Center for American Archeology

Field Archaeology and Geophysical Testing
June 15-July 26, 2025

Instructors

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Course Description
The Advanced Field School Field Archaeology and Geophysical Testing track is a unique, intensive field experience for undergraduate and graduate students of all skill and experience levels. Stationed at the Center for American Archeology, Kampsville, IL, students gain experience in archaeological excavation, laboratory methods, geophysics, theory, and research design while participating in the problem-oriented research in the Lower Illinois River Valley with CAA archaeologists. Students learn geophysical survey and analysis, total station use, excavation methods, mapping, soil description, artifact and debris processing, water flotation sample collection processing, and curation. Practical experiences are supplemented by reading assignments and lectures by field school staff and guest lecturers.

Course Goals
The goals of the Field Archaeology course are (1) to teach students skills necessary for archaeological field and laboratory work and (2) to prepare them to undertake future archaeological research as part of a project team.

Learning Outcomes
By the end of the course, each student will have demonstrated the ability to:

- conduct geophysical survey at archaeological sites, process and interpret geophysical data, and understand how such data inform site interpretation, groundtruthing, and unit placement;
- understand the logic of excavation strategies and how decisions are made to excavate specific contexts;
- setup an excavation unit
- excavate levels to correct dimensions;
- develop a vertical wall profile;

- measure and map accurately
- adequately document excavation of their assigned unit;
- properly collect, identify, and process archaeological artifacts and debris;
- properly collect and process flotation samples
- understand the cultural implications of excavated soils and sediments, material culture, and their contexts, both within their assigned unit and in relation to concurrent and previous excavation units; and
- complete an independent research project.

Reading List
The course reading list and PDFs are available on DropBox:
https://www.dropbox.com/sh/8ru6l6a0w1856pf/AADYzW7cZUlXH9pKGXVbrMNPa?dl=0

Course Schedule
Attendance is required for all class meetings, meals, and lectures.

Monday-Friday	
7:00 am	Breakfast
8:00-10:00 am	Fieldwork
10:00-10:20 am	Break
10:20 am-12:30 pm	Fieldwork
12:30-1:15 pm	Lunch
1:15-4:30 pm	Fieldwork
5:00-5:30 pm	Dinner
5:30-7:00 pm	Break
7:00-9:00 pm	Lab, Lecture, or Projects
Saturday	
7:30	Breakfast
8:30 am-12:00 pm	Lab or Projects
12:00 pm	Lunch
Sunday	
Free	

Fieldwork start and end times will vary slightly depending travel time to and from the site.

Coursework Evaluation
Final grades will be awarded based on the following:

Technical Skill (20%): Students should demonstrate mastery of basic field methods, e.g., shovel and trowel technique, measurement accuracy, soil description, data recording, to receive full points for this portion of the grade. Laboratory performance will also affect points assigned in this category.

Efficiency (20%): Students should show the ability to execute field and laboratory tasks in an efficient manner as they begin to master technical skills. As students master skills, completion of tasks should occur with increased rapidity without loss of work quality. Performance in the field and laboratory are evaluated.

Interpretation (20%): Students should demonstrate that they understand the cultural implications of the soils and sediments excavated, material culture recovered, and their contexts. Initial focus should be on their assigned excavation unit, moving to consideration of other units currently being excavated, and then then relating this information to the general goals of the project.

Attitude (20%): The overall success of any archaeological project depends upon group effort. Students contribute to a successful field season through cooperation, taking initiative, and maintaining a positive attitude.

Project (20%): Each student will engage in an independent, instructor-approved research project that incorporates information from readings, lectures, and/or excavation experience(s). Students are expected to submit a project abstract for instructor approval. Approved projects address an archaeological question. The completed project is a 12-15 minute conference-style presentation to field school during the last week.

All dimensions of coursework are evaluated in all components of the program through student activities, work, and performance.

Extra Credit
There will be no extra credit opportunities assigned for this course.

Late Assignments
Unexcused late assignments will not be accepted. Excuses for an assignment must be made and approved in advance of the due date of the assignment.