera (Sanitja), Menorca, Balearic Islands |
| **Dates** | May to October 2027 (10 sessions of 16 days) |
| **Duration** | 16 days per session |
| **Instructional hours** | 101.5 hours (14 instructional days x 7.25 h) |
| **Recommended credit equivalence** | 4-5 semester credits, depending on the student's home institution (reference scale: about 20 instructional hours per semester credit; 80 h = 4, 100 h = 5, 120 h = 6). Credit is awarded by the student's home institution; see section 12. |
| **Level / Prerequisites** | Introductory. Open to students with or without previous experience. |
| **Language of instruction** | English |
| **Maximum enrolment** | 14 students per session |
| **Tuition** | from USD 1,650 per session (see section 14) |
| **Instructors** | Fernando Contreras Rodrigo (Course Director); Ethan Campo Gómez (Instructor in bioarchaeology and physical anthropology) |
| **Contact** | info@archaeology.institute · www.archaeology.institute · Ciutadella de Menorca, Balearic Islands, Spain |

## 1. Program description

Sanisera is a Roman port on the northern coast of Menorca, at the harbour of Sanitja. Founded as a military camp after the Roman conquest of the Balearic Islands in 123 BC, it grew into a port town connected to the maritime traffic of the western Mediterranean and was occupied until the 7th century AD, when its inhabitants had built an Early Christian basilica and several necropolises. The Sanisera Archaeology Institute has excavated the site since 2008.

This course is a practical introduction to the excavation of a Classical site. Students join the research excavation of the Roman city, work every day in the trenches and in the laboratory, and attend lectures on Roman archaeology and on the history of the site. The course provides the full sequence of archaeological documentation, from excavation and stratigraphic recording to the cleaning, classification and inventory of the finds (Roman pottery, amphorae, glass, metal, coins and faunal remains).

## 2. Course objectives

- To train students in the techniques and methodology of stratigraphic excavation on a Roman urban site.
- To teach the recording system used in a research excavation: context sheets, Harris Matrix, plans, sections and photography.
- To introduce the typological classification of Roman material culture and its use for relative dating.
- To place the site in the history of the Roman and late antique western Mediterranean.
- To develop professional habits: field journal, teamwork, care of the record and of the finds.

## 3. Learning outcomes

On successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Excavate a stratigraphic unit correctly, using the appropriate tools and identifying the limits of contexts.
- Complete a stratigraphic context sheet and build a Harris Matrix for the excavated sequence.
- Draw plans and sections to scale and take archaeological photographs.

- Recognise the main categories of Roman finds from the 2nd century BC to the 6th century AD (amphorae, fine wares, glass, coins, faunal remains).
- Apply the basic procedures of sampling and finds inventory.
- Explain the history of Sanisera and the archaeology of Menorca before and after the Roman conquest.
- Present the results of fieldwork orally to an audience.

## 4. Course format and instructional hours

A normal working day begins when the staff collect the students from the residence in Ciutadella and drive them to the port of Sanitja. Students devote four hours to excavation in the Roman city and, after a sandwich break at the Field School centre, three hours and a quarter to laboratory work (washing, labelling, classification and inventory of the finds) and to lectures and exercises. The working day is seven hours and fifteen minutes. Over the 16-day session there are 14 instructional days and 2 rest days, which gives 101.5 instructional hours.

**Total instructional hours:** 101.5 hours. This figure appears on the Certificate of Completion and on the Student Evaluation Report.

## 5. Course schedule

*Indicative daily schedule; the order of activities may change according to weather, site conditions and research needs.*

| Day | Activities |
|---|---|
| Day 1 | Arrival in Menorca (Mahón airport, transfer on your own to Ciutadella). Welcome, orientation, safety briefing, Code of Conduct, hand-out of the field journal and recording sheets. First visit to the site. Lecture 1: history and archaeology of Sanisera. |
| Day 2 | Roman city of Sanisera: excavation techniques and tools; the stratigraphic unit. Lab: washing and labelling of finds. Lecture 2: history, archaeology and economy of the Roman civilisation. |
| Day 3 | Roman city of Sanisera: excavation and identification of contexts; introduction to the Harris Matrix. Lab: first classification exercises. |
| Day 4 | Roman city of Sanisera: excavation and context recording (first recording sheets). Lab: classification of Roman pottery (amphorae and fine wares). Lecture 3: Menorca before the Roman conquest: Talayotic culture. |
| Day 5 | Roman city of Sanisera: excavation, drawing of plans and sections, photography. Lab: inventory work. |
| Day 6 | Roman city of Sanisera: excavation and sampling procedures. Lab: classification of Roman pottery (amphorae and fine wares). Lecture 4: Roman pottery typologies I: amphorae. |
| Day 7 | Roman city of Sanisera: excavation. Lab: review of the first week's journals and recording sheets with the instructors. |
| Day 8 | Rest day (optional guided visit to the archaeological heritage of the island). |
| Day 9 | Roman city of Sanisera: excavation; students take responsibility for a sector under supervision. Lab: classification of Roman pottery (amphorae and fine wares). |
| Day 10 | Roman city of Sanisera: excavation and recording. Lab: relative dating exercise. Lecture 5: Roman pottery typologies II: fine wares, glass and coins. |
| Day 11 | Roman city of Sanisera: excavation and recording. Lab: classification of Roman pottery (amphorae and fine wares); choice of final-presentation topics. |
| Day 12 | Roman city of Sanisera: excavation and recording. Lab: inventory and preparation of presentations. Lecture 6: Late Antiquity in the Balearic Islands: the basilica and the necropolises of Sanisera. |
| Day 13 | Roman city of Sanisera: excavation; completion of context sheets and matrix. Lab: classification of Roman pottery (amphorae and fine wares). |
| Day 14 | Roman city of Sanisera: closing of the excavation sector, final photographs and drawings. Lab: completion of inventories. |
| Day 15 | Rest day. |
| Day 16 | Final presentations (morning), course assessment and delivery of certificates. Departure. |

## 6. Assessment and grading

Students complete three assignments during the course, in addition to daily supervised work: a daily field journal, the course's recording sheets and a final presentation. The final grade is calculated as follows:

| Component | Weight | Description |
|---|---|---|
| Field / laboratory participation and professional conduct | 40 % | Daily assessment by the instructors of engagement, technique, care of the record and of the finds, teamwork and compliance with the Code of Conduct. |
| Daily field journal | 20 % | A written entry for every instructional day describing the work carried out, the methods applied, the contexts or materials handled and the student's own observations. Reviewed weekly. |
| Recording sheets | 20 % | Stratigraphic context sheets of the Sanisera excavation (Harris system), plans and sections. Assessed for accuracy, completeness, terminology and legibility. |
| Final presentation | 20 % | A 10-minute PowerPoint presentation, delivered on the last instructional day, on a context or sector excavated by the student, a category of finds, or an aspect of the history of the site, followed by questions. |

### Grading scale

| Letter grade | Percentage |
|---|---|
| A | 93-100 |
| A- | 90-92 |
| B+ | 87-89 |
| B | 83-86 |
| B- | 80-82 |
| C+ | 77-79 |
| C | 73-76 |
| C- | 70-72 |
| D | 60-69 |
| F | below 60 |

Grades are recorded as a percentage and as a letter grade on the US scale above. Students who request it receive a Student Evaluation Report signed by the Course Director, with the breakdown of the grade, the attendance record and the instructional hours completed, for submission to their home institution. The Institute does not itself award academic credit.

## 7. Attendance policy

Attendance at all scheduled instructional activities is compulsory. A minimum attendance of 85 % of the instructional hours is required to pass the course and to receive the Certificate of Completion. Absences for documented illness or injury are excused but still count towards the 85 % threshold; unexcused absences lower the participation grade. Students who leave the course early receive a certificate stating only the hours actually completed.

## 8. Prerequisites and who should apply

None. No previous knowledge of archaeology is required. Minimum age 18; students aged 16-17 may join this course with written permission from their parents. Students must be able to work outdoors in a Mediterranean summer climate.

## 9. Instructors

**Fernando Contreras Rodrigo** — Course Director. Licenciatura in History, specialisation in Classical Archaeology (Autonomous University of Barcelona). Five-year degree officially recognised in Spain at Master's level (MECES 3). Director of the Sanisera Archaeology Institute; since 1993 he has directed research, conservation and heritage-management projects in Spain, Italy and the United Arab Emirates, and since 2015 annual excavation and restoration missions for the Government of Dubai. Author of more than thirty publications and reports.

**Ethan Campo Gómez** — Instructor in bioarchaeology and physical anthropology. Degree in Biology (University of Oviedo) and Master's specialisation in Physical Anthropology (Complutense University of Madrid). Experience in the excavation of human and faunal remains, including Bronze Age tombs at the Al Qusais necropolis (Dubai).

## 10. Equipment and what to bring

- Work clothes and closed boots or sturdy shoes; hat, sunscreen and a refillable water bottle.
- Work gloves and a 4-inch pointing trowel (WHS or Marshalltown type) are recommended.
- Notebook for the field journal, pencils, eraser, ruler.
- Own laptop (compulsory) for the daily journal, recording sheets, exercises and final presentation; tablets and phones are not accepted.
- European Health Insurance Card (EU students) or private travel insurance; passport valid for the whole stay.

## 11. Travel and meeting point

Fly to Menorca (Mahón, MAH). Students travel on their own to the Student Residence in Ciutadella (bus or taxi, approx. 45 minutes); public buses approx. EUR 30, taxi approx. EUR 75; on the arrival day the Institute offers a private minibus from the airport for about EUR 30-40 in cash. The address and arrival instructions are sent two weeks before the course. Meeting point: the residence, on Day 1 at 6 p.m.

Students arriving from outside the Schengen area should check whether they need a visa; the Institute issues the letter of invitation required for the application. US, Canadian, UK and Australian citizens do not need a visa for stays of up to 90 days in Spain; they will need the EU ETIAS travel authorisation once it comes into force (no start date has been fixed yet; the Institute will inform admitted students). If a Schengen visa is refused, everything paid is refunded in full on presentation of the official refusal document.

## 12. Academic credit and transcript

With 101.5 instructional hours, this course can be recognised for 4 to 5 semester credits, depending on the student's home institution (reference: about 20 instructional hours per semester credit).

The Sanisera Archaeology Institute is an independent, non-profit institution and does not award academic credit directly. Students who wish to receive credit for this course should obtain pre-approval from their department or study-abroad office before the course begins, using this syllabus. On completion, the Institute issues a Certificate of Completion stating the course, dates, instructional hours and final grade, and, on request, a detailed Student Evaluation Report. Students from universities in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia have regularly obtained credit for Sanisera courses in this way: students from more than 40 universities have done so (see the list on the Institute's website). The Institute is currently working towards a School of Record agreement with a US accredited institution for the issue of official transcripts.

## 13. Code of conduct and safety

All students and staff are bound by the Institute's Code of Conduct and Anti-Harassment Policy, available on the website, which applies at the site, in the laboratory, in the accommodation and during free time. A safety briefing is given on the first day; students may decline any activity they consider unsafe. Serious breaches of the Code may lead to removal from the course without refund. Accident insurance at the site is included; students are responsible for their own health and travel insurance.

## 14. Dates, tuition and what is included

| Session | Dates 2027 | Tuition (USD) |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1-16 May | $ 1,650 |
| 2 | 19 May - 3 June | $ 1,750 |
| 3 | 6-21 June | $ 1,950 |
| 4 | 26 June - 11 July | $ 2,000 |
| 5 | 14-29 July | $ 1,800 |
| 6 | 1-16 August | $ 1,800 |
| 7 | 19 August - 3 September | $ 1,800 |
| 8 | 6-21 September | $ 1,800 |
| 9 | 24 September - 9 October | $ 1,800 |
| 10 | 12-27 October | $ 1,800 |

### Tuition includes

- Course tuition and teaching.
- Daily transportation between the student residence and the site (excavation courses).
- Accident insurance at the site and in the laboratory.
- Accommodation in the Institute's Student Residence in the centre of Ciutadella de Menorca (rooms separated by sex, air conditioning / heating, dining room and terrace, daily professional cleaning; launderette three minutes away).
- Visits to museums and archaeological heritage of the island.
- Certificate of completion and, on request, the Student Evaluation Report.
- Letter of invitation for the Schengen visa, if required.

### Not included

- Airfare from the student's home to/from Menorca (Spain).
- Meals (budget approx. EUR 23 per day; cafés and restaurants recommended by the Institute).
- Personal expenses and optional travel insurance.

Payment. A deposit of USD 450, which is part of the tuition and is deducted from the total, reserves the place and is due within five days of admission; the balance is due 60 days before the session begins. Payment plans are available on request. The Institute does not offer scholarships or discounts.

Refund policy. If the student cancels, only the USD 450 deposit is refunded, and only if the refund is requested within 20 days of paying it; the balance is not refundable, but everything paid can be converted into credit for any course in the current year or the following season. Everything paid is refunded in full if the Institute cancels the session or if the student's Schengen visa is refused (official refusal document required). Places are not transferable. Full text: Terms and Conditions of Payment on the website.

## 15. Recommended readings

*Recommended, not required. Readings are available in the Institute's library during the course.*


- Harris, E. C. (1989). Principles of Archaeological Stratigraphy. 2nd ed. London: Academic Press.
- Roskams, S. (2001). Excavation. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Renfrew, C. & Bahn, P. (2020). Archaeology: Theories, Methods and Practice. 8th ed. London: Thames & Hudson.
- Peacock, D. P. S. & Williams, D. F. (1986). Amphorae and the Roman Economy. London: Longman.
- Hayes, J. W. (1972). Late Roman Pottery. London: British School at Rome.


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