

Excavations at Aixonidai Halai (Voula Field School)

January 4-23, 2024

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Course Description

This three week session will evolve around the physical excavation of a site near the modern Athenian suburb of Voula which, in antiquity, was associated with Aixonidai Halai, one of the main coastal *demes* (municipalities) of ancient Attica. According to all indications, it is quite probable that the excavation site corresponds to the *Agora* of the ancient municipality.

The course will consist of three main teaching components. The first is the on-site excavation, focusing on experiential learning, aimed primarily at introducing students to archaeological fieldwork and all related aspects of current research methodology and theory, under the supervision of trained professionals. The second consists of class lectures, which will subsequently enhance the “hands on” experience by placing it within the proper wider methodological and historical context. Last, but not least, the third component will be centered around lab-work, dealing primarily with the study and interpretation of the material cultural and will include artifact processing and cataloging as well as artifact restoration and preservation.

For the on-site excavation portion of the course, students will be under the supervision of archaeologists from the Greek Ministry of Culture and the Greek Archaeological Service; Effi Lyggouri is the principal investigator; Mary Giamalidi and Dr. Anna Maria Anagnostopoulou and CYA’s Dr. John Karavas are the field directors. Afternoon classes will meet at CYA each afternoon following the morning excavation sessions. In addition to the above, the course will also include visits to nearby relevant archaeological sites and museums, such as the Sanctuary of Apollo Zoster, the Cemetery at Pigadakia as well as the Piraeus Archaeological Museum.

Learning Objectives

- To familiarize students with current archaeological methodology and techniques.
- To acquaint students with aspects of stratigraphic excavation and field documentation, material culture, artifact processing and cataloging.
- To instruct students on how to keep archaeological field journals.
- To introduce students to current artifact dating techniques.
- To contextualize the Voula excavations within their historical setting.

Course Requirements

Each student will be responsible for keeping a daily journal of their participation and activity on the excavations. The parameters and criteria for the nature, style and implementation of the journal will be discussed in the first two in-class sessions. The journal must be handed in by the end of the course session.

A final exam, on the last day of classes will consist of short essays and multiple choice questions and will cover the class lectures, material and readings on archaeological method and theory, as well as knowledge of the history and archaeology of the Voula excavation site.

The final grade will be assessed on the basis of the final exam (40%), the fieldwork journal of 3,000 words (50%) and class participation and attendance over the course of the session (10%).

Class Attendance – Absences Student attendance is mandatory. All absences must be excused by the administration and not the instructor.

The instructor is available for individual consultation before and after class or by prior arrangement:

Daily Class Schedule

Thursday, January 4

8.00-13.00 On site excavation

15.00-16.00 General Introduction to the course and its objectives. The history of the site and its importance in the wider historical setting.

Lecture/discussion on the history of the Voula excavations.

Friday, January 5

8.00-13.30 On site excavation

15:00-16:00 Field techniques, documentation and analysis.

Introduction to Archaeology: Method and Theory.

(Renfrew & Bahn, chapter 1)

Monday, January 8

08.00-13.30 On site excavation

15.00-16.00 Method and Theory: Artifact Categories and analysis.

(Renfrew & Bahn, chapters 2-3)

Tuesday, January 9

8.00-13.30 On site excavation

15.00-16.00 Chronology/Dating methods. Discussion/Lecture on aspects of material culture: Ceramics; metalwork; Coinage; Epigraphic evidence; small finds.

(Renfrew & Bahn, chapter 4)

Wednesday, January 10

08.00-13.00 On-site excavation

13.00-14.00 GIS Applications in the Archaeological site of Voula

16.00-17.00 Non-Invasive Methods of Archaeological Investigation.

Thursday, January 11

08.00-14.00 On-site excavation

16.00-17.00 A History of Attica through the ages.

(Camp, chapters 1-3)

Friday, January 12

08.00-14.00 On-site excavation

16.00-17.00 The archaeology of Attica, with a special emphasis on Athenian sites and monuments (Camp, p.271-327).

Monday, January 15

08.00-14.00 On-site excavation

16.00-17.00 A Recap of the excavation season: Original objectives, objectives achieved, things we did not see coming and drafting a plan for future archaeological investigations at the site.

Tuesday, January 16

08.00-13.00 On-site excavation

13.15-14.15 Visit to the temple of Apollo Zoster

16.00-17.00 From Excavation to Publication: Drafting a preliminary report of the season's results.

Wednesday, January 17

08.00-13.00: On site excavation

13.30-15.00 Ceramics workshop: Production, Typology, Processing, Cleaning.
(Voula Storage Facility)

Thursday, January, 18

08.00-13.00: On site excavation

14.00-15.30 An Introduction to Osteology/Zooarchaeology: Studying human and animal remains within an excavation context

Friday, January 19

10.00-13.00: Metallurgy workshop: Coins, metal fragments and their significance in our studying and understanding of the archaeological record

14.00-15.00 : Review Session

Monday, January 22

09.00-12.00 The Usual Suspects: Other small finds and their respective value in archaeological methodology. A hands on approach.

Tuesday, January 23: Final Examination

Please Note: The final week of classes will be held at the premises of the excavation warehouse/storage space facilities where, in addition to the relevant lab-work and handling of the material, students will receive instruction and guest lectures by trained professionals in their respective fields. The storage building is located about 20 minutes away from the site and is accessible by public transport.

The site employs two skilled workers that will be handling most of the “heavy” loads/work. However, as part of the experience, students will be doing some very light pick-axing (where necessary) as well as the occasional wheel barrow. Other than that, students will be exposed to the usual archaeological field techniques and skills that will include, among others, shoveling, troweling and brushing, trench and/or section drawing and planning, depth/elevation measurements as well as the detailed filling in of the respective context sheets.

Bibliography

The standard prescribed textbooks for this course include:

Renfrew, C. and P. Bahn. *Archaeology: Theories, Methods and Practices*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 2000.

Camp, J. *The Archaeology of Athens*. London: Yale University Press, 2001.

Traill, J. The Political Organization of Attica. *Hesperia Suppl. 14* (1975)

Ibid, *Demes and Trittys* (1996)

In addition to the above, further background or specialist reading material will be introduced to students at the beginning of each separate thematic entity.