

Fayum Field School, Egypt
October 10 – November 15, 2009
(C159/C259)

Overview

This course has two goals; 1) to introduce students to field methods in archaeology, and 2) to provide a practical working knowledge of survey, excavation, and field cataloging methods.

Approximately 50 miles southwest of Cairo lies the Fayum, a lush oasis in Egypt's Western Desert. Fed by a branch of the Nile, the Fayum is a fertile depression with a lake at its northern edge. UCLA's archaeological research project in the Fayum is entitled "Lake shores, land use and the development of Agriculture from prehistory to present". Near the ancient lake shorelines, which are now located in the Sahara Desert, the earliest evidence of agriculture in Egypt has been found. Agriculture intensified during the Middle Kingdom (ca. 1975-1640 BCE) and the Greco-Roman period, starting in the third century BCE. The 2009 Field School will concentrate on the Greco-Roman town of Karanis, founded in the third century BCE and abandoned during the seventh century CE. The preservation of the ancient remains is excellent and a wide range of archaeological materials, including botanical macro-remains, textiles, wood and metal, is studied by a large group of archaeological specialists. The work of UCLA in the Fayum includes a site management and landscape preservation project. The Fayum Field School combines teaching American students with training Egyptian archaeologists employed by the Supreme Council of Antiquities making cultural exchange an integral part of the program. During the five weeks of the field school students get an intensive on-the-job training in archaeological excavation techniques, survey and finds processing. They will have the opportunity to work closely with archaeological specialists and are encouraged to take on finds recording tasks. Excursions to important sites in the vicinity and ethnoarchaeological assignments are also part of the training.

Prerequisites:

None

Grading

Undergraduate grading will be based on participation (50%), their field notes (30%) and an exam on archaeological field methods (20%). Graduate students are graded on participation (50%), their field notes (30%), an exam (10%) and are required to write a 10-15 page paper on the relation between theory and practical field work on material from Karanis (20%).

Budgeting

We recommend that you budget accordingly to cover optional sightseeing, internet cafes, emergencies, etc. How much to budget depends on your travel, entertainment and souvenir choices. It is always best to overestimate your spending. Take the time to research the cost of living in your destination and the activities you want to participate in while abroad.

Students are encouraged to prolong their time in Egypt to visit the famous monuments of Luxor and Aswan

Schedule

All schedules, itineraries, and group activities are subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

The Egyptian work week runs from Sunday to Thursday. Friday and Saturday are off. Students can use the weekends to venture out. On some days, including some of the weekends, excursions will be organized which relate to the field work project or the broader cultural context.

Week 1

Saturday October 10
Arrival from Cairo and settling in

Sunday October 11
Morning: Lecture “Doing research in Egypt: communication, and what not to do”
Afternoon: “Egyptian Arabic crash course”

Monday October 12
Morning: Lecture “Ancient Egyptian History: an overview”
Afternoon: “Egyptian Arabic crash course”

Tuesday October 13
Morning: Lecture “Modern Egyptian History: an overview”
Afternoon: “Egyptian Arabic crash course”

Wednesday October 14
Morning: Lecture “Sakkara and Memphis: spatial development”
Preparation of site visit
Afternoon “Egyptian Arabic crash course”

Thursday October 15

Morning Excursion to Sakkara

Week 2

Weeks 2 through 5 have a long morning section (6:00 am to 2:00 pm) with a break for “second breakfast” (at 10:00 am), a lunch break (2:00 to 4:00 pm), and a shorter afternoon section (4:00 to 7:00 pm). In the afternoons the students work on their reports and attend the daily lectures.

Sunday October 18

Morning: Tour of Karanis and discussion on the location of trenches
Afternoon: Lecture: “Stratigraphic excavation and field recording I”
 The use of a grid, laying out trenches, drawing a top plan.

Monday October 19

Morning: Field work
Afternoon: Lecture: “Stratigraphic excavation and field recording II”
 Recording deposits.

Tuesday October 20

Morning: Field work
Afternoon: Lecture: “Stratigraphic excavation and field recording III”
 Recording structures

Wednesday October 21

Morning: Field work
Afternoon: Lecture: “Stratigraphic excavation and field recording IV”
 Recording cuts

Thursday October 22

Morning Field work
Afternoon Lecture: “Stratigraphic excavation and field recording V”
 Stratigraphy and the Harris Matrix

Week 3

From this week onwards students will work some of the time with the team’s archaeological specialists on a rotating basis.

Sunday October 25

Morning: Field Work
Afternoon: Lecture “Pottery analysis”

Monday October 26

Morning: Field work
Afternoon: Practical: recording and drawing ceramics

Tuesday October 27

Morning: Field work

Afternoon: Practical: recording and drawing ceramics

Wednesday October 28

Morning: Field work

Afternoon: Lecture: "Ethnoarchaeology"

Thursday October 29

Morning Excursion to the potters of el-Nazla

Week 4

Sunday November 1

Morning: Field work

Afternoon: Lecture: "Archaeobotanical research".

Monday November 2

Morning: Field work

Afternoon: Lecture in the office of the SCA in Cairo:
"The Fertile Shores of Sobek: Rescue Archaeology and Site Management
in the Fayum".

Tuesday November 3

Morning: Field work

Afternoon: Lecture: "Zooarchaeological research"
Recording structures

Wednesday November 4

Morning: Field work

Afternoon: Lecture: "Analyzing organic materials (textiles, basketry, leather, wood)"

Thursday November 5

Morning Field work

Afternoon Lecture: "Principles and practice of site management "

Friday November 6

Excursion to the World Heritage Site of Wadi Hitan ("the Whales Valley")

Week 5

Sunday November 8

Morning: Field work
Afternoon: Practical: survey methods

Monday November 9

Morning: Field work
Afternoon: Lecture: "The use and mis-use of GIS"

Tuesday November 10

Morning: Field work
Afternoon: Report writing and paper work

Wednesday November 11

Morning: Field work
Afternoon: Report writing and paper work

Thursday November 12

Morning Exam
Afternoon Exam

Saturday November 14

Visit to the Egyptian Museum in Cairo
End of season dinner.

Sunday November 15

Return to the US