



SÂNPETRU BIOARCHAEOLOGY FIELD SCHOOL: UNEARTHING THE MEDIEVAL PAST OF TRANSYLVANIA, ROMANIA

*Course ID: **TBD***

July 16 – August 12, 2023

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

FIELD SCHOOL DIRECTORS

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OVERVIEW

The field school takes place in the quaint village of Sânpetru, a few km from the city of Braşov, in southeast Transylvania, and is part of the broader Biserica Neagră Bioarchaeology Project. Our project started in 2014, when rescue excavations in the courtyard surrounding the Biserica Neagră, Braşov's main historical landmark, exposed a large cemetery from which human skeletal remains from over 1,500 burials were recovered. The foundation of this majestic Gothic-style cathedral is deeply connected with much of the history of the surrounding city.

Located in the heart of the Carpathians and founded in the 12th century by Central European colonists (generally referred to as Saxons) invited by the Hungarian king Géza II, Braşov (called Kronstadt/Corona in medieval times); Transylvania was, during the Middle Ages, a crossroads for travellers, merchants and diplomats from central Europe and the Middle East, where communities of German, Romanian, Hungarian and Jewish ancestry coexisted. Such multi-cultural reality, still poorly understood, was the result of centuries of population movement in many Transylvanian urban centres. From pre-Roman times to the Middle Ages, the fertile lands of Transylvania were traversed and pillaged by nomadic tribes, colonised by European settlers and disputed and fought over by more powerful entities. In fact, the Transylvanian Saxon cities, Braşov, Sibiu, Sighişoara to name a few, are emblematic of the persistence of this historical heritage.

The field school combines training in both bioarchaeological analysis and archaeological fieldwork and aims to achieve two crucial research objectives:

1) The post-excavation processing and organization of human skeletal remains from the Biserica Neagră skeletal assemblage and associated archaeological contexts. The cemetery is an extremely interesting site not only for its complex stratigraphy and abundance of finds, but also because it was continuously used by the wealthy and upper echelons of Braşov society for over five centuries, between the 12th and the 18th century AD. This is rare for Transylvanian cemeteries, the use of which was discontinued after the Reformation. Furthermore, the elevated number of individual burials and family graves and the good state of preservation of the skeletal material will allow statistically significant demographic and pathological analyses and comparisons with other populations.

2) To uncover new evidence on Transylvanian society in the Middle Ages through new archaeological excavations. The 2023 season will focus on areas of the fortified Saxon church in Sânpetru. The village of Sânpetru is known for its 13th century fortified church and 14th century painted chapel, and for the discovery of several fossilized dinosaur bones in the vicinity. The excavations in Sânpetru will take place in the environs of the fortified walls with the aim to:

- Investigate the origins and development of the settlement, which was donated to the Order of the Cistercians in 1240 AD;
- Clarify the relationship between the 13th century fortified structures and the religious buildings associated with them.

In addition, restoration works of the church and associated fortified enclosure are ongoing, and students will be able to witness the process of conservation and participate in cultural heritage activities. This is a unique opportunity to experience the importance of interdisciplinary projects and discover how the combined efforts of researchers from diverse fields of study can answer compelling research questions and bring back to life sites rich in culture and heritage.

Traditional photographic recording and 3D modelling of the excavated areas and fortified structure will also be carried out.

ACADEMIC CREDIT UNITS & TRANSCRIPTS

Credit Units: Attending students will be awarded 8 semester credit units (equivalent to 12 quarter credit units) through our academic partner, Connecticut College. Connecticut College is a highly ranked liberal arts institution with a deep commitment to undergraduate education. Students will receive a letter grade for attending this field school (see assessment, below). This field school provides a minimum of 360 hours of experiential education. Students are encouraged to discuss the transferability of credit units with faculty and registrars at their home institution prior to attending this field school.

Transcripts: An official copy of transcripts will be mailed to the permanent address listed by students on their online application. One more transcript may be sent to the student's home institution at no cost. Additional transcripts may be ordered at any time through the National Student Clearinghouse: <http://bit.ly/2hvurkl>.

DISCLAIMER – PLEASE READ CAREFULLY

Our primary concern is with education. Traveling and conducting field research involve risk. Students interested in participating in IFR programs must weigh whether the potential risk is worth the value of education provided. While risk is inherent in everything we do, we do not take risk lightly. The IFR engages in intensive review of each field school location and programming prior to approval. Once a program is accepted, the IFR reviews each program annually to make sure it still complies with all our standards and policies, including those pertaining to student safety.

The IFR does not provide trip or travel cancellation insurance. We encourage students to explore such insurance on their own as it may be purchased at affordable prices. insuremytrip.com or [Travelguard.com](http://travelguard.com) are possible sites where field school participants may explore travel cancellation insurance quotes and policies. If you do purchase such insurance, make sure the policy covers the cost of both airfare and tuition.

We do our best to follow a schedule of activities, methods training, and programming as outlined in this syllabus. However, this schedule can be easily disrupted by any number of unforeseen circumstances, including revised decisions by local permitting agencies, political unrest, and changes in the weather. While this schedule represents the best of the director(s) intentions, we—students and staff alike—need to be adaptable and tolerant of necessary alterations. This adaptability is an intrinsic part of all field research.

Summer in Romania is generally mild to hot, with average temperatures between 25°C/77° F and 35°C/95° F. Students should plan accordingly by bringing clothes and sun protection suitable for hot and sunny weather, but should also consider the possibility of wet, colder days and thus bring waterproof, layered clothing as well. Sturdy footwear is recommended, preferably hiking or work boots. Although the working conditions in the field are by no means difficult, students must be aware that excavation entails considerable strenuous physical activity.

If you have any medical concerns, please consult with your doctor. For all other concerns, please consult with the program director and staff.

PREREQUISITES

No prerequisites are required, other than the willingness to learn and get involved. The field school is aimed at students and graduates interested in developing their knowledge of and achieving hands-on experience on human skeletal remains and archaeological excavation methods and techniques. This intensive field school will alternate theory and practice and focus on topics relevant to the bioarchaeology of human skeletal assemblages. Basic identification and anatomy of animal bone will also be provided.

Students should be aware that archaeological field work is physically demanding and must be prepared to work outdoors in variable weather conditions and occasionally walk/hike, especially during field trips. All work is manual and requires patience, attention to detail and diligence.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Core objectives of the course are of theoretical and practical nature and aim to introduce students to the principles of archaeology and bioarchaeology and their methods and techniques both in the field and in the laboratory. Learning objectives will be distributed across several activities including lectures, workshops, archaeological fieldwork, post-excavation processing, lab analysis, independent readings of suggested bibliography, note taking, trips to heritage sites and seminars (art and crafts workshops, historical re-enactments, etc.) with the local community.

The practical aspect of the field school schedule will be two-fold, with the aim to offer 1. excavation and 2. hands-on bioarchaeological experience.

During practical sessions, students will be assigned a burial context each to clean and prepare for storage. They will be able to learn post-excavation procedures of skeletal remains through individual training and face-to-face interaction with their instructors; students will also be assigned group activities and will be encouraged to ask questions and openly discuss any doubts in a friendly and judgment-free environment.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Throughout and at the end of the course, students are expected to achieve independent thinking and a basic level of competence and practical skills in:

- Excavation techniques;
- On site and lab recording methods;
- Finds post-excavation processing;
- Awareness of the unique nature of archaeological finds and biological specimens;
- Methods (and laws) for the ethical treatment of human remains from excavation from the archaeological or forensic context to storage;
- A basic knowledge of skeletal anatomy, analytical methods and paleopathology;
- Lab photography and data collection;

Learning outcomes will be monitored by the supervisory team in the form of day-to-day tasks, written assignments, group activities and field journals.

ASSESSMENT

Assessment of students' progress and achievements at the end of the course will be based on the individual and combined scoring of the following activities:

Participation (50%): Students are required to participate and show active interest in everyday activities. These include lectures, workshops, helping open and close the site daily, fieldwork, group discussions, post excavation finds processing, keeping the excavation area and work premises tidy and clean. This component will be assessed over the duration of the course and will reflect engagement both in the excavation and post-excavation components. It should be stressed that students are also expected to show enthusiasm for both independent and team-work, and a general positive attitude in order to contribute to a friendly learning experience and atmosphere. Negative behaviour will be addressed and graded accordingly.

Field journal (20%): Students will be asked daily, to fill a field notebook which will be submitted to the supervisors at the end of the last week. Guidelines and suggestions on what should be the content of the

journal will be provided on the first day on site by project directors and instructors. Students will be allowed to use their creativity and personal flair to compile the journal as long as the content is scientifically grounded and reflects the content of the field school program and their learning outcomes.

Group practical exam (20%): At the beginning of the final week students will be divided in groups and will be asked to assess a burial context and associated archaeological finds/skeletal material over the course of the morning. This will be collectively discussed in the afternoon session.

Individual skeletal report (10%): Skeletal remains from the burial contexts observed at the practical exam will be laid out in anatomical position and students will have self-study time at disposal to produce an osteological report, which will be submitted with the field journal on the last day. Guidance and bibliographic support will be provided.

TRAVEL, ROOM & BOARD, & SAFETY LOGISTICS

COVID-19 Disclaimer:

The logistics outlined below for this IFR field school were written according to the most current and accurate information available to IFR. We recognize that the best practices for preventing the transmission of the coronavirus may change in the coming months. The IFR will be revisiting program-specific plans periodically throughout the enrollment period and will update program details according to new developments, new travel protocols, and updates to local policies. Updates to program-specific protocols will be communicated to participants at the pre-program orientation.

An IFR field school is designed to provide safe, positive, and constructive experiences for participating communities, students, and researchers. We are committed to protocols and practices that support the health and well-being of all involved in our field school projects, including the members of the community in which these projects take place. The IFR COVID-19 Policies have been developed with Dr. Kurt Eifling, the IFR Medical Director. Dr Eifling is a Fellow of the Academy of Wilderness Medicine and a practicing physician (<https://ifrglobal.org/about/staff/>).

We strongly recommend reviewing IFR's COVID-19 policies before enrolling in a program. All IFR students sign an agreement (Student COVID-19 Prevention Agreement) to uphold and abide by all aspects of the IFR COVID-19 policy as published on the website (<https://ifrglobal.org/ifr-covid-19-practices/>) as well as any program-specific protocols. These practices are subject to change as health and risk management experts provide new recommendations and best practices.

PRIOR TO TRAVEL

IFR requires all students participating in IFR programs to be "up to date" with their COVID-19 vaccines, meaning they have completed a COVID-19 vaccine primary series AND received the most recent booster dose recommended by CDC, if eligible. For recommendations and eligibility for booster shots according to age and health status, please consult the [CDC website](#).

VISA REQUIREMENTS

Students must hold a passport valid for at least six months on entry to Romania. Citizens of the US and Canada can stay in Romania without a visa for up to 90 days in a period of 6 months.

Citizens of other countries are asked to check the embassy website page at their home country for specific visa requirements.

TRAVEL (TO AND DURING THE PROGRAM)

Due to ongoing uncertainties regarding the travel regulations related to COVID-19, IFR will assess the local conditions closer to the travel date (5–6 weeks prior to the program beginning) and will make Go/No Go decisions then. You are required to participate in the mandatory orientation meeting when we will discuss the latest travel information and regulations. We also suggest you consider postponing the purchase of your airline ticket until *after* the program orientation.

Students are encouraged to fly into Bucharest Otopeni International airport. From there, they will have to reach the central station (Gara de Nord) where they will be able to catch a train to Braşov. Our meeting point is the train station in Braşov, where students will be picked up by bus to the host accommodation in the village of Feldioara. More detailed itineraries and options will be provided on orientation day and the directors will be available for help and clarification with each student on the days of travelling.

At the time of writing, it is not known what the state of the COVID-19 pandemic will be by July 2023. Romania has a well-organized program of vaccination, booster shots and testing and the local government constantly updates requirements for travelling and quarantining. The field school directors currently require mask wearing on vehicles, in closed indoor spaces and regular hand washing. Health and safety measures will be adapted accordingly if cases might arise. Students are welcome to wear masks at all times for personal and/or health reasons. If a multi-day quarantine is required, the field school will try to accommodate students in compliance with the Romanian government's guidelines and restrictions, although the field school might not be able to afford incurring extra expenses if several people will need individual quarantine. We recommend that the students regularly consult websites of the relevant institutions:

<https://www.gov.ro/en/>;

<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/covid-3/coronavirus-romania>

<https://gov.ro/ro/info-coronavirus-covid-19>

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

LOCAL PROTOCOLS, REGULATIONS, & EXPECTATIONS

Feldioara (where the guesthouse is located) and Sânpetru (20 km and 8 km respectively from Braşov) are two typical small, quiet and safe Transylvanian villages. Many locals will be able to speak English and will be aware of the presence of a group of students in the area, prompting the community to be of guidance when needed. Pharmacies and small supermarkets are in close vicinity of both the accommodation and excavation site. Braşov is the closest big city and only a short bus/train ride away.

Students will receive help and advice from field school directors and staff to discover the local customs, traditions, food and social life. In bigger cities like Braşov and Bucharest most people, especially the youth, speak English and several other languages and they are generally welcoming and helpful. More indications and advice on local customs and what students should expect will be provided closer to their arrival in the country.

Interaction with the local community must be limited to situations where everyone is masked when indoors and/or can ideally be outside.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Students will stay in a newly built guesthouse/hotel in Feldioara (Pensiunea Marienburg Feldioara). Rooms are airy and spacious and all have en-suite bathrooms. They will be generally occupied by two, maximum three students depending on the number of applicants. The hotel is equipped with all essential amenities (Wi-Fi, kitchen, laundry facilities, communal areas) and offers ample outdoor spaces (garden, tables, a hot tub, sauna) where the students will be able to relax, read, study, eat and socialize on hot summer evenings.

A professional cook will serve breakfast and dinner in the common dining room, while lunches will consist of sandwiches and field food prepared by students themselves from foods provided at the hotel each morning. Accommodations will be made for special dietary requirements and restrictions although specific dietary restrictions such as kosher or halal meals may not be feasible. The directors will try, however, to accommodate all needs as much as possible.

All participants in a field school, students and staff, will wear masks while indoors (i.e. during lectures, during labs, in shared residential spaces, etc.). Regular hand washing will be a part of the project's daily schedule. Arrangements will be made for students and staff to be able to isolate within their accommodation, in line with the Romanian government health advice.

MANAGING COVID-19 CASES & OUTBREAKS

In the event of an outbreak amongst field school members, affected members will be quarantined in a separate room in the hotel. Members with mild symptoms will be quarantined until they exhibit no symptoms and test negative. If members exhibit symptoms near the end of the field school, we will coordinate a plan to keep them quarantined in the hotel under supervision until it is safe for them to travel. Laundry for sick members will be carefully collected and washed separately from the rest of the field school. Should field school members or members of the community come down with COVID-19, we will coordinate the best appropriate response plan with community leaders.

In case field school members require medical attention, the closest emergency hospital is in Braşov. Field school directors will arrange transport either through a field school vehicle, taxi, or ambulance depending on the need and severity of the case.

EQUIPMENT LIST

Students are **required** to bring:

- A four-inch pointed archaeology trowel, for example a Marshalltown type trowel or WHS trowel
- A leaf trowel for detailed work
- Sturdy, waterproof hiking boots
- Hat/bandanas
- Sunscreen
- Backpack
- Flashlight
- Any prescription medication you need for the duration of the field school
- Water bottle
- A rain jacket and a warm jacket
- Layers and clothes suitable for outdoor work and all types of weather
- Long work trousers
- Personal protective equipment including gloves and face masks

Students are also **recommended** to bring:

- Laptop/tablet
- Paintbrushes in a range of sizes for excavation and cleaning purposes
- A set of digital callipers
- Own stationary

COURSE SCHEDULE

All IFR field schools begin with safety orientation. This orientation addresses local and program protocols concerning student behaviour, appropriate attire, local practices and sensibilities that may be unfamiliar, potential fauna and flora hazards, IFR harassment and discrimination policies, and the student Code of Conduct.

The field school consists of four types of learning activity spread across the program:

1. **Theory (Lectures/workshops/seminars):** introduction to Transylvanian Archaeology, Romanian history, Bioarchaeology, Archaeological methods and practice, information about the research project. Bioarchaeology workshops will consist of both theory and practice;
2. **Practice:** fieldwork (excavation, post-excavation), bioarchaeological analysis and all associated activities;
3. **Weekly field trips** to historical, archaeological, cultural and environmental landmarks, museums, cultural events;
4. **Independent/group study time:** students will be allocated time to discuss daily achievements and will be asked to produce a presentation summarising excavation/bioarchaeological analysis highlights at the end of each week.

WEEK	DAY	ACTIVITY*	
		Morning	Afternoon
Arrival			Welcome meeting
I	1	Project orientation and induction	Lecture/visit: Sânpetru fortified church and village historical and archaeological landmarks
	2	Lecture: Introduction to the History and Archaeology of Transylvania	Lecture: The Biserica Neagră Bioarchaeology Project - Introduction to the skeletal assemblage
	3	Field trip 1: Brasov and Bran Castle	
	4	Fieldwork: Introduction to methods and practices for excavation and recording, use of tools and working techniques. How to set up a grid.	Bioarchaeology Workshop I
	5	Fieldwork: Excavation	Bioarchaeology lab
	6	Seminar: Medieval Feldioara	Visit to Feldioara citadel and museum
	7	Day off	
II	8	Lecture: Burial archaeology	Bioarchaeology Workshop II
	9	Fieldwork: Excavation	Bioarchaeology lab
	10	Fieldwork: Excavation	Bioarchaeology lab
	11	Field trip 2: Sighisoara and environs	
	12	Fieldwork: Excavation	Workshop: Conservation of archaeological materials
	13	Visit to Hărman village and fortified church	
	14	Day off	
III	15	Fieldwork: Excavation	Bioarchaeology Workshop III
	17	Fieldwork: Excavation	Bioarchaeology lab
	18	Field trip 3: Sibiu	
	19	Fieldwork: Excavation	Bioarchaeology Workshop IV
	20	Fieldwork: Excavation	Fieldwork: Post-excavation
	21	Culture, crafts and music festival	
	22	Day off	
IV	23	Fieldwork: Excavation	Bioarchaeology lab
	24	Bioarchaeology practical exam	Group discussion and analysis

	25	Fieldwork: Excavation	Osteological report
	26	Field trip 4: Sinaia and Peleş Castle	
	27	Fieldwork: closing the excavation	End of program cultural event in Feldioara Cinema theatre
	28	Turn in osteological reports and field journals	Preparation for departure
	29	Departure	

*Please note, this is an indicative schedule and may be subject to changes on directors' discretion. In addition, depending on the number of students, they might be divided into groups for easier access to facilities and better face-to-face tuition and instruction.

Working day hours

6:45 – 7:45 am	Breakfast
7:45 – 8:00 am	Transportation to site
8:00 am – 4:00 pm	Lectures, workshops, fieldwork and lab activities; one 15 minute break in the morning and a 30 minute lunch break
4:00 – 4:15 pm	Transportation to the hotel
4:15 – 4:30 pm	Tea break
4:30 – 5:30 pm (when applies)	Group assignments, self-study
5:30 pm	Dinner

Excavation practice, lectures and post-ex/bioarchaeology lab work will rotate/alternate between morning and afternoon according to progress of the schedule, weather conditions and at discretion of site supervisors and project directors.

Summer in Transylvania is a very busy time, with many cultural festivals in villages and cities. Unfortunately dates and programs for 2023 festivals are not yet available at the time of writing, but we anticipate that, once made official, those activities will be added to the program.

REQUIRED READINGS

PDF files of all mandatory readings will be provided to enrolled students via a shared Dropbox folder. Students are encouraged to download and/or print readings prior to traveling. Course participants are expected to be prepared to engage the discussions led by facilitators, all of whom will be looking for compelling evidence that students have read and thought about the assigned readings prior to the scheduled day on which they are first discussed.

- Brickley, M. & McKinley, J. 2004. Guidelines to the Standards for Recording Human Remains. BABAO & IFA. Available electronically on:
<http://www.archaeologists.net/modules/icontent/inPages/docs/pubs/humanremains.pdf>
- English heritage 2004. Human bones from archaeological sites. Guidelines for producing assessment documents and analytical reports.
- Marcu Istrate, D. (ed.) 2015. Redescoperirea trecutului medieval al Braşovului - Unearthing the medieval past of Braşov. Braşov: Editura Mega.
- Marcu Istrate, D. and Diana, A. 2017. The Black Church Cemetery: Interdisciplinary approaches to the study of a medieval urban skeletal assemblage (Braşov, Romania), *Studies in Digital Heritage*.
- Museum of London 1994. Archaeological Site Manual 1994. Museum of London Archaeology Service, Third edition.
- Wright, L., and Yoder, E. 2003. Recent Progress in Bioarchaeology: Approaches to the Osteological Paradox. *Journal of Archaeological Research* 11(1):43-70.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

- Bass, W.M. 2005. *Human Osteology: A Laboratory and Field Manual*. Fifth Edition. Special Publication No.2 of the Missouri Archaeological Society. Columbia, Missouri.
- Bello, S.M., Thomann, A., Signoli, M., Dutour, O., and Andrews, P. 2006. Age and Sex Bias in the Reconstruction of past Population Structures. *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 129 (1):24-38.
- Buikstra, J.E. and Ubelaker, D.H. 1994. *Standards for Data Collection from Human Skeletal Remains: Proceedings of a Seminar at the Museum of Natural History, Organized by Jonathon Haas*. Arkansas Archaeological Survey Research Series No. 44. Fayetteville, Arkansas.
- Buikstra, J.E. and Beck, L.A. (eds.) 2006. *Bioarchaeology: The Contextual Analysis of Human Remains*, New York: Academic Press.
- Duday, H. 2009. *The Archaeology of the Dead. Lectures in Archaeoethanatology*. Oxford and Oakville: Oxbow Books.
- Hillson, S. 2005. *Teeth*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hitchins, K. 2014. *A Concise History of Romania (Cambridge Concise Histories)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9781139033954
- Mazower, M. 2001. *The Balkans: From the end of Byzantium to the present day*. London: Phoenix.
- Ortner, D.J. 2003. *Identification of pathological conditions in human skeletal remains*. 2nd ed. San Diego: Academic Press.
- Schaefer, M., Black, S., Scheuer, L. 2009. *Juvenile Osteology: a Laboratory and Field Manual*. Elsevier Academic Press.
- White, T.D. & Folkens, P.A. 2005. *The Human Bone Manual*. Academic Press.