

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD SCHOOL: BELIZE
ANTHROPOLOGY 662
Summer 2011: Belize, Central America

Instructor*: Fred Valdez 471-0060 office
SAC 2.162 471-5946 lab.
Hrs.: Monday-Sunday* fredv@mail.utexas.edu

Teaching Assts*: Debora Trein
Deanna Riddick
TA contact information (office hours, email, etc.), will be provided at the lab meetings.

* Please note that Prof. Valdez and the TAs are available beyond the listed office hours, just ask and make an appointment.

TEXTS: Required – All required readings provided in the field. Pre-season recommendation is Maya by M. Coe.

COURSE CONTENT: This course is a hands-on class in the field. Techniques utilized in archaeology, basic analysis, and terminology for forms, etc. are reviewed and practiced. Field days are six (6) days per week with the seventh day used to visit other archaeological sites. Please see attached for applicable comments.

COURSE GRADING: Evaluation in this course will be through participation in a cooperative and collaborative manner. Tests are not given, but proper attitude, the correct recording of forms, etc. are among the significant basis of grading.

The University of Texas Archaeology Field School – Belize Program

1. The UT-Belize Program is an archaeological field school that provides basic hands-on training in field techniques, laboratory processing, and some aspects concerning artifact analysis & conservation.
2. For student participants desiring academic credit, the program provides up to 9 semester hours of credit (through UT). Non-UT participants may opt to obtain credit at their home institutions.
3. The potential academic credit (not required for program participation), includes a 6 hour credit for the field school component and an additional 3 hours may be earned as a conference/readings course (also known as an Independent Study). The Independent Study usually involves extra work in the field or lab assisting with specific research, but has included readings on specialized topics.

The UT-Belize field session run 4 weeks long with 6 day “work” weeks and 1 day for other archaeology related activities. Each field day extends from about 7:00am (heading to site) until 4:00pm (head back to camp). The archaeological site serves as the classroom or instruction location. At each site students/participants learn field techniques including: setting-up an excavation unit, arbitrary and natural level excavations, sample collecting, profile mapping, plan mapping, soil sifting and artifact identification, and how each of these aspects are recording (onto paper forms & proper observations). Participants also learn the basics of tool/equipment use.

The Belize Program rotates participants to different sites (or types of excavation) each week. This provides members the opportunity to observe & participates in different setting requiring different tasks and recording. Participants also spend some time (at least four full days) in the laboratory. Lab processing include accession of field collected artifacts, the processing (washing, drying, re-bagging, labeling, etc.) of these materials, and at times assisting with artifact (lithics, ceramics, osteology, etc.) analysis under expert guidance. The program also has a conservator working with artifacts and at time special field finds that require specialized attention. Many students have the opportunity to learn preliminary conservation techniques & procedures.

During the field season, lectures (usually 2-4 per week) are provided by the program director as well as other excavation directors. Lectures include Maya Culture History, Issues concerning the Terminal Classic Maya, Ceramic Analysis, Lithic Studies, Maya Bones (osteology of the prehistoric Maya), and Recent/Current Excavations, among other topics as determined each field season.