

ARCX 321 | Excavating in the Aegean | The Despotiko Field School **Paros, Antiparos** **Summer 2025**

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Course Description

CYA summer course **ARCX 321 | Excavating in the Aegean: The Despotiko Field School** aims at introducing students to archaeological fieldwork theory and methods through active participation in the systematic excavation of one of the most important sites in the Cyclades at the centre of the Aegean.

Despotiko is today an uninhabited island, west of Antiparos and east of Siphnos. A shallow, naturally protected bay is formed between Despotiko and Antiparos, bordered by the islet of Tsimintiri from the north. Since 2001, the systematic excavation at the site of "Mandra", occupying the island's largest and most fertile peninsula, revealed an extended establishment. Almost 30 buildings have come to light so far with a sanctuary dedicated to Apollo forming the site's core. Since 2021, the excavation expanded on Tsimintiri, where large building complexes, most possibly port facilities, had been located and they are currently under exploration.



The course will provide students the opportunity to uncover more part of the site's long history extending from the Early Iron Age (9th c. BC) to the end of the Classical period (4th c. BC).

The excavation season of 2025 will be mostly dedicated to Tsimintiri, continuing the work conducted by CYA students last summer. In 2024, the exploration of two extended building complexes revealed both their interesting architectural features and rich ceramic and stone material. More buildings have been located on the islet waiting to be investigated. The history of the site is still to be written.

The students will also work at the site of Mandra on Despotiko, where the temenos of Apollo. The East complex, composed of buildings operating during the 6th and 5th centuries BC, as well as some more buildings recently discovered need to be further excavated.

During the first three weeks on Despotiko and Tsimintiri, the students will be offered the chance to follow the entire excavation procedure, while digging a unique and promising archaeological site. They will be taught the basic methods of stratigraphical excavation, the onsite documentation, and processing of the finds. Excavation work will be combined with the detailed recording of the morning activities in the afternoon, the preparation of architectural plans and more importantly of the excavation diary.

The last week of the course will be spent at Paroikia, the capital of the island of Paros so that the students to be trained at the detailed processing of the findings from Despotiko at the Archaeological Museum of Paros. At the museum's storage rooms, the students will learn how to clean, sort, catalogue, draw and photograph the material. They will therefore become acquainted with the process, which enables the detailed study, interpretation and publication of the excavated material.

Morning work at the museum will be combined with afternoon classes, focusing on the nature of the various objects uncovered during the excavation with a special focus on the clay vases, clay figurines and other clay or metal finds. Students will be provided with supplementary information on the examined material with our discussions adapted to the nature of the finds processed at the museum.

During these four weeks, students will have the opportunity to meet and discuss with experts from all over the world, who are members of the excavation's research team, including archaeologists, archaeozoologists, geologists, architects, photographers, conservators.

Moreover, a series of lectures will be given on issues concerning archaeological theory and methods, the various types of archaeological evidence, focusing on the material from Despotiko, ancient religious practices and rituals, the birth and development of Greek sanctuaries, in particularly those in the Cyclades. These lectures aim at enabling students to fully comprehend the purposes of a systematic excavation and to place the site and its material culture into its theoretical context.

The final exam, scheduled for the last day, aims at testing the knowledge gained by students throughout the experience on Despotiko and Paros, as well as from the bibliography studied during the same period of time.

Course Requirements

Participation at the excavation (50%)

The disciplined, enthusiastic participation in the excavation is a basic parameter for the successful completion of the course. The everyday on-time attendance and the respect of the schedule rules set by the director of the excavation are required. Each student will serve as a trench-master for a number of days, being responsible for the excavation diary and the everyday recording of the finds. The careful reading of the assignments and the afternoon classes will provide the basis for this responsibility.

Class participation (25%)

The attendance of the afternoon classes is compulsory. The study of the suggested bibliography and the active participation of the students will contribute substantially toward the final grade.

Final Exam (25%)

A two-hour written exam is based on the three-week excavation experience at the site of Despotiko, the study week at the museum of Paros and the material provided during the course.

COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK 1	23 June – 19 July 2025
M. June 23	13.30 Students' arrival at the port of Antiparos 15.00 Transfer to the hotel 18.00 Orientation 20.00 Welcome Dinner <i>Introduction to Archaeological Methods</i>
T. June 24	07.30 - 14.30 On-site Excavation 15.00 Lunch 19.00 Lecture: <i>Discovering Despotiko</i> Introduction to documentation of the excavation
W. June 25	07.30 - 14.30 On-site Excavation 15.00 Lunch 19.00 Lecture: <i>Theoretical approaches to Classical Archaeology</i> [Renfrew & Bahn: Introduction & Chapter 1; Haggis & Antonaccio 2015]

	Preparation of the Excavation Diary
T. June 26	07.30 - 14.30 On-site Excavation 15.00 Lunch 19.00 Lecture: <i>Archaeological Project Development & Excavation Methods</i> [Renfrew & Bahn: Chapter 3] Preparation of the Excavation Diary
F. June 27	07.30 - 14.30 On-site Excavation 15.00 Lunch 19.00 Lecture: <i>Processing, Classification and Recording, Artefact Categories</i> [Renfrew & Bahn: Chapter 2] Preparation of the Excavation Diary
WEEK 2	30 June – 4 July 2025 <i>Greek Sanctuaries</i>
M. June 30	07.30 - 14.30 On-site Excavation 15.00 Lunch 19.00 Lecture: <i>Chronology and Periodization</i> [Renfrew & Bahn: Chapter 4] Preparation of the Excavation Diary
T. July 1	07.30 - 14.30 On-site Excavation 15.00 Lunch 19.00 Lecture: <i>Introduction to Greek Sanctuaries</i> [Pedley Chapters IV-VI] Preparation of the Excavation Diary
W. July 2	07.30 - 14.30 On-site Excavation 15.00 Lunch 19.00 Lecture: <i>Birth of Greek Sanctuaries & Ritual Dining</i> Preparation of the Excavation Diary
T. July 3	07.30 - 14.30 On-site Excavation 15.00 Lunch 19.00 Lecture: <i>Ritual Practices & Sacrifice</i> Preparation of the Excavation Diary
F. July 4	07.30 - 14.30 On-site Excavation 15.00 Lunch 19.00 Lecture: <i>Votive Dedications</i> [Pedley Chapter VII]
WEEK 3	7 – 11 July 2025 <i>The Sanctuaries of the Cyclades</i>
M. July 7	07.30 - 14.30 On-site Excavation 15.00 Lunch 19.00 Lecture: <i>The Geology of Despotiko, Antiparos & Paros</i> (Professor Erich Draganits) Preparation of the Excavation Diary
T. July 8	07.30 - 14.30 On-site Excavation 15.00 Lunch 19.00 Lecture: <i>The Sanctuaries of the Cyclades: Paros</i> Preparation of the Excavation Diary
W. July 9	07.30 - 14.30 On-site Excavation 15.00 Lunch 19.00 Lecture: <i>The Sanctuaries of the Cyclades: Naxos</i> Preparation of the Excavation Diary
T. July 10	07.30 - 14.30 On-site Excavation 15.00 Lunch 19.00 Lecture: <i>The Sanctuaries of the Cyclades: Delos</i> Preparation of the Excavation Diary
F. July 11	07.30 - 14.30 On-site Excavation 15.00 Lunch 19.00 Lecture: <i>The Sanctuaries of the Cyclades: Siphnos, Kythnos</i>
S. July 12	Free Day

S. July 13	09.00 - 10.00 Check out from Zombos Hotel Transfer to the Port of Antiparos – Ferry to Paros – Bus to Paroikia 14:00 Check in Hotel Aegean Village Paros
WEEK 4	14 – 19 July 2025 <i>Archaeological Museum of Paros</i>
M. July 14	08.30 - 14.30 Visit at the Archaeological Museum of Paros and the ancient Cemetery Material Processing at the Storage area of the museum 14.45 Lunch 19.00 Lecture: <i>Introduction to Cycladic ceramics</i>
T. July 15	08.30 - 14.30 Material Processing 14.45 Lunch 19.00 Lecture: <i>Shapes & Uses, Typologies & Utilities</i>
W. July 16	08.30 - 14.30 Material Processing 14.45 Lunch 19.00 Lecture: <i>Pots & Images</i>
T. July 17	08.30 - 14.30 Material Processing 15.00 Lunch 19.00 Lecture: <i>Clay Figurines & various Clay Objects</i>
F. July 18	08.30 - 14.30 Material Processing 15.00 Lunch 18.00 Final Exam
S. July 19	END OF PROGRAM

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Despotiko

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Kourayos Y., 2012. *Despotiko. The Sanctuary of Apollo*, Athens.

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Cyclades

Alexandridou, A. & Mazarakis Ainian, A., Recent archaeological work in the Cyclades (Geometric to Hellenistic), *Archaeological Reports* 68, 197-220.

Archaeology & Methods

Haggis, D. & Antonaccio, C., 2015. *Classical Archaeology in Context Theory and Practice in Excavation in the Greek World*, Berlin.

Renfrew, C. & Bahn, P., 2004. *Archaeology: Theories, Methods and Practice*,⁴ London.

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Pedley, J.G., 2005. *Sanctuaries and the sacred in the ancient Greek world*, Cambridge.

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Greek Pottery

Boardman, J., 2001. *The history of Greek vases*, London.