



Asylum Hill Cemetery Excavation, Mississippi, USA

Course ID: HIST 301AH

July 10–August 5, 2023

Academic Credits: 8 Semester Credit Units (Equivalent to 12 Quarter Units)

School of Record: Iowa Wesleyan University

DIRECTORS

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PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Center for Bioethics and Medical Humanities at the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC), in conjunction with Millsaps College, invites anthropology students to participate in the inaugural season of the bioarchaeological field school at the cemetery of the original Mississippi State Lunatic Asylum (ca. 1855-1935). This unique opportunity is available to a limited number [20] of students in 2023.

The cemetery, which is located on the UMMC campus, contains the unmarked graves of over 4,000 individuals who will be removed to make way for vital medical center expansion. Students will spend four weeks in the heart of Jackson, Mississippi, working alongside a professional archaeological crew on the excavation as well as laboratory tasks. Training will focus on bioarchaeological methods, including burial excavation, human osteology, and mortuary artifact identification. Students will also receive instruction in basic archaeological methods, such as mapping, soil sample collection, and the creation of field sketches. Previous coursework in human osteology is not required but will be beneficial to participants. All students should have completed an introductory course in archaeology or anthropology, and should come prepared to work in the extreme heat and humidity of a Mississippi summer.

The Asylum Hill Cemetery field school will provide students the rare opportunity to gain experience in human burial excavation without the expense of traveling abroad. Participants will contribute to a

greater understanding of the African American and Euroamerican population that lived and died at the asylum, and will gather data that allow the stories of deceased patients to be told. The Asylum Hill Project plans to permanently memorialize the interred individuals during a later phase of the work.

IMPORTANT DISCLAIMER

The Center for Field Sciences was established to support field training in a range of sciences at sites across the world. Traveling and conducting field work involves risk. Students interested in participating in any CFS program must weigh the potential risk against the value of education provided for the program sites of their choosing.

Risk is inherent in everything we do and the CFS takes risk seriously. A committee of leading scholars review each field school location prior to approval. Once a program is accepted, the CFS continually monitor conditions at the program site, its academic quality and ability to conduct as safe of an experience as possible.

The CFS 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 cancelation due to pandemics. If you wish to purchase an insurance policy that cover 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.

You should be aware that conditions in the field are different than those you experience in your home, dorms or college town. You will be exposed to the elements, live in rustic accommodation, and expect to engage in physical activity daily.

We do our best to follow schedule and activities as outlined in this syllabus. Yet local permitting agencies, political, environmental, personal, 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 change.

All students must consult medical professionals to ensure they are fit to participate in this program. If you have any medical concerns, please consult your doctor. For all other concerns, please consult with the program director – as appropriate.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, students will be familiar with human skeletal terminology, burial excavation techniques, and methods for recognizing and recording pertinent data in the field and lab. They will gain experience in the interpretation of soil stratigraphy, soil sampling, artifact identification, field photography, Total Station mapping, planview drawing, excavation form completion, water-screening, artifact cleaning, human remains cleaning, and laboratory tracking procedures. While the focus of the field school is the acquisition of practical skills, through this project students will also learn about the ethical issues surrounding the excavation and analysis of human remains, the history of mental health treatment in the United States, and the nuanced story of the Mississippi State Lunatic Asylum and its patients.

LEARNT SKILLS

We are aware that many students may not seek academic careers but will pursue employment in the private sector. To that end, we are following the Twin Cairns Skills Log Matrix™ (<https://twincairns.com/skill-set-matrix/>) and will provide training for the following skills:

Skill	Skill Definition
Understanding stratigraphy	Ability to understand the relationships between layers of both cultural and natural depositions

Total station	Able to create maps and plans using a Total Station
Small hand tools	Can operate a trowel or similar small hand tool to conduct excavations
Screening	Ability to use geological and general screens to identify, collect and record small scale finds
Recording-Excavations	Ability to understand, collect and record all excavation process and data
Recording sheets	Ability to understand and properly record excavation process, stratigraphy, sections and artifact documentation
Photography	Ability to take clear images of various feature, artifact & soil colors at various light and field depth conditions
Large hand tools	Can operate a pickax, hoe or similar large hand tool to conduct excavations
Drawing plans	Can create site plans using plumb bob and measuring tape
Artifact washing	Ability to wash different artifact types while maintaining their material characteristics for research purposes
Artifact recovery	Ability to record, safely excavate and properly storage artifacts and ecofacts made of different types of materials (ceramics, metal, lithics, etc.) and various level of fragility
Artifact processing	Ability to identify, collect and record a wide range of artifact types, understanding their relative fragility within different site types and conditions
Artifact classification & seriation	Understand how to assign artifacts to accepted cultural/geological spheres, across space (classification) and across time (seriation)

COURSE SCHEDULE

July 9—Students arrive in Jackson by late afternoon. Welcome event at 7:00 pm Central time

July 10—15 Fieldwork and lectures, with lab work on rain days.

July 16—Rest day with optional excursion.

July 17—22 Fieldwork and lectures, with lab work on rain days.

July 23—Rest day with optional excursion

July 24—29 Fieldwork and lectures, with lab work on rain days.

July 30—Rest day with optional excursion

July 31—August 3 Fieldwork and lectures with lab work on rain days.

August 5—Site clean-up and lab organizing. Farewell dinner.

August 6—Students depart.

Course structure may be subject to change upon directors' discretion

TYPICAL WORK DAY

7:30 am, Breakfast in Millsaps cafeteria

8:15 am, Students ready to go in the vans

8:30 am, Students arrive on site and begin work

10:00—10:15 am, 15-minute mid-morning break

12:00—1:00 pm, Lunch and lecture at lab

1:00 pm, Return to field work. *Some days, students will instead have a hands-on workshop from 1:00-2:30 pm.*

2:30—2:45 pm, 15-minute afternoon break

2:45 pm, Return to fieldwork.

4:00 pm, Students load up on vans to return to Millsaps campus.

ACADEMIC GRADING MATRIX

Students will be graded based on their work as follows.

Attendance—48 points (2 per day)

Participation—24 points (1 per day)

Engagement and attitude—24 points (1 per day)

Professionalism—4 points (overall)

90–100% = A

80–89% = B

70–79% = C

60–69% = D

<60% = F

SKILLS MATRIX LEVELS

The school instructors will evaluate the level each student achieved on the list of skills provided above. Each skill will be graded on one of the following 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.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

The required attendance for the successful completion of the field school is 100% of the course hours. Absences for medical or other serious personal reasons will be excused, and students who miss hours for these reasons will be given an opportunity to catch up on the field school study plan through additional readings, homework, or tutorials with program staff members.

PREREQUISITES

Introduction to Anthropology or Archaeology or a similar course is required. A course in Human Osteology is not required, but a previous knowledge base will allow students to engage more extensively with the fieldwork.

This is hands-on, experiential learning, and students will study on-site how to conduct archaeological research. Field work involves physical work and exposure to the elements and thus requires a measure of understanding that this will not be the typical university learning environment. You will have to work outdoors and will get sweaty and tired. Students are required to come equipped with sufficient excitement and adequate understanding that field work requires real, hard work, in the sun and rain. The work requires patience, discipline, and attention to detail.

SCREENING AND HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

Health/immunization review:

Because UMMC is a medical campus with vulnerable patients, all students (clinical and non-clinical) are required to provide proof of current immunization (or immunity) for measles, mumps, and Rubella (MMR); varicella (chicken pox); tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (TDAP); and Covid-19. Students must also have proof of a negative test for tuberculosis (TB). Immunization records and TB testing may be obtained from your health care provider, local clinic, or health department. Vaccinations may be obtained through these providers or a pharmacy. Students who are accepted to the field school program will be given more specific instructions regarding verification. Students are responsible for

any fees associated with completing health requirements at their provider of choice. After completion, students will upload proof of health requirements to a unique, personalized link from UMMC.

Criminal history review:

After acceptance to the field school program, students will need to obtain fingerprint cards from their local police or Sheriff's department. These cards will be submitted to UMMC's HR Service Center along with a signed consent form for a full background check. Students may be disqualified from the program if the background check finds a history of felonies of a violent or sexual nature or felonies related to theft or the possession or sale of drugs. If a student is disqualified from participation, any tuition money paid will be refunded, less the \$50 background check fee.

Health Insurance:

Students must obtain and maintain health insurance for the duration of the field school and provide proof of health insurance upon request by UMMC. Any cost for medical treatment provided during the field school will be the responsibility of the students.

PROGRAM ETIQUETTE

No smoking or vaping is permitted on site or anywhere on the UMMC campus. No pets may be brought to the Millsaps dormitories or the site. Cell phone use is not permitted on site, and ear buds may not be worn on site or in the lab. Taking personal photos of the human remains will result in immediate expulsion from the field school with a failing grade and no refund of tuition. Students are expected to demonstrate the utmost respect at all times for both the dead and their descendants. This is especially important because descendants and members of the descendant communities may visit the site during the field school.

EQUIPMENT LIST

Students should come equipped with:

- **Sturdy, water-resistant boots**, preferably broken in prior to the project
- **Rubber boots** (a good idea, but not required)
- **Durable, well-fitting work gloves**. Fit is important as dexterity is necessary for careful excavation work. Gloves will prevent blisters, scratches and cuts, and direct contact with noxious plants.
- **Sturdy raincoat** (not a poncho) and **rain pants** for water-screening and working in light rain
- **Insect repellent**
- **Sunscreen**
- **Wide-brim hat** (for sun)
- **Reusable water containers** sufficient to supply the student for an entire day in hot weather
- **Inexpensive mapping compass** similar to [this](#)
- **Sunglasses**
- **Backpack**

Students should pack at least **six days of field clothing** as well as clothing for after hours. **Long pants** are advisable on site due to the presence of fire ants and poison ivy.

Poison ivy cleanser will be available in the lab but students who are highly allergic should bring their own for showering in the dorms.

All medications needed for the 4 week period should be obtained prior to traveling to avoid any issues with out-of-state refill transfers. This includes extra contact lenses, vitamins and supplements.

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 CFS 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 CFS is forced to cancel a program.

Students **arriving by air** should book flights arriving at the Jackson-Medgar Wiley Evers International Airport (JAN) prior to 6:00 pm Central on July 9, 2023. Flight number and arrival time must be communicated to the project director in order for transportation to Millsaps College to be arranged. You may be asked to wait one or two hours for other students to arrive for a single pick-up. Be advised that there are few amenities at the airport.

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

Students **arriving by car** should proceed directly to Millsaps College campus. A map will be provided showing parking facilities and the location of the dormitory. Students who are planning to drive must inform the project director ahead of time so that a parking pass can be arranged.

All students will attend a welcome event at the Millsaps College dormitory on July 9 at 7:00 pm.

VISA REQUIREMENTS

Procedures for accepting international students are not in place for the 2023 field school.

MEALS & ACCOMMODATION

Student accommodations will be double-occupancy rooms in a dormitory at Millsaps College. Participants will be expected to bring their own bed linens, blankets, pillows, towels, and toiletries sufficient for a 4-week stay. Bathroom tissue is provided.

Breakfast and dinner will be served in the Millsaps cafeteria. The cost of these meals is included in the field school fees. Vegetarian and gluten-free options are normally available. Additional food items may be purchased from vending machines in the dormitory.

Lunch will be provided on site Monday through Saturday. A buffet will allow students to make their own sandwiches and will also include fruits, vegetables, and a limited variety of beverages. Students who need accommodation for dietary restrictions must inform the project director in advance of arrival in Jackson.

Sunday lunches are not included in student fees. Students may opt to travel independently to a grocery store or restaurant or may have food delivered to the dormitory. On excursion days (optional), the class will stop at a restaurant for the midday meal, but students will be responsible for their own expense. Be sure to have sufficient funds to cover this meal each week of the field school.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

International dialing code: 001 (if dialing from outside the US)

Money/Banks/Credit Cards: USD\$

ATM availability: And ATM is present in the Millsaps cafeteria building.

Local Language: English, with a Southern accent.

Measure units: degree Fahrenheit (°F), foot/yard/mile, pound (lb), quart/gallon.

Field units: Meter (m.), Gram (gr.)

Time zone: Local time is Central.

ACADEMIC CREDITS & TRANSCRIPT (CFS text – do not change)

Attending students will be awarded 8 semester credit units (equivalent to 12 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 160 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 transcript through our School of Record – Iowa Wesleyan University. IWU has authorized the National Student Clearinghouse to provide enrollment and degree verification (<https://secure.studentclearinghouse.org/tsorder/schoolwelcome?ficecode=00187100>). Upon completion of a program, students will get an email from IWU 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 IWU office of the registrar at registrar@iw.edu.

REQUIRED READINGS

PDF files of all mandatory readings will be provided to enrolled students via a shared Dropbox folder.

Bell, Edward L.

1990 The Historical Archaeology of Mortuary Behavior: Coffin Hardware from Uxbridge, Massachusetts. *Historical Archaeology* 24:54–78. **25 pgs.**

Gibson, Lida

2022 Timeline of the Mississippi State Asylum, 1855–1935. **50 pgs.**

LeeDecker, Charles H.

2009 Preparing for an Afterlife on Earth: The Transformation of Mortuary Behavior in Nineteenth-Century North America. In *International Handbook of Historical Archaeology*, edited by Teresita Majewski and David Gaimster, pp. 141-157. Springer, New York. **17 pgs.**

Lillie, Robin, and Jennifer Mack

2015 *Dubuque's Forgotten Cemetery: Excavating a Nineteenth-century Burial Ground in a Twenty-First-Century City*. University of Iowa Press, Iowa City, IA. Chapters 1, 5, and 9. **45 pgs.**

Mack, Mark E. and Michael L. Blakey

2004 The New York African Burial Ground Project: Past Biases, Current Dilemmas, and Future Research Opportunities. *Historical Archaeology* 38:10-17. **8 pgs.**

Mytum, Harold

2021 Ethics and Practice in the Excavation, Examination, Analysis, and Preservation of Historical Mummified Human Remains. *Historical Archaeology* 55:96–109. **14 pgs.**

Sprague, Roderick

2005 *Burial Terminology: A Guide for Researchers*. AltaMira Press, Lanham, MD. Chapter 3 (pp. 27–36) and Chapter 4:XIII and XIV (180–190), **21 pgs.**

Steadman, Dawnie Wolfe and Steven A. Anderson

2009 The Marty Miller Case: Introducing Forensic Anthropology. In *Hard Evidence: Case Studies in Forensic Anthropology*. edited by Dawnie Wolf Steadman. Pp. 8-28. Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River. **21 pgs.**

Steadman, Dawnie Wolfe and Lyle W. Konigsberg

2009 Multiple Points of Similarity. In *Hard Evidence: Case Studies in Forensic Anthropology*. Edited by Dawnie Wolf Steadman. Pp. 68-79. Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River. **12 pgs.**

Wiersema, Jason, Jennifer C. Love and L. Gill Naul

2009 The Influence of the Daubert Guidelines on Anthropological Methods of Scientific Identification in the Medical Examiner Setting. In *Hard Evidence: Case Studies in Forensic Anthropology*. edited by Dawnie Wolf Steadman. Pp. 80-90. Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River. **11 pgs.**

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Lillie, Robin, and Jennifer Mack

2015 *Dubuque's Forgotten Cemetery: Excavating a Nineteenth-century Burial Ground in a Twenty-First-Century City*. University of Iowa Press, Iowa City, IA.

Penney, Darby, and Peter Stastny

2008 *The Lives They Left Behind: Suitcases from a State Hospital Attic*. Bellevue Literary Press, New York.

White, Tim D., Michael T. Black, and Pieter A. Folkens

2012 *Human Osteology*, 3rd edition. Elsevier Academic Press, Burlington, MA.