Sanisera Archaeology Institute for International Field Schools

Course 010: Digging Remains and Biological Anthropology in Sanisera

Course Syllabus · 2027 season

Course ID	SAI 010 · Digging Remains and Biological Anthropology in Sanisera
Country / Location	Spain · Roman city and 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	14 students per session
Tuition	from USD 1,850 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

This course combines, in equal parts, the two excavations that the Institute runs at Sanisera: the Roman city and its late antique necropolis. Students spend half of the course excavating urban structures of the Roman port and classifying Roman pottery, and the other half excavating inhumation graves and working on human remains in the biological anthropology laboratory.

It is designed for students who have not yet decided between archaeology and biological anthropology: two closely related fields with many differences in excavation technique and in the treatment of the recovered material. At the end of the course the student has practical experience of both and a sound basis for choosing a path of study.

2. Course objectives

- To train students in stratigraphic excavation on a Roman urban site and in the excavation of inhumation graves.
- To teach the recording systems of both excavations: context sheets, Harris Matrix, skeleton recording, plans and sections.
- To introduce the classification of Roman material culture and the basic methods of human osteology.
- To place the site in the history of the Roman and late antique western Mediterranean.
- To develop professional habits and to help students choose between archaeology and biological anthropology.

3. Learning outcomes

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

- Excavate and record a stratigraphic unit in the Roman city and a grave in the necropolis.
- Build a Harris Matrix and complete context and skeleton recording sheets.
- Recognise the main categories of Roman finds and clean, inventory and catalogue human bones.
- Estimate age, sex and stature from skeletal remains using basic methods.
- Apply sampling procedures, including the collection of radiocarbon samples.
- Compare the methods of archaeology and biological anthropology from first-hand experience.
- Present the results of fieldwork orally.

4. Course format and instructional hours

The working day runs seven hours and fifteen minutes. Part 1 (days 1-7) is devoted to the Roman city: four hours of excavation and three hours and a quarter of laboratory work on Roman pottery, exercises and lectures. Part 2 (days 9-14 and 16) is devoted to the necropolis and to the biological anthropology laboratory. 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, orientation, safety briefing and Code of Conduct; hand-out of journal and recording sheets; visit to both sites. Lecture 1: history of Sanisera.
Days 2-7	Part 1. Excavation in the Roman city (4 h/day) and laboratory on Roman pottery (3 h/day): excavation techniques, stratigraphy, Harris Matrix, context sheets, plans and sections; classification of amphorae and fine wares, relative dating. Lectures 2-4: Roman civilisation; Menorca before Rome; Roman pottery typologies.
Day 8	Rest day (optional guided visit to the heritage of the island).
Days 9-14	Part 2. Excavation in the necropolis and biological anthropology laboratory: detection and excavation of graves, exhumation and recording of skeletons, scale drawings, C14 sampling; cleaning, inventory, age/sex/stature estimation, palaeopathology. Lectures 5-6: skeletal anatomy; Roman funerary ritual.
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 (Roman city) and grave/skeleton recording sheets (necropolis). Assessed for accuracy, completeness, terminology and legibility.
Final presentation	20 %	A 10-minute PowerPoint presentation, delivered on the last instructional day, on a context, grave or category of material studied by the student, or a comparison of the two excavations, 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. Minimum age 18.

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	$ 1,850
2	19 May - 3 June	$ 1,950
3	6-21 June	$ 2,150
4	26 June - 11 July	$ 2,300
5	14-29 July	$ 2,000
6	1-16 August	$ 2,000
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.

- 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.
- 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.

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