

TAU International Short Term Summer Program: Excavations & Field Courses

Tel Shimron 2026

INTRODUCTION TO FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY

TAU ARC 2120-1123-01: 3 semester credits

Summer 2026: July 12 – August 1

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 scientific methods of field archaeology and the history of northern Israel in general and the Jezreel Valley in particular. Beyond daily excavation work in the field and afternoon find processing, during which the students will acquire the principles of archaeological fieldwork, students will learn more about the modern scientific methods applied in archeology. The fields of zooarchaeology, microarchaeology, physical anthropology and spatial technology will be discussed in a series of evening lectures. In addition, lectures will also address the history of the region from the Iron Age to the Ottoman period and beyond (for the Middle Bronze Age, see course “History of the Jezreel Valley”). 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
- ❖ 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	12.Jul	Arrival day		
M	13.Jul	Excavation; PC*	<i>Zooarchaeology</i> (D. Fulton)	Reitze and Wing 2010
T	14.Jul	Excavation; PC	<i>Microarchaeology</i> (Weizmann team)	Weiner 2010
W	15.Jul	Excavation; PC	<i>Workshop</i> (Martin) <i>Bedouin Meal</i>	
Th	16.Jul	Excavation; PC	<i>Introduction to Physical Anthropology</i> (R. Kalisher)	Goldstein 2006, White and Folkens 2005, Knusel 2014
F	17.Jul	Excavation; PC		
S	18.Jul	Field Trip: Capernaum, Magadala, Kinneret		
S	19.Jul	Free day		
M	20.Jul	Excavation; PC	<i>Phoenician Markets and Iron Age Economy</i> (D. Master)	Master 2003, 2014
T	21.Jul	Excavation; PC	<i>Iron Age II and Assyria</i> (J. Walton)	Walton 2015
W	22.Jul	Excavation; PC	<i>Workshop</i> (Martin) <i>Persia and Greece in Northern Israel</i> (K. Birney)	Stewart 2005, Lipschits 2006
Th	23.Jul	Excavation; PC	<i>The Rise of Islam and Cities of the Levant</i> (T. Hoffman)	Walmsley 2007, Avni 2014
F	24.Jul	Excavation; PC		
S	25.Jul	Field Trip: Huleh Basin, Golan		
S	26.Jul	Free day		
M	27.Jul	Excavation; PC	<i>Recent Excavations at Tel Acco</i> (TBD)	
T	28.Jul	Excavation; PC	<i>Botanical Remains</i> (J. Marston)	
W	29.Jul	Excavation; PC	<i>Workshop</i> (Martin) <i>Season's Progress: Interpreting Tel Shimron</i> (D. Master & M. Martin)	
Th	30.Jul	Excavation; PC	<i>Party</i>	
F	31.Aug	Excavation; PC		
S	1.Aug	Departure		

* Work in Pottery Compound

LECTURES AND READINGS

ZOOARCHAEOLOGY (D. FULTON)

This lecture will focus on the importance of faunal remains in their archaeological contexts. Specifically, it will discuss how zooarchaeology may inform historical, cultural, and regional studies on ancient Israel, Judah, and Philistia.

READING

Reitze, E.J. and Wing, E.S. (2010). *Zooarchaeology*, 2nd Edition (pp. 1-30). New York: Cambridge University Press.

MICROARCHAEOLOGY (WEIZMANN TEAM)

Over the last two decades, the growth of archaeological science in Israel has transformed our understanding of archaeological contexts. What were once thought to be palaces are now known as stables. Chronologies have been re-written. This lecture will introduce students to the tools and methods of these recent advances.

READING

Excerpts from Weiner, S. (2010) *Microarchaeology: Beyond the Visible Archaeological Record*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

INTRODUCTION TO PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY (R. KALISHER)

This lecture aims to familiarize students with the basic principles of physical anthropology and its use in archaeology. Students will learn the fundamental differences between human and nonhuman fauna typical to the region, as well as the many ways we can interpret human skeletal remains.

READING

Knusel, C. (2014). Crouching in fear: Terms of engagement for funerary remains. *Journal of Social Archaeology* (14). pp. 26-58.

Goldstein, L. (2006). Mortuary Analysis and Bioarchaeology. In Buikstra, J.E. and Beck, L.A. (Eds.) *Bioarchaeology: The Contextual Analysis of Human Remains* (pp. 375-388). Oxford: Elsevier.

White, T. and Folkens, P. (2005) *Human Bone Manual* (pp. 1-6). Oxford: Elsevier.

PHOENICIAN MARKETS AND ECONOMY (D. MASTER)

How did ancient economies work? What are some of the cultural specific institutions which allowed for the movement of goods in the Iron Age. This lecture will use the Iron Age as a case study for examining ancient economy.

READING

Master, D.M. (November 2014). Economy and Exchange in the Iron Age Kingdoms of the Southern Levant. *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* (372). pp. 81-97.

Master, D.M. (May 2003). Trade and Politics: Ashkelon's Balancing Act in the Seventh Century B.C.E. *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* (330). pp. 47-64.

IRON AGE II AND ASSYRIA (J. WALTON)

The coming of Assyria transformed the southern Levant with the regions of Galilee undergoing dramatic decline. How did Assyria govern in the southern Levant? What were their economic and political motivations. This lecture will frame the period in terms of the internal logic of the Assyrian economy.

READING

Excerpts from Walton, J.T. (2015). *The Regional Economy of the Southern Levant in the 8th-7th Centuries BCE*. (Doctoral Dissertation) Harvard University, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences.

PERSIA AND GREECE IN NORTHERN ISRAEL (K. BIRNEY)

Despite the state of war which existed between them, Greek goods - in particular Attic glazed and painted drinking and dining wares - were a popular commodity in urban centers along the coast during the 5th-4th centuries B.C. More than pretty objects, however, these vessels reflect the selective adoption of Greek elite drinking and dining behaviors, though adapted to local tastes. But how far did these tastes spread? This lecture discusses the Eastern version of the symposium, and draws upon comparison of coastal and inland assemblages to discuss the economic and cultural routes by which Greek refinements traveled east.

READING

Stewart, A. (2005). Attic Pottery at Tel Dor, Israel: An Overview. *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* (337). pp. 79-94.

Lipschits, O. (2006). Achaemenid Imperial Policy, Settlement Processes in Palestine, and the Status of Jerusalem in the Middle of the 5th Century B.C.E. In Lipschits, O. and Oeming, M. (Eds.), *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period* (pp. 19-52). Tel Aviv: Institute of Archaeology.

THE RISE OF ISLAM AND CITIES OF THE LEVANT (T. HOFFMAN)

The political transformation from Byzantine to Umayyad rule was dramatic, but below the surface patterns of subsistence and social institutions changed much more slowly. This

lecture will discuss the sudden changes, but also chart the long term rise of new urban forms which transformed the southern Levant.

READINGS

Excerpts from Avni, G. (2014). *The Byzantine-Islamic Transition in Palestine: An Archaeological Approach*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Excerpts from Walmsley, A. (2007). *Early Islamic Syria: an archaeological assessment*. London: Bristol Classical Press.

RECENT EXCAVATIONS AT TEL ACCO (TBD)

In this lecture, one of the excavators of the recent excavations at Tel Acco will discuss recent findings at the site.

BOTANICAL REMAINS (J. MARSTON)

In this lecture, J. Marston will discuss the importance of botanical remains in the archaeological record.

SEASON'S PROGRESS: INTERPRETING TEL SHIMRON (D. MASTER & M. MARTIN)

What was the outcome of the season? What were the preliminary results of our 2019 research questions? Using the results from 2019, the directors will discuss their preliminary assessment of the excavation.

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)

Magness, 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.

LEARNING ACCOMMODATIONS

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](#).