

## **ARCX 321 | Excavating in the Aegean | The Despotiko Field School Summer Session II 2026, Paros, Antiparos**

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CYA summer course ARCX 321 **Excavating in the Aegean: The Despotiko Field School (Paros, Antiparos)** 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.

Mandra is now recognized as one of the most important sites in the Aegean that has utterly changed the archaeology of the early Aegean.

The course will provide students the opportunity to uncover more part of the long history of Despotiko, extending from the Early Iron Age (9<sup>th</sup> c. BC) to the end of the Classical period (4<sup>th</sup> c. BC).

During the first days at the site, the students will get to know the site of Mandra on Despotiko and its architectural components, as well as the history of their exploration. Moreover, they will participate in the cleaning operations, absolutely necessary before the beginning of the excavation.

During the season of 2026, the excavation 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 Mandra, where the temenos of Apollo is located. The East complex, composed of buildings operating during the 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> 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.

## REQUIREMENTS

### Antiparos-Despotiko

#### 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

<b>M. June 22</b>	1330	Students' arrival at the port of Antiparos
	1500	Transfer to the hotel
	1800	Orientation
	2000	Welcome Dinner, <i>Introduction to Archaeological Methods</i>
<b>T. June 23</b>	07.30-14.30	On-site Excavation
	1500	Lunch
	1900	Lecture: <i>Discovering Despotiko</i> Introduction to documentation of the excavation
<b>W. June 24</b>	07.30-14.30	On-site Excavation
	1500	Lunch
	1900	Lecture: <i>Theoretical approaches to Classical Archaeology</i> [Renfrew & Bahn: Introduction & Chapter 1; Haggis & Antonaccio 2015] Preparation of the Excavation Diary
<b>T. June 25</b>	07.30-14.30	On-site Excavation
	1500	Lunch
	1900	Lecture: <i>Archaeological Project Development &amp; Excavation Methods</i> [Renfrew & Bahn: Chapter 3] Preparation of the Excavation Diary
<b>F. June 26</b>	07.30-14.30	On-site Excavation
	1500	Lunch
	1900	Lecture: <i>Processing, Classification and Recording, Artefact Categories</i> [Renfrew & Bahn: Chapter 2] Preparation of the Excavation Diary

<b>WEEK 2</b>	<b>Greek Sanctuaries</b>	
<b>M. June 29</b>	07.30-14.30	On-site Excavation
	1500	Lunch
	1900	<b>Lecture:</b> <i>Chronology and Periodization</i> [Renfrew & Bahn: Chapter 4] Preparation of the Excavation Diary
<b>T. June 30</b>	07.30-14.30	On-site Excavation
	1500	Lunch
	1900	<b>Lecture:</b> <i>Introduction to Greek Sanctuaries</i> [Pedley Chapters IV-VI] Preparation of the Excavation Diary
<b>W. July 1</b>	07.30-14.30	On-site Excavation
	1500	Lunch
	1900	<b>Lecture:</b> <i>Birth of Greek Sanctuaries &amp; Ritual Dining</i> Preparation of the Excavation Diary
<b>T. July 2</b>	07.30-14.30	On-site Excavation
	1500	Lunch
	1900	<b>Lecture:</b> <i>Ritual Practices &amp; Sacrifice</i> Preparation of the Excavation Diary
<b>F. July 3</b>	07.30-14.30	On-site Excavation
	1500	Lunch
	1900	<b>Lecture:</b> <i>Votive Dedications</i> [Pedley Chapter VII]
<b>WEEK 3</b>	<b>The Sanctuaries of the Cyclades</b>	
<b>M. July 6</b>	07.30-14.30	On-site Excavation
	1500	Lunch
	1900	<b>Lecture:</b> <i>The Geology of Despotiko, Antiparos &amp; Paros</i> (Professor Erich Draganits) Preparation of the Excavation Diary
<b>T. July 7</b>	07.30-14.30	On-site Excavation
	1500	Lunch
	1900	<b>Lecture:</b> <i>The Sanctuaries of the Cyclades: Paros</i> Preparation of the Excavation Diary
<b>W. July 8</b>	07.30-14.30	On-site Excavation
	1500	Lunch
	1900	<b>Lecture:</b> <i>The Sanctuaries of the Cyclades: Naxos</i> Preparation of the Excavation Diary
<b>T. July 9</b>	07.30-14.30	On-site Excavation
	1500	Lunch
	1900	<b>Lecture:</b> <i>The Sanctuaries of the Cyclades: Delos</i> Preparation of the Excavation Diary
<b>F. July 10</b>	07.30-14.30	On-site Excavation
	1500	Lunch
	1900	<b>Lecture:</b> <i>The Sanctuaries of the Cyclades: Siphnos, Kythnos</i>
<b>S. July 11</b>		<b>Free Day</b>
<b>S. July 12</b>	09.00-10.00	Check out from Zombos Hotel Transfer to the Port of Antiparos – Ferry to Paros – Bus to Paroikia
	1400	Check in Hotel Aegean Village Paros
<b>WEEK 4</b>	<b>Archaeological Museum of Paros</b>	
<b>M. July 13</b>	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
	1900	<b>Lecture:</b> <i>Introduction to Cycladic ceramics</i>
<b>T. July 14</b>	08.30-14.30	Material Processing
	14.45	Lunch
	1900	<b>Lecture:</b> <i>Shapes &amp; Uses, Typologies &amp; Utilities</i>
<b>W. July 15</b>	08.30-14.30	Material Processing
	14.45	Lunch

	1900	<b>Lecture: Pots &amp; Images</b>
<b>T. July 16</b>	08.30-14.30	Material Processing
	14.45	Lunch
	1900	<b>Lecture: Clay Figurines &amp; various Clay Objects</b>
<b>F. July 17</b>	08.30-14.30	Material Processing
	14.45	Lunch
	1800	<b>Final Exam</b>
<b>S. June 18</b>	<b>END OF PROGRAM</b>	

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Alexandridou A. – Kourayos Y. – Daifa I., *Despotiko. The Temple and its Deposits*, Leuven 2023.

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### *Cyclades*

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### *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*,<sup>4</sup> London.

### *Sanctuaries*

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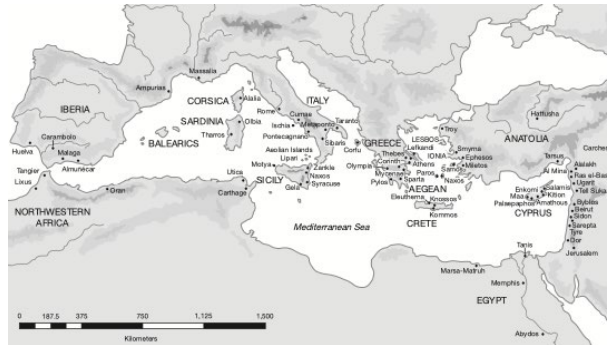
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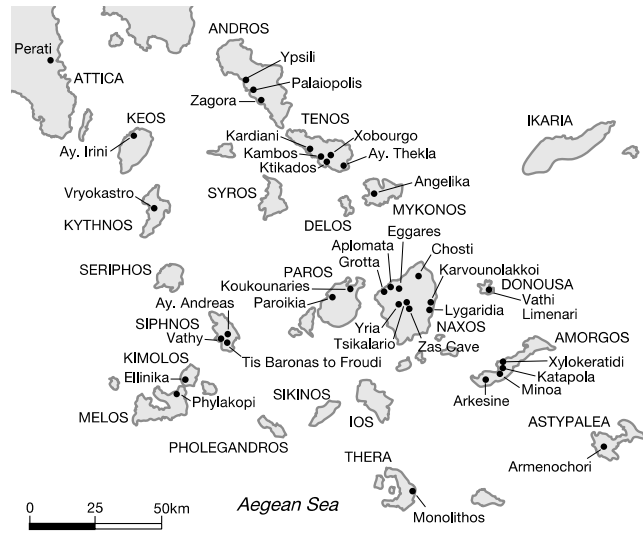
### *Greek Pottery*

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**MAPS**



**1. The Mediterranean** (after Lemos & Kotsonas 2020, Map 1)



**2. The Cyclades** (after Lemos & Kotsonas 2020, Map 13)  
**Basic Greek Chronology**

