

HUMAN OSTEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS AT THE CAGLIARI SOPRINTENDENZA LABORATORY, SARDINIA (ITALY)

Course ID: HIS 489

June 21-July 2, 2027

Academic Credits: 4 Semester Credit Units (Equivalent to 6 Quarter Units)

School of Record: Culver Stockton College

This program does not provide accommodation or meals. Cagliari is the capital and largest city in Sardinia (Italy), with many hostels, hotels, short term rentals, grocery stores and restaurants for all price ranges. [Ostello Cagliari](#) offers various dormitory and shared room housing options in the center of Cagliari, starting at €35 (ca. \$40) per night.

DIRECTORS:

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PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Osteological analysis of human skeletal remains is an essential part of the post-excavation analysis of any project where human remains are encountered. Human remains provide important information about diet, health, demography, social inequality, and individual life histories. Additionally, osteological analysis of human remains is often the starting point for further scientific studies analyzing aDNA, stable isotopes, and dental calculus. The ability to identify human remains and study them ethically is an important skill for both academic and commercial archaeologists.

This program provides a hands-on introduction to the fundamentals of human osteological analysis. Students will work with the Italian national archaeological service, the Soprintendenza Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio, to learn the theoretical foundations of human osteological analysis and gaining practical experience with the ethical handling and identification of excavated human remains. Students will learn to identify skeletal element, age, sex, and pathology while working with human remains from ongoing Soprintendenza projects from a variety of sites and time periods. Additionally, students will collaborate to produce interpretive materials that will explain the importance of their work to local stakeholders.

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](https://insuremytrip.com), [Squaremouth.com](https://squaremouth.com) or [Travelguard.com](https://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

The main objective of this program is to introduce students to the theory and practice of human osteological analysis.

To achieve this objective, the program will (a) engage students in developing a practical working knowledge of **human osteological analysis** through hands-on participation in all aspects of the analysis and recording of excavated human remains; (b) introduce students to the **intellectual challenges presented by human osteological analysis**, including research design and the interpretation of data through practice, critical reading, and discussion; and (c) introduce students to the **ethical complexity of working with human remains**, including the differences among US, Italian, and UK approaches.

Students will participate in the following research activities:

Human osteological analysis: Students will undertake analysis of excavated human remains, including identifying skeletal element, age, sex, and pathology.

Record keeping: Students will contribute to the recording of the analyzed human remains using the standard recording methods employed by the Soprintendenza.

Artifact photography: As part of the process of assessment and analysis, students will learn to photographically document significant human remains.

Production of interpretive materials: As a group, students will collaborate with project staff to conceptualize and create interpretive materials that will communicate the significance of their work to local stakeholders.

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
Bioarchaeology	Ability to document and study human remains
Artifact Documentation	Ability to measure, record, photograph and classify human remains in the lab/post ex setting
Artifact Photography	Ability to professionally photograph archaeological human remains
Bioarchaeology ethics	Ability to articulate and practice best ethical standards when working with human remains

ACADEMIC GRADING MATRIX

Students will be graded based on their work as follows.

- 40%:** Attend and participate each scheduled day, including lectures, practicals, and discussions
- 40%:** Record keeping: includes accurate completion of assessment and analysis spreadsheets that will be checked periodically throughout the course and submitted and evaluated at the end of the course
- 20%:** Contribution to interpretive materials for project stakeholders

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1		Readings
Monday	• Introductions: Team introductions, lab tour, introduction to lab safety • Lecture: Introduction to ethics in bioarchaeology • Practical: Introduction to working in the lab • Practical: Introduction to using the reference skeletons	Required: • White et al. 2011, Chapters 1-13 Recommended: • Duday 2009

	• Lab work: Begin project work	• Nikita & Mardini 2026, Chapters 1, 9-11
Tuesday-Thursday	• Lab work: Work on projects • Interpretation: Work on concepts and drafts of interpretive materials	
Friday	• Lab work: Work on projects • Interpretation: Work on drafts of interpretive materials • Discussion: Challenges of human osteological analysis	
Week 2		
Monday	• Lab work: Work on projects • Interpretation: Peer review first drafts of interpretive materials	<u>Required:</u> • White et al. 2011, Chapters 14-22 <u>Recommended:</u> • Nikita & Mardini 2026, Chapters 2-8
Tuesday-Thursday	• Lab work: Work on projects • Interpretation: Revise interpretive materials	
Friday	• Lab work: Finalize projects • Interpretation: Turn in final drafts of interpretive materials • Discussion: Reflections on human osteological analysis – where will we go from here?	

- Course structure may be subject to change upon directors' discretion. The course meets on weekdays only.

A TYPICAL WORKDAY

Time	Activity
8:30am-12:30pm	Morning lab work, practicals, and lectures
12:30-1:30pm	Break for lunch
1:30-5:30pm	Afternoon lab work, work on interpretive materials, and discussion sessions

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 catches up on the program study plan through additional readings, homework or tutorials with program staff members.

PREREQUISITES

There are no prerequisites. This is hands-on, experiential learning, and students will study on-site how to conduct human osteological analysis. The work requires patience, discipline, manual dexterity, and attention to detail.

TRAVEL & MEETING POINT/TIME

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

Students will meet at the Villa Pollini offices of the Soprintendenza (Via Edward Jenner 3, Cagliari CA 09121), at 8:30 am on Monday, the first day of this field school. Villa Pollini is easily

accessed using the Cagliari bus system on the #13 line. Weekly bus passes are available using the CTM Bus Finder app for €12.00 (ca. \$13.70).

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

PROGRAM ETIQUETTE

Cultural norms in Cagliari are similar to cultural norms in many cities in North America. Cagliari is a large Italian city, and students should be prepared to encounter and respect people from a wide variety of cultures and backgrounds. Students should remember that Villa Pollini is an official laboratory of the Soprintendenza and treat it as a professional environment, including dressing appropriately.

EQUIPMENT LIST

Students should bring a laptop, but otherwise, no specific equipment is needed for this course. Students are required to wear long pants, closed-toe shoes, and socks in the lab.

VISA REQUIREMENTS

Italy is a party to the Schengen Agreement. As such, US citizens may enter Italy for up to 90 days for tourist purposes without a visa. Stiff fines may be imposed for overstaying the 90-day period. Your passport should be valid for at least three months beyond the period of your stay.

Citizens of other countries, please visit the Italian Embassy website at your home country for visa information.

MEALS & ACCOMMODATION

Students are responsible for finding their own accommodations and supplying their own food. There are many options for affordable temporary housing in Cagliari. There are many AirBnBs in the city. There are also low-cost hostels and hotels in the city center. [Ostello Cagliari](#) offers various dormitory and shared room housing options in the center of Cagliari, starting at €35 (ca. \$40) per night.

Inexpensive meal options can be found in grocery stores and restaurants around Cagliari. A sandwich or salad can be purchased at grocery stores such as Conad and Coop for approximately \$6.00. Many of the small eateries and fast-food restaurants around town offer meal options costing approximately \$8.00-\$13.00. There are also inexpensive restaurants in town that offer hot meals for approximately \$15.00-\$20.00. There is a large Conad grocery store within easy walking distance of Villa Pollini that offers both hot and cold meal options.

Cagliari's public transportation is excellent, connecting the town with an efficient & affordable bus system that is access through the CTM Bus Finder app. Buses and trains also connect Cagliari with numerous other destinations in Sardinia should students wish to travel on the weekends.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

International dialing code: +39

Money/Banks/Credit Cards: euro / 1 USD = 0.91 EUR / Credit/debit cards are now generally accepted everywhere in Cagliari and even in small towns, but credit card machines often malfunction, and it is always a good idea to carry cash as a backup.

ATM Availability: ATMs are widely available.

Local Language: Sardinia is bilingual. Most residents speak both Sardo and Italian, and Sardo is the first language for many. You may hear Sardo spoken around town, but most residents use

Italian in professional interactions. English is also spoken by many establishments in the more touristed parts of the city.

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

ACADEMIC CREDITS & TRANSCRIPT

Attending students will be awarded 4 semester credit units (equivalent to 6 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 a shared Dropbox folder.

- White, T. D., Black, M. T. & Folkens, P. A. (2011). *Human Osteology*. 3rd ed. Academic Press.
- DeGrazia, D. 2017. The Definition of Death. In *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, ed. E.N. Zalta. Stanford: Stanford University.
<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/death-definition/>
- Squires, K., Errickson, D., Márquez-Grant, N. (2019). Introduction. In: Squires, K., Errickson, D., Márquez-Grant, N. (eds). *Ethical Approaches to Human Remains*. Springer, Cham. Pg 1-15. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-32926-6_1

RECOMMENDED READINGS

- Nikita, E. & Mardini, M. (2026). *A Concise Guide to Differential Diagnosis in Palaeopathology: Navigating the First Steps of Disease Identification in Human Skeletal Remains*. Vol. 1. Routledge.
- Duda, H. (2009). *The Archaeology of the Dead: Lectures in Archaeoethnology*. Translated by A. M. Cipriani & J. Pearce. Oxford: Oxbow Books.