Sanisera Archaeology Institute for International Field Schools

Course 008: Digging Anthropology in the Sanisera Necropolis

Course Syllabus · 2027 season

Course ID	SAI 008 · Digging Anthropology in the Sanisera Necropolis
Country / Location	Spain · Roman necropolis of 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	8 students per session
Tuition	from USD 1,800 per session (see section 14)
Instructors	Ethan Campo Gómez (Instructor in bioarchaeology and physical anthropology); Fernando Contreras Rodrigo (Course Director)
Contact	info@archaeology.institute · www.archaeology.institute · Ciutadella de Menorca, Balearic Islands, Spain

1. Program description

Death in Roman Sanisera has been studied since 2008, when the Institute began excavating the first of the necropolises that surround the Roman city. Some 90 tombs of a cemetery of the 4th to 6th centuries AD, probably related to the Early Christian basilica, have been excavated so far, and the osteological collection exceeds 230 individuals.

This course is an introduction to funerary archaeology and biological anthropology in the field. Students excavate inhumation graves, recover and record human remains and grave goods, and work in the biological anthropology laboratory on the cleaning, inventory and basic analysis of the skeletons. Lectures cover skeletal anatomy, palaeopathology, Roman funerary ritual and the history of the site.

2. Course objectives

- To train students in the excavation of inhumation graves and the recovery of human remains in context.
- To teach the recording of funerary structures and skeletons (context sheets, scale drawings, photography).
- To introduce the basic methods of human osteology: inventory, age and sex estimation, stature, palaeopathology.
- To place the Sanisera cemetery in the context of Roman and late antique funerary practice.
- To develop professional habits: field journal, teamwork, ethical handling of human remains.

3. Learning outcomes

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

- Detect, define and excavate a grave in the necropolis following bioarchaeological protocol.

- Exhume a skeleton in anatomical order and record its position, orientation and grave goods on the context sheet and in scale drawings.
- Clean, inventory and catalogue human bones in the laboratory.
- Apply basic methods to estimate age, sex and stature and to recognise common pathological lesions.
- Collect samples for radiocarbon dating following the basic procedures.
- Explain Roman funerary ritual and the history of the Sanisera necropolises.
- Present a case study orally.

4. Course format and instructional hours

The working day runs seven hours and fifteen minutes, divided between excavation in the necropolis (most of the day), laboratory work on the skeletal remains and on Roman pottery, and lectures on methodology, human osteology and Roman archaeology. Over the 16-day session there are 14 instructional days and 2 rest days: 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	Necropolis of Sanisera: excavation techniques and tools; the stratigraphic unit. Lab: washing and labelling of finds. Lecture 2: introduction to physical anthropology and bioarchaeology.
Day 3	Necropolis of Sanisera: excavation and identification of contexts; introduction to the Harris Matrix. Lab: first classification exercises.
Day 4	Necropolis of Sanisera: excavation and context recording (first recording sheets). Lab: cleaning, inventory and basic analysis of skeletal remains. Lecture 3: skeletal anatomy and terminology: skull, dentition and postcranial skeleton.
Day 5	Necropolis of Sanisera: excavation, drawing of plans and sections, photography. Lab: inventory work.
Day 6	Necropolis of Sanisera: excavation and sampling procedures. Lab: cleaning, inventory and basic analysis of skeletal remains. Lecture 4: Roman funerary ritual and the necropolises of Sanisera.
Day 7	Necropolis 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	Necropolis of Sanisera: excavation; students take responsibility for a sector under supervision. Lab: cleaning, inventory and basic analysis of skeletal remains.
Day 10	Necropolis of Sanisera: excavation and recording. Lab: relative dating exercise. Lecture 5: age, sex and stature estimation.
Day 11	Necropolis of Sanisera: excavation and recording. Lab: cleaning, inventory and basic analysis of skeletal remains; choice of final-presentation topics.
Day 12	Necropolis of Sanisera: excavation and recording. Lab: inventory and preparation of presentations. Lecture 6: palaeodemography and palaeopathology: reading the lives of a population.
Day 13	Necropolis of Sanisera: excavation; completion of context sheets and matrix. Lab: cleaning, inventory and basic analysis of skeletal remains.
Day 14	Necropolis 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 %	Grave and skeleton recording sheets (context sheet, skeleton inventory sheet, grave plan at 1:10). Assessed for accuracy, completeness, terminology and legibility.
Final presentation	20 %	A 10-minute PowerPoint presentation, delivered on the last instructional day, on a grave excavated by the student, a skeletal element or pathology studied in the laboratory, or an aspect of Roman funerary ritual, 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 or anthropology is required. Minimum age 18.

9. Instructors

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).

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.

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	$ 1,850
2	19 May - 3 June	$ 1,950
3	6-21 June	$ 2,150
4	26 June - 11 July	$ 2,300
5	14-29 July	$ 1,800
6	1-16 August	$ 1,800
7	19 August - 3 September	$ 2,100
8	6-21 September	$ 2,000
9	24 September - 9 October	$ 2,000
10	12-27 October	$ 2,000

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.

- White, T. D. & Folkens, P. A. (2005). The Human Bone Manual. Amsterdam: Elsevier Academic Press.
- Buikstra, J. E. & Ubelaker, D. H. (eds.) (1994). Standards for Data Collection from Human Skeletal Remains. Fayetteville: Arkansas Archeological Survey.
- Roberts, C. A. (2018). Human Remains in Archaeology: A Handbook. 2nd ed. York: Council for British Archaeology.
- Toynbee, J. M. C. (1971). Death and Burial in the Roman World. London: Thames & Hudson.

- Harris, E. C. (1989). Principles of Archaeological Stratigraphy. 2nd ed. London: Academic Press.

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