

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE NURAGIC CULTURE ON THE ISLAND OF SARDINIA: LANDSCAPE ARCHAEOLOGY AT PROGETTO PRAN'E SIDDI, ITALY

Course ID: HIST 489

June 1-29, 2025

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

School of Record: Culver-Stockton College

DIRECTORS

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The Italian government requires a tetanus vaccination for all individuals working on archaeological projects. Contact CFS Enrollment Department if you have any questions or concerns.



Program Description

Pran'e Siddi, or the Siddi Plateau, is a high basaltic plateau located in the south-central part of the island of Sardinia (Italy), near the modern town of Siddi. The area around Siddi was inhabited by prehistoric villagers beginning in the Neolithic period (ca. 4000-3200 BCE). During the Middle Bronze Age (ca. 1700-1450 BCE), these previously egalitarian people began to develop a hierarchical social system with an elite who expressed their power and prestige through the building of monumental stone towers called *nuraghi*. The elites of the Nuragic community on the Siddi Plateau built sixteen nuraghi, which they lived in and added onto for

three centuries. By 1450 BCE, however, the elite sites on the Siddi Plateau seem to have been abandoned, and the population moved away.

Progetto Pran'e Siddi was formed to conduct a thorough investigation of Nuragic climate, environment, land use, and economic practices in the Siddi region. We are interested in finding out what kinds of pressures – social, environmental, and/or economic – made the Nuragic people abandon their towers on the plateau. We are answering these questions through a combination of archaeological excavation and survey. Excavation takes place at the site of Sa Conca 'e sa Cresia, one of the largest nuraghi on the plateau. Survey focuses both on-site and off-site, addressing the other Nuragic structures on the plateau as well as the landscapes surrounding them. By participating in Progetto Pran'e Siddi, students will contribute to ongoing research while gaining professional skills in excavation methods, pedestrian survey, and artifact processing.

IMPORTANT DISCLAIMER

The Center for Field Sciences was established to support field training in a range of sciences at sites within the U.S. & 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 by the program of their choosing.

Risk is inherent in everything we do and the CFS takes risks 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's site and so we can provide an experience that is as safe 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 covers such contingencies, explore Cancel for Any Reason (CFAR) plans. [Insuremytrip.com](https://www.insuremytrip.com), [Squaremouth.com](https://www.squaremouth.com) or [Travelguard.com](https://www.travelguard.com) are possible websites where students may explore different insurance policies.

Students should be aware that conditions in the field are different than those experienced at home, dorms or college towns. Students will be exposed to the elements, live in rustic accommodation, and expect to engage in daily physical activity.

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

All students must consult medical professionals to ensure they are fit to participate in a CFS field program. CFS is not qualified to provide medical advice. For all other concerns, please consult with CFS staff members or program director(s) – as appropriate.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This field school has three main objectives: (1) to introduce students to the theory and practice of archaeological excavation, (2) to provide students with an understanding of the complex relationships between human behavior and environmental change, and (3) to acquaint students with the fascinating but little-known prehistoric culture of the Nuragic people on the island of Sardinia (Italy).

To achieve these objectives, the field school will (a) engage students in developing a practical working knowledge of **archaeological field and laboratory methods** through hands-on participation in all aspects of excavation and artifact processing; (b) introduce students to the **intellectual challenges presented by archaeological research**, including research design, the recovery and interpretation of data, and the continual readjustment of hypotheses and field strategies through lectures, critical reading, discussion, thought experiments, and participation in excavation; and (c) familiarize students with the **Nuragic culture of Bronze Age Sardinia** through readings, lectures, site visits, and direct engagement with archaeological materials.

The course will take place in south-central Sardinia, Italy, near the town of Siddi. Students will divide their time between excavations at the site of Sa Conca ‘e sa Cresia, an early Nuragic corridor nuraghe, and laboratory processing of artifacts.

Students will participate in the following research activities:

Excavation: Students will participate in guided excavations at Sa Conca ‘e sa Cresia.

Record Keeping: Students will fill out specific excavation and survey forms, keep a field notebook, map sites and finds using GPS, and contribute to an artifact database.

Cataloging: Students will participate in field sorting and cataloging of finds.

Laboratory: Scheduled lab tasks will include washing, sorting, measuring, recording, photographing, and cataloging finds.

LEARNED 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 example set by Twin Cairns with their Skills Log Matrix™ (<https://twincairns.com/skills-log-matrix/>). Students will be trained in the following skills:

Skill	Skill Definition
Artifact Classification	Ability to identify, collect, seriate and record a wide range of artifact types
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 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 Washing	Ability to wash different artifact types while maintaining their material characteristics for research purposes
Geoarchaeology	Ability to collect, sample and analyze soil and sediment samples through dry sieving, wet sieving and flotation
Large Hand Tools	Can operate a pickax, hoe or similar large hand tool to conduct excavations
Photography	Ability to take clear images of various feature, artifact & soil colors at various light and field depth conditions
Recording Sheets	Ability to understand and properly record excavation process, stratigraphy, sections and artifact documentation
Recording-Excavations	Ability to understand, collect and record all excavation process and data
Screening	Ability to use geological and general screens to identify, collect and record small scale finds
Small Hand Tools	Can operate a trowel or similar small hand tool to conduct excavations
Soil Identification	Ability to identify, describe and record different types of soil and depositions
Understanding Stratigraphy	Ability to understand the relationships between layers of both cultural and natural depositions

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1		Readings
Sunday 5:00pm	Students are picked up at CAG airport and taken to project housing	
Sunday 8:00-10:00pm	Welcome dinner	
Monday 6:30-8:30am	Breakfast at the Piazza Bar	
Monday 8:30am-1:00pm	Orientation field trip part I: Su Nuraxi, Casa Zapata, Centro Lilliu	Required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holt 2014 Dyson and Rowland, Chpts 1 and 2
Monday 1:30-2:30pm	Lunch at a restaurant in Siddi	
Monday 2:30-3:30pm	Free time (prepare for afternoon field trip)	
Monday 3:30-7:30pm	Orientation field trip part II: Santa Cristina	Required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Depalmas and Melis 2010 Ialongo 2018 Perra 2021 Recommended: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Webster 1991 Blake 1999 Russell 2010 Holt 2015
Monday 8:00-10:00pm	Dinner at a restaurant in Siddi	
Tuesday 6:30-7:00am	Breakfast	
Tuesday 7:00-7:45am	Handbook quiz	Handbook
Tuesday 8:00am-1:00pm	Lectures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction to Sardinia Sardinia in the Bronze Age Introduction to the settlement system of the Siddi Plateau Previous excavations at Sa Conca 'e sa Cresia 	Required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holt and Perra 2021 Holt, Aguilar, and Schirru 2022 Recommended: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schirru 2017
Tuesday 1:30-2:30pm	Lunch	
Tuesday 2:30-6:00pm	Lectures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excavation methods Introduction to stratigraphy Excavation records Fieldwork safety 	Required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hester, Shafer, and Feder 2016: Chpt 3 Connolly 2005
Tuesday 6:00-8:00pm	Site visits: Sa Fogaia, Sa Domu 'e s'Orku, Sa Conca 'e sa Cresia	
Tuesday 8:00-10:00pm	Dinner	
Wednesday 6:30-7:00am	Breakfast	
Wednesday 7:00am-1:00pm	Practicals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sediment identification and description Drawing a Harris matrix Using site forms to record excavation contexts 	
Wednesday 1:30-2:30pm	Lunch	
Wednesday 2:30-6:30pm	Practicals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keeping an excavation notebook 	Required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fisher 2009a Fisher 2009b

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site photography • Artifact photography
Wednesday 6:30-8:00pm	Free time
Wednesday 8:00-10:00pm	Dinner
Thursday-Friday 6:30-7:00am	Breakfast
Thursday-Friday 7:00am-1:00pm	Excavation or lab work (in teams)
Thursday-Friday 1:30-2:30pm	Lunch
Thursday-Friday 2:30-6:00pm	Lab work (everyone)
Thursday-Friday 6:00-8:00pm	Free time
Thursday-Friday 8:00-10:00pm	Dinner
Saturday 6:30-8:30am	Breakfast
Saturday 9:00am-1:00pm	Orientation field trip part III: Archaeological Museum in Cagliari
Saturday 1:30-2:30pm	Lunch (packed lunches provided)
Saturday 2:30-6:00pm	Orientation field trip part IV: Obsidian Museum
Saturday 8:00-10:00pm	Dinner in Siddi
Sunday 9:00am-1:00pm	Free day – meals at usual times
Weeks 2-3 (Mon-Sun)	
Monday-Friday 6:30-7:00am	Breakfast
Monday-Friday 7:00am-1:00pm	Excavation or lab work (in teams)
Monday-Friday 1:30-2:30pm	Lunch
Monday-Friday 2:30-6:00pm	Lab work (everyone)
Monday-Friday 6:00-8:00pm	Free time
Monday-Friday 8:00-10:00pm	Dinner
Saturday	Free day – meals at usual times
Sunday	Free day – meals at usual times
Week 4	
Monday-Wednesday 6:30-7:00am	Breakfast
Monday-Wednesday 7:00am-1:00pm	Excavation or lab work (in teams)
Monday-Wednesday 1:30-2:30pm	Lunch
Monday-Wednesday 2:30-6:00pm	Lab work (everyone)
Monday-Wednesday 6:00-8:00pm	Free time
Monday-Wednesday 8:00-10:00pm	Dinner
Thursday-Friday 7:00am-6:00pm	Lab work and final cataloguing – meals at usual times
Saturday 8:00am-7:00pm	Mandatory team cleaning day (skipping this day is an automatic fail for the course)
Saturday 8:00-10:00pm	Farewell dinner
Sunday	Students depart project housing before lunch

Course structure may be subject to change at directors' discretion.

TYPICAL WORKDAY

6:00-6:30am	Wake up
6:30-7:00am	Breakfast at the Piazza Bar
7:00am	Departure to the field site for field teams
7:15-10:00am	Fieldwork or lab work (in teams)
10:00-10:15am	Morning break (exact time(s) will vary based on field conditions)
10:15am-1:00pm	Fieldwork or lab work (in teams)
1:30-2:30pm	Lunch at a local restaurant
2:30-6:00pm	Lab work (everyone)
6:00-8:00pm	Clean up and rest
8:00-10:00pm	Dinner at a local restaurant

In case of rainy days, lab work and/or lectures will be performed.

ACADEMIC GRADING MATRIX

Students will be graded based on their work as follows.

- 50%:** Attend and participate each scheduled day, including lectures, practicals, field, and laboratory work
- 40%:** Record keeping: includes excavation and laboratory records and field notebooks that will be submitted and evaluated at the end of the course
- 10%** A quiz on the information in the handbook taken Tuesday morning of Week 1

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 minimum attendance for the successful completion of the field school is 85% of the course hours. Any significant delay or early departure from an activity will be calculated as an absence from the activity. An acceptable number of absences for medical or other personal reasons will not be taken into account if the student catches up on the field school study plan through additional readings, homework or tutorials with program staff members. Wherever possible, students are asked to inform program staff members of foreseeable absences before they occur.

PREREQUISITES

None. 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, tired, and bitten by bugs. Students are required to come equipped with sufficient excitement and adequate understanding that field work requires real, hard work in the sun and wind. The work requires patience, discipline, and attention to detail.

PROGRAM ETIQUETTE

Siddi is a very small, rural town with about 600 residents. Cultural sensibilities in Siddi vary among the different generations, but in general they are more conservative than students may be used to. The local population is mostly Roman Catholic, and students who choose to enter church buildings should show respect by speaking in quiet voices and wearing proper attire (chest, shoulders, and knees covered). Sardinian food culture is quite different from American food culture: meat and fish are generally served on the bone, which some students have found surprising. Finally, Sardinian meals tend to be longer and more social than American meals. There can be multiple courses, and it is considered rude to leave the table before all the courses are served. The use of phones at meals is also considered rude, other than for very brief message checking. Students are encouraged to use mealtimes to unplug and get to know their local hosts, classmates, and program staff.

Students are reminded that the purpose of an archaeological field school is to study archaeology. While students are always encouraged to exchange ideas, political polarization in the U.S. and Europe may create an environment that distracts from our core learning goals.

Discussion of political topics, therefore, will not be allowed during mandatory group activities (lectures, fieldwork, lab work, mandatory field trips) or during official group meals.

EQUIPMENT LIST

Students must bring the following items to the field. These tools will help in your research and accommodations.

- Steel-toed work boots for excavation (These are required on excavation by Italian law; regular hiking boots or other closed-toe shoes can be worn in the lab.)
- Hat: wide-brimmed hats are usually best for outdoor working conditions
- Sunscreen
- Daypack/backpack
- Any medication you need and prescription medication to last for the duration of the field school
- Water bottle, at least 1 liter
- Marshalltown Pointing Trowel - 5" x 2"
- Pocket knife or multitool (Leathermans and Swiss army knives work well)
- Sunglasses with UV protection
- Insect repellent
- A laptop computer with wireless capabilities that can run Microsoft Office or OpenOffice
- A usb flash drive
- Two archival pens, black ink, size 03. We prefer Pigma Micron: (<https://www.sakuraofamerica.com/product/pigma-micron/>)

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 will be met by Dr. Holt and staff members at the Cagliari airport (CAG) on Sunday, June 1, at 5:00 pm local time. Students must be sure to be at the airport by 5:00 pm. For students who choose to travel in Sardinia before the project begins, the airport is easily reachable by bus or train from the main Cagliari bus/train station; buses leave for the airport roughly every hour and trains leave a little more frequently. At the end of the project, students will be driven to the Cagliari airport. Students should expect to leave the project housing on the morning of Sunday, June 29.

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

VISA REQUIREMENTS

Italy is a party to the Schengen Agreement. As such, US citizens may enter Italy for up to 90 days for tourist purposes without a visa. Stiff fines may be imposed for overstaying the 90-day period. Your passport should be valid for at least three months beyond the period of your stay.

Citizens of other countries, please visit the Italian Embassy website at your home country for visa information.

MEALS & ACCOMMODATION

Students will live in a comfortable, but modest, field housing in the town of Siddi. Conditions at the field accommodation are basic: there is only one bathroom, hot water may run out, and students will share communal rooms. Mattresses will be provided, but it may be necessary for some students to sleep on mattresses on the floor.

The cost of all meals is included in the program fee; however, students will be responsible for purchasing their own meals if they choose to travel on free days. Breakfast will take place at the Piazza Bar. Lunch and dinner will take place at local restaurants. Students should be advised that traditional Italian breakfast is quite light: coffee or tea and a pastry. Students with larger appetites may wish to purchase additional foods at the local minimarket. Lunch and dinner are more substantial meals. They are communal events that will introduce students to the traditions of Sardinian cuisine. Sardinian food is delicious and hearty, but students should be aware that meat plays a large role in it.

Given how small the town is and the local traditional cuisine, this program will not be able to accommodate any special diets (Kosher, Halal, vegan, high protein, etc.). There are hearty and nourishing vegetarian options available; however, the selection is limited.

Due to the pervasive presence of wheat and nut products in Sardinian cuisine and the impossibility of avoiding cross-contamination in small restaurant kitchens, this program will not be able to accommodate students with severe gluten or nut allergies.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

International dialing code: +39

Money/Banks/Credit Cards: euro / 1 USD = 0.91 EUR / Credit/debit cards are now generally accepted even in small towns, but credit card machines often malfunction, and it is always a good idea to carry cash as a backup.

ATM Availability: There are no ATMs in Siddi. Students are advised to withdraw cash from ATMs at the Cagliari airport before being picked up at the beginning of the project. There will be limited opportunities to withdraw cash on weekends during the project, but this depends on students choosing to travel to Cagliari or one of the other towns.

Local Language: Siddi is bilingual. Most residents speak both Sardo and Italian, and Sardo is the first language for many. You will often hear Sardo spoken in the bar and around town, but most residents will be happy to switch to Italian if you speak it (or want to try).

Measure units: degree Celsius (°C), meter (m.), gram (gr.), liter (l)

ACADEMIC CREDITS & TRANSCRIPT

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.

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Students will be able to access their transcript through our School of Record – Culver-Stockton College. C-SC has authorized the National Student Clearinghouse to provide enrollment and degree verification (at <https://tsorder.studentclearinghouse.org/school/select>). Upon completion of a program, students will get an email from C-SC 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 C-SC office of the registrar at registrar@culver.edu.

REQUIRED READINGS

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

Connolly, D. 2005. Basic Health and Safety Advice in Archaeology. BAJR Guide 20, *BAJR Practical Guide Series*.

Depalmas, A. and Melis, R. 2010. The Nuragic People: Their Settlements, Economic Activities and Use of the Land, Sardinia, Italy. In Martini and Chesworth (eds.), *Landscapes and Societies*. Pp. 167-186. Springer, Dordrecht.

Dyson, S. L., and R. J. Rowland. 2007. *Shepherds, sailors, and conquerors. Archaeology and history in Sardinia from the Stone Age to the Middle Ages*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. Chapters 1 & 2.

Fisher, L. J. 2009a. Photography for Archaeologists Part I: Site specific record. BAJR Guide 25, *BAJR Practical Guide Series*.

Fisher, L. J. 2009b. Photography for Archaeologists Part II: Artefact recording. BAJR Guide 26, *BAJR Practical Guide Series*.

Hester, T., Shafer, H., and Feder, K. 2016. *Field Methods in Archaeology*. Left Coast Press, Walnut Creek, California: Chapter 3.

Holt, E. 2014. Nuragic culture and architecture (Bronze Age to Iron Age). In C. Smith (ed.), *Springer Encyclopedia of Global Archaeology*. Springer Science+Business Media, New York. DOI: 10.1007/978-1-4419-0465-2_943

Holt, E. and Perra, M. 2021. Progetto Pran'e Siddi: Preliminary Report of Excavations at Nuraghe Sa Conca 'e sa Cresia (Siddi SU). *Layers. Archeologia Territorio Contesti*.

Holt, E., Aguilar, J., and Schirru, D. 2022. The early Nuragic settlement system of the Siddi Plateau, south-central Sardinia.

Ialongo, N. 2018. Crisis and Recovery: The Cost of Sustainable Development in Nuragic Sardinia. *European Journal of Archaeology* 21: 18-38.

Perra, M. 2021. The Land of the Ancestors and Socioeconomic Dynamics in Nuragic Sardinia. *Origini* 44: 149-170.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Blake, E. 1999. Identity-Mapping in the Sardinian Bronze Age. *European Journal of Archaeology* 2(1): 35-55.

Holt, E. 2015. Mobility and Meaning in the Nuragic Culture of Bronze Age Sardinia (c. 1700-900 BC). In Suchowska-Ducke, Reiter, and Vandkilde (eds.), *Forging Identities. The Mobility of Culture in Bronze Age Europe. Report from a Marie Curie Project 2009-2012 with concluding conference at Aarhus University, Moesgård 2012. Volume I*. Pp. 193-202. BAR, Oxford.

Russell, A. 2010. Foreign materials, islander mobility and elite identity in Late Bronze Age Sardinia. In Van Dommelen and Knapp (eds.), *Material Connections in the Ancient Mediterranean: Mobility, Materiality and Identity*. Pp. 106-126. Routledge, New York.

Schirru, D. 2017. Nuraghi with a view: Understanding visualsapes in Nuragic Marmilla (South-Central Sardinia, Italy). *Journal of Archaeological Sciences: Reports*: 106-114.

Webster, G. 1991. Monuments, mobilization, and Nuragic organization. *Antiquity* 65: 840-856.