

THE HIPPOS EXCAVATIONS PROJECT: CLASSICAL ARCHAEOLOGY IN ISRAEL

Course ID: HIS 489

June 26-July 24, 2026

Academic Credits: 8 Semester Credit Units (Equivalent to 12 Quarter Units)

School of Record: Culver Stockton College

DIRECTORS:

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PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Hippus Excavations Project is one of Israel's main long-running and exciting Classical Archaeology digs. As of the year 2000, our international team unearths various building complexes that allow a reconstruction of the ancient cityscape and a better understanding of public, military, private, and funerary architecture. The ancient Graeco-Roman city of Hippus of the Decapolis is located on a hill above the Sea of Galilee, with one of the most breathtaking panoramas in Israel. We study and reconstruct the way of life of its inhabitants in the various periods, from its foundation in the Hellenistic period (mid-2nd century BCE), through its Roman-period time of prosperity (64 BCE – mid-4th century CE), to the Christian transformation in the Byzantine period (mid-4th to mid-7th century CE) and other changes that happened after the Islamic takeover (mid-7th century CE to 749 CE earthquake). Perched on an isolated hill and devastated by an earthquake after which it was never rebuilt, Hippus is an ideal site for archaeologists to study the evolution of a city.

During the upcoming 2026 season, students will continue exploring a Roman-Byzantine period cardo and its surrounding insulae with its houses and mosaic floors, and the Byzantine-period cathedral.

For additional information regarding Hippos Excavations Project, see our website dighippos.com.

IMPORTANT DISCLAIMER

The Anthropocene Research Center was established to support field training in a range of sciences at sites within the U.S. & across the world. Traveling and conducting field work involves risk. Students interested in participating in any ARC program must weigh the potential risk against the value of education provided by the program of their choosing.

Risk is inherent in everything we do, and the ARC takes risks seriously. A committee of leading scholars review each field school location prior to approval. Once a program is accepted, the ARC continually monitors conditions at the program's site and so we can provide an experience that is as safe as possible.

The ARC does not provide trip or travel cancellation insurance. Students are encouraged to explore such insurance policies on their own. Post Covid 19, most basic policies do not cover trip cancellation due to pandemics. If you wish to purchase an insurance policy that covers such contingencies, explore Cancel for Any Reason (CFAR) plans. Insuremytrip.com, Squaremouth.com or Travelguard.com are possible websites where students may explore different insurance policies.

Students should be aware that conditions in the field are different than those experienced at home, dorms or college towns. Students will be exposed to the elements, live in rustic accommodation, and expect to engage in daily physical activity.

We do our best to follow schedule and activities as outlined in this syllabus. Yet local permitting agencies, political, environmental, personal, and/or weather conditions may force changes. This syllabus, therefore, is only a general commitment. Students should allow flexibility and adaptability as research work is frequently subject to modification.

All students must consult medical professionals to ensure they are fit to participate in an ARC field program. ARC is not qualified to provide medical advice. For all other concerns, please consult with ARC staff members or program director(s) – as appropriate.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Students will take an active part in all stages of the excavations process and finds processing after a short explanation of these activities, supervised by the area manager of the field that they will work at or the specialist in the field laboratory. Students will have the opportunity to use all tools and documentation instruments, after a verbal explanation and observation of the team members carrying out the tasks. Students interested in conservation will have the opportunity to join the field conservation efforts under the supervision of the project's conservator.

Students will take part in the weekly lectures organized in the evenings, where they will learn about regional history and various research threads connected to the works at the site, including tools that were used to carry out this research. Students are encouraged to get involved in the research themselves, with opportunities of working with the architecture remains, mosaics, frescoes, various installations, and portable finds. We invite students who seek Honorary Thesis or MA Thesis to reach out to us to find a subject suitable to their research interests and needs.

LEARNT SKILLS

We are aware and strongly support students who seek employment in the Cultural Resource Management sector – whether with private CRM companies or in government compliance agencies. CRM employers seek to understand the skills students learn at the field school, so listing (and ranking) those should help students secure CRM employment. To that end, we are listing all the skills students will learn during this program. At the end of the field school, students will get a Certificate of Completion, where each skill will be ranked at one of three levels:

- ✓ **Basic:** Can perform the skill/task with some supervision.
- ✓ **Competent:** Can perform the skill/task without any supervision.
- ✓ **Advanced:** Can perform the skill/task and teach others how to do it.

Students will be trained in the following skills:

Skill	Skill Definition
Artifact Identification	Ability to identify archaeological artifacts and ecofacts
Artifact Processing	Understand how to assign artifacts to accepted cultural/geological spheres, across space (classification) & time (seriation)
Basic Conservation & Preservation	Ability to conduct initial field conservation and preservation of different artifact types, features & architecture
Data Recording	Ability to use printed or digital sheets to document & record field data
Excavations/General Principles	Know how to excavate in cultural or arbitrary layers, document and record all excavation activity
Grid & Trench Layout	Ability to lay excavation grid and generate reliable trench outlines for excavations
Map & Plan Making-Manual	Ability to use a theodolite & measuring tape to produce maps and plans of a site
Photogrammetry (part)	Ability to create and interpret photographic and electromagnetic radiant imagery & patterns
Photography	Ability to take clear images of various features, artifacts & soil colors at different light and field depth conditions
Public Interpretation	Ability to understand site history and provide clear and coherent interpretation for the public
Soil Identification	Ability to identify, describe, and record different types of soil and depositions
Stratigraphy	Ability to identify, measure, and describe stratigraphic layering of a site
Total Station (part)	Know how to properly set a Total Station, take back and fore points, and collect geospatial data/points that can be used to generate digital topographic maps

COURSE SCHEDULE

Work in the field commences from Sunday to Thursday, Friday and Saturdays are free from activities (students can travel on their own or stay and rest).

One day per week in the afternoon, a tour of archaeological and cultural sites in the north of Israel will take place.

TYPICAL WORKDAY

Time	Activity
4:20 AM	Wake up (on your own)
4:45 AM	Leaving for the site
5:00 AM	Fieldwork begins
8:30-9:00 AM	Breakfast (in the field)
10:30-10:45 AM	Fruit Break

12:00 PM	End of fieldwork
12:30 PM	Lunch at the Kibbutz
1:00-4:00 PM	Rest or swim at the Sea of Galilee
4:00-6:00 PM	Lab work processing finds
6:30 PM	Dinner at the kibbutz
7:00-8:00 PM	Lecture

** Course structure may be subject to change at the directors' discretion.*

ACADEMIC GRADING MATRIX

Students will be graded based on their work as follows.

- ❖ 70%: Attend each day of the field work with active participation, carrying out any task that the area manager assigns
- ❖ 20%: Attend and actively participate in the afternoon activities in the field laboratory and the evening lectures
- ❖ 10%: Assist the area managers in dig documentation (from week II each day one student will assist the supervisor, carrying out all the documentation on their own, under supervision)

ATTENDANCE POLICY

The required minimum attendance for the successful completion of the field school is 85% of the course hours. Any significant delay or early departure from an activity will be calculated as an absence from the activity.

An acceptable number of absences for medical or other personal reasons will not be considered if the student substitutes them with other requested educational activities (lab work in the place of lodging instead of hours in the field, additional written assignment in place of completely missed workdays etc.).

PREREQUISITES

None. This is hands-on, experiential learning and students will study on-site how to conduct archaeological research. Fieldwork involves physical work and exposure to the elements and thus requires a measure of understanding that this will not be the typical university learning environment. You will have to work outdoors and will get sweaty, dirty, and tired. Students are required to come equipped with sufficient excitement and adequate understanding that fieldwork requires real, hard work, in the sun and dust.

PROGRAM ETIQUETTE

There is no dress code in the kibbutz where we stay, but if you wish to visit any of the many religious sites across Israel during your trip, a modest outfit is required to enter (long sleeves, long skirts for women and long pants for men, etc.).

Please note that public transportation in Israel stops almost entirely from Friday afternoon to Saturday evening (private transportation is moving unhindered 24/7). Please plan accordingly when organizing your flight itinerary and weekend activities.

EQUIPMENT LIST

Bring things that are sturdy, light in weight and color, and easy to launder. As the sun is very intense, long sleeves and pants are recommended for field work time. Sunscreen and a sunhat are mandatory.

Good work shoes are a must! The shoes should be strong, with high ankles, and comfortable, provided with solid traction soles for protection and footing on rocks. Good trekking shoes will do.

Work gloves are provided, but if you have a favorite tested pair of your own, you should bring them with you.

If you wish to enjoy the Sea of Galilee, bring swimming clothing and a beach towel. The shore is quite rocky and full of vegetation, so water shoes are recommended.

TRAVEL & MEETING POINT/TIME

We suggest you hold purchasing your airline ticket until six (6) weeks prior to the departure date. Natural disasters, political changes, weather conditions, and a range of other factors may require the cancelation of a program. The CFS typically takes a close look at local conditions 6-7 weeks prior to the program beginning and make a Go/No Go decision by then. Such a time frame still allows for the purchase of deeply discounted airline tickets while protecting students from the potential loss of airline ticket costs if CFS is forced to cancel a program.

The Ein Gev Kibbutz lodging will be open for our arrival on the weekend before the first field school day – students may arrive on Fri or Sat as the week begins in Israel on Sun. We will meet students at the main gate to the kibbutz (Fig 1). Detailed directions will be provided to all students before arrival, and we will be available to assist in finding the best way to get to the kibbutz based on your travel itinerary.

If you missed your connection or your flight is delayed, please call, text or email the project director immediately. A local emergency cell phone number will be provided to all enrolled students.



Figure 1: Main entrance gate to Kibbutz Ein Gev

VISA REQUIREMENTS

As of January 1, 2025, all foreign visitors must have an approved Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA-IL) to enter Israel for business or tourism purposes for stays up to 90 days. Information on the new requirements and how to apply can be found on the [ETA-IL website](https://eta.il/).

A valid passport and evidence of return or onward travel are required to enter and depart Israel. Travelers holding U.S. or E.U. passports receive a card stating the length of the approved stay (usually 3 months). This card should be kept inside the passport until leaving the territory of Israel. You will be provided with the contact information of the dig directors, which you can pass on to the Immigration Authorities in case of need.

MEALS & ACCOMMODATION

The expedition lodges in the hostel of kibbutz Ein Gev, on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, about 5 min. drive from the site. The kibbutz is a 20-min drive from Tiberias and a 1.2-hr drive from Haifa.

There are 2-4 occupants in each of the simple rooms and the facilities are shared. All rooms are air-conditioned and have wi-fi access. Linens and towels for indoor use are provided. Free of charge collective laundry service is available once a week.

Three meals a day are provided: breakfast buffet in the field, lunch buffet in the kibbutz's dining hall, and dinner (arranged according to the afternoon activities of the day). The meals are suitable for any diet type - there is always a variety of choices.

Each week a tour is organized to other archaeological and cultural sites nearby, and on the weekends, students are free to sightsee on their own.

The kibbutz has a small but well-stocked supermarket for all immediate needs. The store is open 6 days per week but closed on Saturdays. A couple of restaurants and a pub can be found within the kibbutz compound.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

International dialing code: +972

Money/Banks/Credit Cards: New Israeli Shekel, ca. 1 \$ = 3.8 NIS, credit/debit card payment is common even in small places (such as the kibbutz supermarket and local restaurants and pub)

ATM Availability: available in the mall at Tzemach Junction (7-min drive from the kibbutz) and in Tiberias (20-min drive from the kibbutz), no ATM at the kibbutz

Local Language: our international team speaks many languages, official language of Israel is Hebrew, Arabic is commonly spoken as well

Measure units: degree Celsius (°C), meter (m.), gram (gr.), liter (l)

ACADEMIC CREDITS & TRANSCRIPT

Attending students will be awarded 8 semester credit units (equivalent to 12 quarter credit units). Students will receive a letter grade for attending this field school based on the assessment matrix (above). This program provides a minimum of 80 direct instructional hours. Students are encouraged to discuss the transferability of credit units with faculty and the registrar at their home institutions prior to attending this program.

Students will be able to access their transcripts through our School of Record – Culver-Stockton College. C-SC has authorized the National Student Clearinghouse to provide enrollment and degree verification (at <https://tsorder.studentclearinghouse.org/school/select>). Upon completion of a program, students will get an email from C-SC with a student ID that may be used to retrieve transcripts. The first set of transcripts will be provided at no cost; additional transcripts may require payment. If you have questions about ordering a transcript, contact the C-SC office of the registrar at registrar@culver.edu.

REQUIRED READINGS

PDF files of all mandatory readings will be provided to enrolled students via e-mail.

E. Dvorjetski 2014 “City mostly of non-Jews, such as this Sussita”: The Historical Geography of Sussita-Antiochia Hippos-Qal’at el-Husn, in A. Segal, M. Eisenberg, J. Młynarczyk, M. Burdajewicz and M. Schuler, *Hippos-Sussita of the Decapolis. The First Twelve Seasons of Excavations 2000–2011* Vol. I, pp. 40–63, Haifa.

M. Eisenberg and A. Segal 2022 “Town Planning and Architecture of Hippos (Sussita) of the Decapolis in the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine Periods”, in M. Kevo, I. Majnarić, S. Obrovac

Lipar (eds), *Marinov Zbornik. Papers in Honour of Professor Emilio Marin* (Catholic University of Croatia), pp. 345–367.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

T. Kaizer (ed.) 2021 *A Companion to the Hellenistic and Roman Near East* (Wiley) – especially parts I and II.

F. Yegül and D. Favro 2019 *Roman Architecture and Urbanism: From the Origins to Late Antiquity* (Cambridge University Press).

R. Cormack, J.F. Haldon, E. Jeffreys (eds) 2008 *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies* (Oxford University Press) – especially the chapters on political survey until year 800.

A full list of the project publications can be found at <https://www.dighippos.com/publications>.