EXCAVATIONS AT SALONA, CROATIA: THE ROMAN CAPITAL OF THE EASTERN ADRIATIC

Course ID: HIS 489

Sep 14-Oct 11, 2025

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

School of Record: Culver Stockton College

This program provides full accommodation, lunch & snacks for the daily break while excavating. Students are responsible for their own breakfast and dinner during days of excavation and all meals for days off. There are numerous, well-supplied supermarkets in Solin that are open 6 days per week.

DIRECTOR:
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PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Salona was the capital of the province of Dalmatia and the most important Roman site on the Eastern Adriatic. As a Roman colony, it was established in the 1st century BCE, and it lasted until 7th century CE when raids from Avar and Slavic peoples conquered Salona and forced its inhabitants to flee. It is probably the only provincial capital that didn't develop into a medieval and, consequently, a modern city. Instead, the royal medieval city of Solin was founded at the eastern outskirts of Roman Salona, whose remains served as a quarry for not just Solin and surrounding places, but also for Split and even as far as Venice.

Salona has been excavated for more than 200 years. Yet most of the Roman city area – about 80% -- is still unexcavated and unknown. There is much we need to know about Salona,

including its building sequence, its integration of local population with Italian Romans, and its economic and political organization and institutions.

Our program is focused on digging at two distinct locations. The first area (Site 1) is a late antiquity building complex, dated to the 4-6 Centuries CE, with enigmatic design and unknown function. The second area (Site 2) is focused on the towers dotting the city's walls, dated to the 2-4 centuries CE. To elevate the floor within the towers, the builders brought soil rich with ceramics from elsewhere at Salona (likely the nearby cemetery), creating a highly packed time capsule.

Both locations are rich in archaeological material, primarily pottery. They also contain other materials typical to a Roman city, including stone inscriptions and human remains**.** The first excavation location offers more complex stratigraphy, attesting to at least four centuries of using the same space (pre Roman and Roman periods), with the remains of several buildings from different occupation levels. The second excavation location offers a unique experience of understanding the building technique of a defensive tower. Namely, the layer below the floor surface consists of intentionally placed archaeological material. Because of that, we need to sift all the dirt we excavate, which brings to light not only pottery, bones and shells, but also many items that can be interpreted as personal belongings and grave goods.

This program provides basic practical archaeological training for international and Croatian students. Our emphasis is on archaeological field methods and practices. Students will learn how to excavate complex stratigraphic contexts and utilize a broad range of archaeological tools. Students will also learn how to sieve, sort and recognize various types of archaeological artifacts, and learn how to properly observe and document the excavation process. Finally, students will use the latest spatial technology and create plans and maps using differential GPS and Photogrammetry.

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, Squaremouth.com or 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

By the end of the program, students will develop an in-depth, interdisciplinary understanding of archaeological excavation methods and practices. Students will learn how to scientifically excavate, analyze and interpret material culture. Students will also learn how to identify, date and classify Roman architecture and artifacts. The main purpose of this program is to enable participants to develop competencies and strategies for working at archaeological sites in various contexts and at multiple scales.

From a methodological perspective, fieldwork includes three main aspects:

Excavation: The goal of the excavation is the retrieval of artifacts, ecofacts and features within the archaeological context. Participants will be trained in the specific excavation and analysis tasks as well as in the general objectives of the excavation and its research design.

Work with recovered material culture and Lab Work: This is a key part of our archaeological strategy and includes inventory, classification and initial study of the artifacts, bones and archaeological structures found at the site. Project staff will train participants in the study of materials retrieved during excavation. Each day, we will discuss the activities to be performed and the results that are being obtained to plan for the work ahead and to fully involve participants in the project.

Lectures: Activities will be complemented with occasional lectures, at least once per week. Lectures will be 45-60 minutes each and presented by staff.

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 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
Understanding stratigraphy	Ability to understand the relationships between layers of both cultural and natural depositions
Small hand tools	Can operate a trawl or similar small hand tool to conduct excavations
Large hand tools	Can operate a pickaxe, shovel, hoe, or a similar large hand tool to conduct excavations
Grid and trench layout	Ability to lay accurate grid and generate reliable trench outline for excavations
Recording excavations	Ability to understand, collect and record all excavation processes and data
Excavations/General Principles	Know how to excavate in cultural or arbitrary layers, document and record all excavation activity
Recording sheets	Ability to understand and properly record the excavation process, stratigraphy sections and artifact documentation
Photography	Ability to take clear images of various features, artifact & soil colors at various light and field depth conditions
Photogrammetry	Ability to create and interpret photographic and electromagnetic radiant imagery & patterns

Soil identification	Ability to identify, describe and record different types of soil and depositions
Total Station Survey	Know how to properly set a Total Station, take back and fore points, collect geospatial data/points that can be used to generate digital topographic maps
Artifact recovery	Ability to record, safely excavate and properly store artifacts and ecofacts made of different types of materials (ceramics, metal, lithics, etc.) and various levels of fragility
Artifact washing	Ability to wash different artifact types while maintaining their material

COURSE SCHEDULE

1st week	Introduction to the site and to the methods of excavations, fieldwork, washing and sorting findings, visit to the Archaeological museum in Split
2nd week	Field work, washing and sorting findings, learning GPS, Total station and Photogrammetry
3rd week	Fieldwork, washing and sorting findings
4th week	Fieldwork, washing and sorting findings, finishing the final report on the site

Course structure may be subject to change upon directors' discretion

TYPICAL WORK DAY

7:00 – 9.30 am	Fieldwork
9:30 – 9:50 am	Coffee/tea break
9:50 – 11:50 am	Fieldwork
12:00 – 1:00 pm	Lunch break
1:00 – 3:00 pm	Fieldwork

In case of rainy days, lab work will be performed.

Two Saturdays will be dedicated to the site and museum visit.

Sundays are days off.

ACADEMIC GRADING MATRIX

Students will be graded based on their work as follows.

- **30% Fieldwork**: Excavation – use of tools and documentation on site.
- **25% Lab work**: Washing, processing, and storage of artifacts.
- **25% Final report**: Write a report on your archaeological experience and what you have learned.
- **20% Team Interaction**: Ability to interact and work among other team members in everyday fieldwork tasks.

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 considered if the student catches up on the field school study plan through additional readings, homework or tutorials with program staff members.

PREREQUISITES

None. This is hands-on, experiential learning and students will study on-site how to conduct archaeological research. Fieldwork 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 wind. The work requires patience, discipline, and attention to detail.

PROGRAM ETIQUETTE

We are Mediterranean people, which means we are cheerful, enjoy life, good company, food and the ea. We are also quite traditional and proud of our identity and heritage. We ask that you respect our local customs and history, even if you feel our views do not match to your own. You will be staying in the apartments that we regularly rent for our students during the excavations. We take care to ensure we are good tenants and allowed to return each year to the same units. That means that we must maintain the apartment clean and operational at all times, and that we all clean the apartments on the last day of the program.

Please note that the following rules apply to all visitors to the City of Split, a major tourist destination with daily, sometimes multiple cruise ship visitation.

- Any public alcohol consumption within the historical center and less than 100 meters from schools and kindergartens will be fined 300 €.
- Urinating in public, food and drink consumption in public spaces when it can leave dirty traces, and staying in bars and other venues after working hours will be fined 300 €.
- Climbing and sitting on historical and other monuments and landmarks, bathing and climbing on public fountains will be fined 300 €. Vomiting in public places will be fined 300 €.
- Sleeping in public parks, squares, parking lots and other public spaces will be fined 150 €.

It is traditional and respectful to cover your shoulders and knees when visiting churches. About 90% of all Croatians are Catholics and many are devout and care deeply about their houses of worship.

Before you rent a car, make sure to read about Croatian traffic rules and regulations. Do not drink and drive, and always use a seat belt. Remember to always check the speed limit and prohibited parking areas.

Smoking is prohibited in most indoor public spaces.

Do not throw waste on the site. Instead, join us in our efforts to recycle plastic, paper and other types of waste in the already-prepared trash bins.

Respect is a vital factor on and off the site. Remember that students always represent the project, both while working at Salona and off-site.

TRAVEL & MEETING POINT/TIME

We suggest you hold purchasing your airline ticket until six (6) weeks prior to the departure date. Natural disasters, political changes, weather conditions and a range of other factors may require the cancellation of a program. The CFS typically takes a close look at local conditions 6-7 weeks prior to the program beginning and makes a Go/No Go decision by then. Such a 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 at the arrival area of the Split International Airport (SPU) on the first day of this field school (Sunday, September 14th) at 4:00pm. The meeting point is at the official "Meeting Point" sign, at the arrival area (Fig. 1). From there, students will be transported to local accommodations.

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.

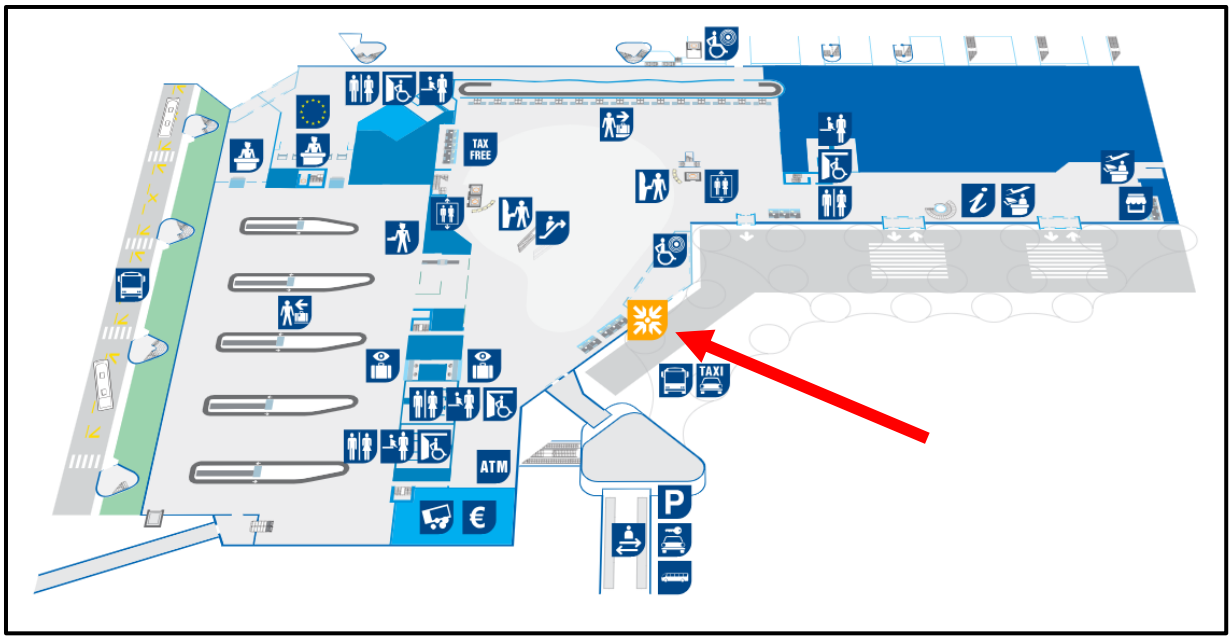

Figure 1: Arrival area and meeting point at Split International Airport

VISA REQUIREMENTS

Croatia is a party to the Schengen Visa Agreement within the EU. Citizens of the U.S. may enter Croatia without a visa for stays of up to 90 days for tourism or business purposes. EU regulations require that U.S. passport holders have no less than three months' validity when they depart Croatia.

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

MEALS & ACCOMMODATION

This program provides lunch and snacks during workdays (Mon-Fri). Students are responsible for their breakfast and dinner during workdays and all meals during weekend days). Some diets (vegan, vegetarian, etc.) may be accommodated in this project but must be communicated with and approved by the project director. There are numerous well-supplied supermarkets in Solin for all types of diets and these are open every day (some don't work on Sundays).

All students will reside in apartments in Solin (pop. 25.000), 3-5 students per apartment, depending on size and number of rooms. The apartments are within walking distance to the site. All rooms are air-conditioned and have Wi-Fi. Linens and towels are provided.

EQUIPMENT LIST

- Passport or ID card. All European citizens should bring their health card, or health insurance card, if applicable
- Student/University ID and/or European Youth Card
- Sunscreen

- Hat or a cap
- Light and comfortable clothing, a minimum of 2 changes of work clothes
- Jacket or windbreaker
- Water bottle
- Mosquito repellent and after-bite cream
- If you take any medication, remember to bring it
- Working shoes or sneakers with ankle/toe protection
- Appropriate adapter for electronic devices
- Notebook and a pen

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

International dialing code: +385

Money/Banks/Credit Cards: The currency in Croatia is the Euro. There are several banks in Solin, some of them *ca*. 10-15 minutes walking distance from the site or accommodation. Most shops/supermarkets accept major credit cards. Still, credit cards are not commonly used for small purchases in Croatia (for example at a café).

ATM Availability: ATMs are available in the center of Solin.

Local Language: The local language is Croatian. The field work will be in English, although we will occasionally speak Croatian among the staff as well.

Measure units: degree Celsius (ºC), 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.

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

Demicheli, Dino. 2024. Dalmatia. In: A Companion to the Archaeology of the Roman Empire, 2 Volume Set. Burrell, Barbara (editor). John Wiley & Sons

Jeličić-Radonić, Jasna. 2015. Salona - Metropolis of the Roman Province and its Cultural environment in the light of Recent Research. In Neue Forschungen zum Frühen Christentum in den Balkanländern. Lässig, Elisabeth & Siana Ivova Pressler (editors). Pp. 73-82.

https://www.academia.edu/33076468/Salona_Metropolis_of_the_Roman_Province_and_its_Cultural_environment_in_the_light_of_Recent_Research_pdf

R. Matijašić, Matijašić, Robert. 2018. "Res gestae (28, 1) and the establishment of Roman colonies on the Eastern Adriatic." In The Century of the Brave: Roman Conquest and Indigenous Resistance in Illyricum during the Time of Augustus and His Heirs. Marina Milićević Bradač and

Dino Demicheli (editors). Pp. 69–76.
https://www.academia.edu/43477825/Res_Gestae_28_1_and_the_establishment_of_Roman_colonies_on_the_Eastern_Adriatic

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Wilkes, J. J. 1969. Dalmatia. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Mardešić, J. 2006. "Excavations at Salona between 1970 and 2000." In Dalmatia, Research in the Roman Province 1970–2001. Papers in Honour of J. J. Wilkes. Davison, David, Vincent Gaffney, and Emilio Marin (editors). Oxford: British Archaeological Reports International Series. Pp.81–88.