

ARCX 326 | Excavating Prehistory on an Aegean Island: Gourimadi Archaeological Project Summer Session I 2026, 14 June – 12 July 2026

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Excavating Prehistory on an Aegean Island: Gourimadi Archaeological Project

1. Course Description

This course will take place as part of the Gourimadi Archaeological Project (GAP), an international prehistoric research excavation on the southern tip of the Aegean Island of Euboea (modern *Evia*). It is designed to provide advanced archaeological field experience to undergraduate students and a theoretical and methodological background regarding excavation techniques and Aegean Archaeology. The course will introduce the students to modern excavation, recording, and documentation methods, and the knowledge gained will translate well into other areas of the world and time periods.

2. Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of both the fieldwork (8 AM - 3 PM) and class lecture (one-hour sessions on weekdays, 6:45 PM) sections of the course, the students will have learned how to:

- stratigraphically excavate an archaeological site;
- document their excavation units in writing and sketch drawings;
- create *Harris matrices* of their trenches;
- analyze architectural remains;
- fly a drone to obtain aerial imagery and *orthomaps* of an archaeological site;
- create photogrammetrical 3D models of trenches and small finds, using a DSLR camera;
- process small finds and ceramics in the project *apothiki* (storeroom/lab);
- carry out floatation to collect archaeobotanical finds;
- set up a *total station* and use it for spatial documentation.

In addition to these practical skills, they will also acquire academic knowledge on:

- excavation methodologies;
- remote-sensing techniques;
- history of archaeological documentation;
- Aegean prehistory from the Palaeolithic to the end of the Bronze Age;
- GIS applications in archaeological excavations and surveys;
- archaeobotany and other disciplines of archaeological sciences;
- introductory pottery and small finds illustration.

3. Course Requirements & Grading

Fieldwork – 50%: Fieldwork participation will be the most important part of the course. Each student will need to learn and complete a series of excavation-related tasks, including—but not limited to—sketch drawings of the trench that they are working in, filling the digital excavation unit form on the project tablets on the field, setting up and recording with the Total Station. Timely attendance of fieldwork and following the directions of the project directors and trench supervisors will be essential for the successful completion of the course.

Weekly Memes/Poems/Diary entries – 10%: Students will reflect on their personal excavation experience on a weekly basis, in the form of memes, poems, or any other creative work.

Final Exam – 25%: A take-home Final Exam will be based on the evening lectures and will test the student's academic knowledge regarding archaeological theory and methodology. Students will have one week to complete the exam.

Class Participation and Attendance – 15%: Attendance at evening lectures is mandatory. The frequency and quality of the questions raised and contributions to in-class discussions will determine your class participation grade.

4. Gourimadi Archaeological Project

GAP includes the systematic excavation of a Late Neolithic - Early Bronze Age site near Karystos in Southern Euboea and its scientific analysis and publication. The project is organized by the Norwegian Institute at Athens and conducted under a permit from the Greek Ministry of Culture and Tourism with the supervision of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Euboea. GAP is directed by Dr. Žarko Tankosić and co-directed by Drs. Fanis Mavridis and Paschalis Zafeiriadis.

The site of Gourimadi, meaning "Big Rock" in the local Arvanitika language, lies on the outskirts of the Katsaronio plain, about 6 km from the modern town of Karystos in southern Euboea.

The prehistoric habitation extended over a natural hill with excellent defensive properties and a key position in the local landscape. This hill offered unobstructed vistas not only of its immediate surroundings but also of the neighboring regions of eastern Attica and the northern Cyclades (Andros, Tinos, Mykonos, Giaros, and Kea).

The project aims to investigate the earliest farmers in southern Euboea, who may have played an essential role in the eventual colonization of the central Aegean islands. As a multi-period site, spanning as much as two and a half millennia, from the Late Neolithic to the Early Bronze Age, Gourimadi will also play a crucial role in our understanding of the transition to the age of metals. Its peculiar location in the local topography, hundreds of arrowheads found during excavations, and its enigmatic architecture all indicate a special function for the site, as opposed to an ordinary farming village. Adobe (earthen) architecture attested in some of our deepest trenches is likely the earliest found in the region. The large structural terrace system documented in the 2024 season.

The methodology employed in GAP is based on the removal of stratigraphic units (termed "excavation units") which, wherever possible, correspond to natural and anthropogenic episodes of archaeological deposition. For faster and more precise measurements, a Total Station device is used throughout the excavation procedure (planning, excavating, and recording), including all elevation points taken for moveable artifacts, architectural features, and excavated units. All the excavated soil is dry-sieved and standardized flotation samples were systematically collected from each excavation unit. All written recordings (excavated units and their specifications, unearthed features, all artifactual categories, and coordinates) are paperless and are logged in a customized digital database using iPads on the field. The visual recording includes hand-drawn sketches, photogrammetrical 3D models of excavation units, and drone-based 3D modeling of the entire excavation area. The spatial information is integrated and analyzed in the project GIS. By the end of the project, the CYA students will be familiar with all these aspects of an archaeological excavation.

Class Schedule, Weekdays, 7 p.m.

Class Day	Day/Date/Place	Topic / Readings / Assignments Due
Sunday, 14.06 Arrival to Karystos, General Meeting 7:15 p.m.		
Week 1		
1	Jun 15	<p>Gourimadi Excavations 1 <i>Early Morning General Team Meeting</i> History of the Project, General Summary and Goals of the 2025 Season <i>Žarko Tankosić</i></p> <p>Gourimadi Excavations 2 Trench by trench Gourimadi Architecture, find types, stratigraphy</p>
	June 16	<p>Gourimadi Excavations 3 Project Database & Tablet-based Digital Documentation <i>Denitsa Nenova</i></p>
	June 17	<p>Basic Principles of Archaeological Stratigraphy Single Context vs. Spits Evolution of archaeological documentation Harris Matrix Harris 1989 Pavel 2010, p. 51-58.</p>
	June 18	<p>Introduction to Archaeological Sciences Archaeobotany, zooarchaeology, geoarchaeology, physical anthropology, isotope analysis <u>Wiener Lab Research ASCSA</u> Renfrew and Bahn 2020, Chapter 4 Guest Lecture: Introduction to Archaeobotany <i>Symeon Ginoudis</i></p>
	June 19	<p>Prehistoric Archaeology 1 Palaeolithic & Mesolithic Bintliff 2012, pp. 28-29, 35-36 <u>Rutter, Lesson 1</u></p>
Week 2		
	June 22	<p>Week 1 in Memes & Poems – First Batch Prehistoric Archaeology 2 Agricultural Revolution: Natuf & Göbeklitepe The Arrival of Farming in Greece and Europe <u>Rutter, Lesson 2</u> Hofmanová et al. 2016 Runnels and Murray 2001, p. 41-64</p>
	June 23	<p>Week 1 in Memes & Poems – Second Batch Prehistoric Archaeology 3 Bronze Age in the Aegean Stansbury-O'Donnell 2015 Cline 2021</p>
	June 24	<p>Guest Lecture: Lithics Technology, Function, and Artefact Biographies <i>Marzena Cendrowska</i></p>
	June 25	<p>Prehistoric Archaeology 4 Iron Age in the Aegean Stansbury-O'Donnell 2015</p>
	June 26	<p>Free Friday – Students may leave Karystos right after fieldwork for travel within Greece</p>

Week 3

(Photogrammetry with DSLR camera practice on M/Tu, Drone flying practice on W/Th – 6 PM)

Make-up practice hours on weekday evenings during Week 3

June 29	<p>Week 2 in Memes and Poems: First Batch Photogrammetry 3D recording and field archaeology Architectural Illustration & Photogrammetry Boyd et al. 2021 Sapirstein and Murray 2017</p>
June 30	<p>Week 2 in Memes and Poems: Second Batch The Use of Drones in Archaeology History of aerial photography and archaeology Aerial imagery as a remote sensing tool Drone-based orthomaps & photogrammetry Campana 2017 Musson and Campana 2013</p>
July 1	<p>Archaeological GIS I Basic Concepts of archaeological GIS and spatial recording Conolly and Lake 2006, Chapter 2 Renfrew and Bahn 2020, p. 93-97</p>
July 2	<p>Archaeological GIS II Guest Lecture: Gourimadi Project GIS <i>Denitsa Nenova</i></p>
July 3	<p>Pottery Studies Why and how to study pottery? Introduction to pottery illustration Orton and Hughes 2013, p. 24-38</p>

Week 4

July 6	<p>Week 3 in Memes and Poems: First Batch Remote Sensing in Archaeology Geophysical Methods of Remote Sensing LIDAR Thermal Imaging Satellite Imagery Renfrew and Bahn 2020, p. 81-92</p>
July 7	<p>Week 3 in Memes and Poems: Second Batch Topic TBD by Students*</p>
July 8	<p>Ancient-DNA Revolution and a new understanding of the human past Archaeological critique Callaway 2018</p>
July 9	<p>Topic TBD by Students*</p>
July 10	<p>Week 4 in Memes and Poems Final Review & Discussion Why Study the Ancient World? <u>Class Discussion Prompt</u></p>

TAKE-HOME FINAL DUE 18.07, 7 PM

***Last Week's Lecture Topics to Choose From:**

ONE FROM "Key concepts in Modern Archaeology":

- Archaeology of Societal Collapse
- Archaeology of Climate Crises

Archaeology of Gender
 Archaeology of Social Inequality
 Archaeology of Slavery
 Archaeology of Food
 Archaeology and the Ethics of Burial Excavations
 Archaeology of Migration
 Archaeology and Nationalism and the contemporary White Supremacists
 Colonialist Archaeology and the Current Decolonization Debate
 Digital Archaeology and Ethics (ownership of digital cultural heritage, accuracy and speed craze, lack of ethical guidelines)
 Archaeogaming (archaeology and video games)
 AI and Ancient Studies (site detection, epigraphic help, find analysis)
 Pseudoarchaeology (Hancock, Atlantis, Aliens, Post-Truth, Flint Dibble)
 Archaeology of the Recent Past (Archaeology of modern dumpsters, WWII battlegrounds, Spanish civil war)

ONE FROM "Key Periods and Regions of Old-World Archaeology":

Earliest States: Sumer and Akkad
 Bronze Age Egypt
 Iron Age Levant (Canaanites, Phoenicians, Philistines, Israel & Judah)
 Iron Age Near East (Assyrian Empire and Babylonia)
 Ancient Iran (Elamites, Zoroastrianism, Iranian Languages and migration theories, Persian Empire)
 Bronze Age Anatolia and Near East (Hittites, Luwians, Mitanni, Assyria)
 Iron Age Anatolia (Phrygia, Lydia, Lycia, Caria, the Urartu, Armenia)
 Iron Age Balkans (Illyria, Dacia, Thrace)
 Pre-Roman Italy and the Etruscans
 Introduction to First Millennium BC Greek Archaeology and History
 Introduction to Roman Archaeology and History

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