

TAU International Short Term Summer Program: Excavations & Field Courses

Tel Shimron 2026

HISTORY OF THE JEZREEL VALLEY

TAU ARC 2120-1122-01: 3 semester credits

Summer 2026: June 20 – July 11

Instructor of Record: Dr. Mario Martin (University of Innsbruck, Austria)*

Principal Co-instructor: Professor Daniel M. Master (Wheaton College, Chicago)

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For course times/days and location, please also visit the [TAU International web site](#) (Study Abroad Course Offerings and Schedules). Please note that all information below is subject to change and/or adjustment as necessary.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course focuses on the history and geography of northern Israel in general and the Jezreel Valley in particular. Moreover, it aims to convey field experience involving excavation, interpretation, and studies in related regional archaeology. Weekend field trips are an integral part of the course, for the students to get acquainted with this fascinating region. The trips will lead us to Jerusalem, the Golan, the Sea of Galilee, Akko, Nazareth, the Jezreel Valley and the northern Jordan Valley, with a focus on both ancient and modern history. A series of evening lectures will introduce the students into the basic principles of stratigraphy and field excavation, landscape and site formation, Bronze Age to Islamic Pottery, as well as the early history of the region in the Early and Middle Bronze Age (for the later periods, see Course “Introduction to Field Archaeology”). Specific topics will be treated with the instructors in weekly workshops. Preparatory readings are provided in the syllabus.

Course activities entail:

- ❖ Daily participation in the excavations at Tel Shimron including fieldwork and afternoon find processing
- ❖ Lecture series
- ❖ Field trips
- ❖ Weekly discussion sessions and workshops with the instructor and the co-instructors
- ❖ Journal and final paper assignments

LEARNING OUTCOMES

THE COURSE IS DESIGNED TO PROMOTE

- Proficiency in ancient Near Eastern history and advanced knowledge of the cultural remains associated with the historical periods and key sites of Bible lands from the Stone Age through late Roman period.
- Aptitude in archaeological field methods and the fundamentals of archaeological theory.
- Critical analysis of primary and secondary historical sources.
- Proficiency in the use of scientific techniques in the context of archaeological excavation.

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

- The course contributes to the mission of producing students who are biblically rooted, theologically formed and liberally educated. It prepares students to think theoretically, methodologically, archaeologically, historically and theologically about the society and history of the ancient Near East.
- The course will promote the ability to design and conduct scientific investigations within the context of an archaeological research project. Archaeological Science is a growing field, located at the intersection of ancient human action and the regularities of the natural world. Students will apply scientific techniques in order to uncover more about the intersection of the cultural remains and scientific practice.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

Final Paper: 40%

Daily Journal: 20%

Participation in all dig activities: 40%

DAILY JOURNALS

Students purchase a small notebook of some kind to be handed in on the last day of excavation. All field school students are required to keep a daily journal, recording their excavation assignments in the field, field techniques they learn day-by-day, lab exercises, and notes from their lectures, discussion groups and field trips. Journal entries do not need to be long, but should instead be concise summaries which demonstrate an understanding of the concepts introduced for that week.

FINAL PAPER

Students will hand in a research paper (ca. 4–5 pages, including references) on a selected topic that relates to the archaeology, history or culture of ancient Canaan and Israel, with a focus on its relationship to Shimron or the Jezreel Valley in general. More specific discussion of paper



topics will be held during the excavation. The papers will be due two weeks after the end of the dig, but submission before departure is recommended.

PARTICIPATION

Students participate in daily excavation, receiving instruction in basic archaeological techniques and concepts while in the field. Each week a new archaeological technology is introduced, and students participate in weekly labs where these technologies are applied to a sample of archaeological problems. In the afternoons, students participate in ceramic and artifact processing at the Pottery Compound.

Evening lectures (delivered by resident specialists or visiting scholars) present the history of Tel Shimron and ancient Israel in the context of the broader Mediterranean, or address special topics of historical interest. Weekly Discussion Sections focus upon the interpretation of archaeological data, introducing principles of archaeological theory and examining how these can be used to answer questions about ancient life in the Jezreel Valley.

Field and Classroom activities will be supplemented by field trips to sites of historical and archaeological importance in northern Israel.

Attendance at all activities is required. There are no excused absences, except for health reasons.

GRADUATE LEVEL

The same general dig activities and lectures will be attended by graduate level students. They will, however, invest more effort in the final paper (ca. 10 pages, including more references) that must be written on a higher academic level and present a genuine research, rather than just the summary of a chosen topic. Also, during the workshop and field activities, graduate level students will take on specific assignments (proactivity welcome), and they will try to share their generally higher experience with their undergraduate colleagues.

OVERVIEW OF THE WEEKLY SCHEDULE

This is a schematic overview of a typical week on the excavation. A more detailed schedule, with lectures, field trips, workshops, etc., is given further below.

MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY

4:40 AM Wakeup

5:00 AM – 1:00 PM Excavation on site (5:00 bus from camp to site)

9:00 AM Breakfast

11:30 AM Break

1:00 PM Lunch

1:30 PM – 3:30 PM Artifact processing

3:30 PM – 6:00 PM Free time

6:00 PM – 6:45 PM Lectures/Workshops

7:00 PM Dinner



FRIDAY AFTERNOON—SUNDAY EVENING

Weekend Break. This is free time except for the scheduled field trips.

DETAILED SCHEDULE

		All	Lectures and workshops	Mandatory reading
S	20.Jun	Arrival in Shimron		
S	21.Jun			
M	22.Jun	Seminar Day (all)	<i>Workshop (Martin, introduction meeting)</i>	
T	23.Jun	Excavation; PC*	<i>Lecture TBD</i>	
W	24.Jun	Excavation; PC	<i>Stories of Shimron—Meeting in Nahalal (L. Regev)</i>	
Th	25.Jun	Excavation; PC	<i>Lecture TBD</i>	
F	26.Jun	Excavation; PC		
S	27.Jun	Field Trip: Lower Galilee		
S	28.Jun	Free Day		
M	29.Jun	Excavation; PC	<i>Stratigraphy and Field Excavation (A. Aja)</i>	Master 2008
T	30.Jun	Excavation; PC	<i>Spatial Technology (GIS) at Tel Shimron (G. Pierce)</i>	Connolly and Lake 2007, Pierce 2010
W	1.Jul	Excavation; PC	<i>17:00 Workshop (Master, Martin—Shimron main research areas)</i> <i>18:00 Understanding Bronze & Iron Age Pottery (D. Master & M. Martin)</i>	Mazar 2015 <i>et al.</i>
Th	2.Jul	Excavation; PC	<i>Understanding Hellenistic-Islamic Pottery (K. Birney, T. Hoffman)</i>	Avissar 1996, Berlin 1997
F	3.Jul	Excavation; PC		
S	4.Jul	Field Trip: Jezreel Valley Carmel Coast		
S	5.Jul	Free Day		
M	6.Jul	Excavation; PC	<i>Synagogues of Galilee (J. Ryan)</i>	Chancey 2001; Meyers, Meyers and Gordon 2015, Weiss 2015
T	7.Jul	Excavation; PC	<i>Recent Excavations at Tel Keisan (TBD)</i>	
W	8.Jul	Excavation; PC	<i>Workshop (Martin)</i> <i>Recent Excavations at Tel Kabri (TBD)</i>	
Th	9.Jul	Excavation; PC	<i>The Egyptian Empire in the Late Bronze Levant, with a Focus on the Jezreel Valley (M. Martin)</i>	Mazar 1997; Martin 2011
F	10.Jul	Excavation; PC		
S	11.Jul	Departure		

* Work in Pottery Compound

LECTURES AND READINGS

STRATIGRAPHY AND FIELD EXCAVATION (A. AJA)

This lecture is an introduction to the principles of archaeological stratigraphy and to the recording system at Tel Shimron. Examples will show the types of depositional processes that are most often encountered in Near Eastern contexts with a discussion of how to understand them.

READING

Master, D. (2008). Grid System and Field Methods. In L.E. Stager, J.D. Schloen, and D.M. Master (Eds.), *Ashkelon 1* (pp. 185-193). Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.

FURTHER READING

Harris, E. (1997). *Principles of Archaeological Stratigraphy*. San Diego: Academic Press. Master, D. (2008). Grid System and Field Methods. In L.E. Stager, J.D. Schloen, and D.M. Master (Eds.), *Ashkelon 1* (pp. 185-193). Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.

SPATIAL TECHNOLOGY (GIS) AT TEL SHIMRON (G. PIERCE)

This lecture will cover the use of spatial technologies employed in previous and current seasons to assess and present the cultural landscape of Tel Shimron. Basic concepts of space and place, the use of archaeological GIS, and types of spatial analyses being conducted will be discussed together with a practical component focused on recording and mapping features in 2D and 3D space.

READINGS

Connolly, J. & Lake, M. (2007). Introduction and Theoretical Issues in Archaeological GIS. In *Geographical Information Systems in Archaeology* (pp.1-10). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pierce, G.A. (2010). GIS and Jaffa's Cultural Landscape. *Near Eastern Archaeology*, Vol 73 (1). pp. 20-21.

UNDERSTANDING BRONZE & IRON AGE POTTERY (D. MASTER & M. MARTIN)

This lecture is a hands-on workshop to introduce students to some of the major pottery types of the Bronze and Iron Ages. The lecture will also discuss issues of seriation, typology, and function as they influence the use of pottery in archaeological reasoning.



READING

Mazar, A. (2015). Iron Age I: Northern Coastal Plain, Galilee, Samaria, Jezreel Valley, Judah, and Negev. In S. Gitin (Ed.), *The Ancient Pottery of Israel and Its Neighbors, Vol. 1* (pp. 5-70). Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society.

Ben-Tor, A. & Zarzecki-Peleg, A. (2015). Iron Age IIA-B: Northern Valleys and Upper Galilee. In S. Gitin (Ed.), *The Ancient Pottery of Israel and Its Neighbors, Vol. 1* (pp. 135-188). Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society.

Livneh, A. (2005). The Pottery of the Middle Bronze Age. In A. Ben-Tor, D. Ben-Ami, and Al Livneh (Eds.), *Yoqne'am III: The Middle and Late Bronze Ages* (pp. 41-138). Jerusalem: Old City Press.

Ben-Ami, D. (2005). The Pottery of the Late Bronze Age. In In A. Ben-Tor, D. Ben-Ami, and Al Livneh (Eds.), *Yoqne'am III: The Middle and Late Bronze Ages* (pp. 165-240). Jerusalem: Old City Press.

UNDERSTANDING HELLENISTIC AND ISLAMIC POTTERY (K. BIRNEY, T. HOFFMAN, & B. GORDON)

Hellenistic ceramics are a means to exploring exciting and fundamental questions about cultural and religious identity. How did the passage of Alexander the Great manifest itself in the material of Syria-Palestine? Who adopted “Hellenizing” customs and why? How is Jewish identity marked in the ceramic repertoire of the home? This short presentation will introduce students to the basic components and fabrics of the Hellenistic ceramic assemblage and how it can be used to think through questions of economy and culture. This presentation will also introduce students to the ceramic assemblage of the Early and Middle Islamic periods, 7th - 13th century, in Syria-Palestine. Students will learn about developments in plain, utilitarian and glazed luxury wares and how analysis of the assemblage contributes to the study of culture and economy at Tel Shimron.

READING

Berlin, A. (1997). Between Large Forces: Palestine in the Hellenistic Period. *The Biblical Archaeologist*, Vol. 60 (1). pp. 3-48.

Avissar, M. (1996). The Medieval Pottery. In Ben-Tor, A., Avissar, M., and Portugali, Y. (Eds.) *Yoqne'am I: The Late Periods*.

SYNAGOGUES OF GALILEE (J. RYAN)

J. Ryan will speak about the synagogues of Galilee



READING

Chancey, M. (2001). The Cultural Milieu of Ancient Sepphoris. *New Testament Studies* (47). pp. 127-145.

Meyers, E., Meyers, C., & Gordon, B. Residential Area (2015). Residential Area of the Western Summit. In D.A. Fiensy & J.R. Strange (Eds.), *Galilee in the Late Second Temple and Mischnaic Periods, Vol 2* (pp. 39-52). Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

Weiss, Z. (2015) From Galilean Town to Roman City. In D.A. Fiensy & J.R. Strange (Eds.), *Galilee in the Late Second Temple and Mischnaic Periods, Vol 2* (pp. 53-75). Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

RECENT EXCAVATIONS AT TEL KEISAN (TBD)

To be announced

RECENT EXCAVATIONS AT TEL KABRI (TBD)

To be announced

THE EGYPTIAN EMPIRE IN THE LATE BRONZE LEVANT, WITH A FOCUS ON THE JEZREEL VALLEY (M. MARTIN)

During the Late Bronze Age (ca. 1500–1130 BCE) the Egyptian New Kingdom established an empire in the southern Levant, and with time had a profound influence on its northern neighbor. In the Eighteenth Dynasty, Egypt maintained its hegemony through a well-balanced interplay of military campaigns and diplomatic alliances, with no need for a sizable permanent physical presence in the region. Later on, in the Ramesside period, Egypt was forced to pursue a more aggressive approach, stationing contingents of military and administrative personnel in permanent garrisons and administrative centers.

This course is a fusion of the textual and archaeological evidence available from the New Kingdom period in Canaan. It covers the main historical events of Egyptian involvement and reveals the various nuances of Egypto-Canaanite relations, from the nature of the Egyptian administrative network, down to simple cultural interactions at the Egyptian bases. The textual sources are fascinating but sketchy, and it is mainly the archaeological finds that reveal the true story of what life was like on a daily basis.

READING

Martin, M.A.S. (2011). *Egyptian-Type Pottery in the Late Bronze Age Southern Levant* (Contributions to the Chronology of the Eastern Mediterranean XXXIX). Vienna. Pp. 18–20.

Mazar, A. (1997). *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible 10.000–586 BCE*. New York. Pp. 232–239.



ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED READINGS

- Cline, E. 2009. *Biblical Archaeology: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford.
- David, N. 2003. *Historical Atlas of the Islamic World*. Checkmark Books. (excerpts)
- Hester, T.R., Shafer, H.J. and Feder, K.L. 2009 *Field Methods in Archaeology*. Seventh Edition. Walnut Creek, CA.
- Krämer, G. 2011. *A History of Palestine from the Ottoman Conquest to the Founding of the State of Israel*. Princeton. (excerpts)
- Magnes, J. 2012. *The Archaeology of the Holy Land: From the Destruction of Solomon's Temple to the Muslim Conquest*. Cambridge. (excerpts)
- Mazar, A. 1997. *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible 10.000–586 BCE*. New York.
- Monson, J.M. 2008. *Geobasics in the Land of the Bible*. Rockford, IL.
- Rapp, G.Jr. and Hill, C.L. 1998. *Geoarchaeology: The Earth-Science Approach to Archaeological Interpretation*. New Haven.
- Weiner, S. 2010. *Microarchaeology—Beyond the Visible Archaeological Record*. Cambridge.

INSTRUCTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Mario A.S. Martin is the Co-director of the Tel Shimron Excavations of Tel Aviv University and Wheaton College, Chicago, and, formerly, of the Megiddo Expedition of Tel Aviv University. Martin, a distinguished field archaeologist, completed his doctorate work at the University of Vienna with Professor Manfred Bietak. His extensive field experience includes his long-time work at the Austrian Archaeological Institute's expedition to Tell el-Dab'a, Egypt, and twenty years of excavations at Megiddo, Israel. Martin has published numerous articles and a monography on Egyptian pottery and is co-editor of the Megiddo publication series. His principle field of research are Egypto-Canaanite relations, Bronze Age pottery and ceramic petrography.

CO-INSTRUCTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Daniel M. Master is Professor of Archaeology at Wheaton College and is co-director of excavations at the site of Tel Shimron (Israel). He co-directed the work of the Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon from 2007-2016 and currently oversees the publication of the Ashkelon Final report series. His publications also include the First Final report on the 1953–1964 excavations at Tel Dothan and the Oxford Encyclopedia of Bible and Archaeology (as general editor).

TAU INTERNATIONAL ACADEMIC GUIDELINES

Students may only attend classes which they are officially registered for. No auditing of courses is permitted. Students are responsible for reading and adhering to all policies and procedures in the TAU International Academic Handbook [posted here](#) at all times. Below is a summary of some of these relevant policies and procedures.



In accordance to University guidelines, TAU International may be able to accommodate students with learning disabilities or accommodation requests if these requests are also honored at the student's home university or home school. To be considered, students must submit official documentation from their home school or university (if not in English, a notarized official copy translated into English is required) to TAU International in advance of arrival describing in detail any specific needs and how these are accommodated at the home school or university. Students must also bring a copy of this documentation with them on-site and give it to their faculty on the first day of class while introducing themselves so that the faculty know who they are and what sorts of needs or accommodations they may have.

Without official documentation from the home school submitted on or before the first day of courses, TAU will not be able to honor accommodation support.

With supporting documentation and by following the correct procedure as outlined above, TAU International and its faculty will do the best it can to make any suitable accommodations possible. However, we cannot guarantee that all accommodations received at the home school can be similarly met at TAU. For example, TAU is usually not able to offer note-taking services in English, private testing rooms, or advance viewing of classroom presentations, exams, or assignments.

It may be an option to provide a student with additional tutoring or support outside the classroom as needed. Students should be aware that this additional support cannot be guaranteed and is based on teacher availability in the subject as well as the specific student level. If available, the cost of additional tutoring or support will be the sole responsibility of the student.

IN-CLASS EXAMS

TAU does not permit, under any circumstances, taking any in-class (including mid or final) exams early or later than the scheduled exam day. When selecting courses, it is thus very important to note if there is an in-class midterm or final exam as this date/exam cannot be changed. It is also the student's responsibility to clarify exam dates with the professors at the beginning of a course, with the understanding that not all exam dates can be decided up front as it can sometimes depend on the pace of the course and class learning. It is the student responsibility to plan to be present for all courses including the final day of class for this reason. Early departures from the program are not approved, nor are early or exception in-class exams.

TAU INTERNATIONAL ABSENCE POLICY

Attendance is mandatory in all of the courses including Hebrew Ulpan. Faculty can and will take attendance regularly. Missing classes will be reflected in the final grade of the course. Up to three justified and properly documented absences from classes may be accepted (for example: emergency matter or illness, both of which will require a doctor's note). Such cases of absence should be reported to the faculty immediately and again, a doctor's note is required. Teachers are entitled to treat any lateness or absence without documentation as unexcused. Some of our courses such as Service Learning or the Internship Seminar require more practical in-class work; thus, attendance policies may be stricter in some courses and



students then must adhere to the stricter attendance policy as outlined by the faculty/syllabus.

Students are required to arrive on time for classes. Teachers are entitled to treat any single case of lateness and/or repeated lateness as an unjustified absence.

Please note that according to official TAU Academic Policy, if a student's behavior or attendance during is disagreeable his/her course participation may be cancelled at the discretion of TAU with no due refund.

GRADE APPEALS

Students are responsible for checking grades once posted or distributed by faculty. The limited grade appeals window and the detailed procedure for appealing a grade – whether a graded assignment, exam or final grade – is outlined clearly in the policies and procedures in the TAU International Academic Handbook [posted here](#).