



THE LOBOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL & BIOARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT, CROATIA

Course ID: ARCH 365AR

June 14 - July 11, 2026

Academic Credits: 8 Semester Credit Units

FIELD SCHOOL DIRECTOR(S)

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OVERVIEW

The site of Lopor in northwestern Croatia has been continuously excavated since 1998. Lopor was a focal point for its broader environs during two periods: 1) in Late Antiquity (5th century AD) when Lopor was an important political and ecclesiastical center, most likely formed as a consequence of the collapse of Roman provincial urbanism; and 2) in the Carolingian age (early 9th century AD) when Lopor was one of the centers of the Frankish province of Lower Pannonia (*Pannonia inferior*), with all the usual features of this new, early feudal age: fortified settlement, residential buildings, and churches. All available historical sources and archaeological materials are considered in an attempt to answer what made Lopor such an important location during these two distinctive periods. In the early 12th century, new political centers were established due to political developments such as the expansion of Hungary into southwestern Pannonia. Many of these new centers have remained in function until today, while the old centers that were rooted in different traditions disappeared or lost their importance. At that time the town of *Siscia*, which had a long trajectory from antiquity until the early Middle Ages and experienced a revival following the Carolingian conquest of Pannonia, gave way to the town of Zagreb as a new center.

From the very beginnings, the Lopor site has been associated with female cults. Based on sculpture fragments, it is believed that a Roman temple dedicated to Diana once stood there. Later, churches related to the Marian cult were built on top. A cemetery stretches around the church and across the entire site, and up to the outer fortification wall. After several years in which the research has focused on the church architecture, it is now being shifted to the cemetery. Through survey, excavations, the project is trying to answer the following questions:

- Was Lopor an important military center or merely a settlement associated with a religious sanctuary?
- Were some of the churches in operation at the same time?
- What was the relationship between the local clergy and the local inhabitants?
- What can be deduced from the burials about the population that lived in Lopor and surroundings?
- What can be said about the population according to archaeological and bioarchaeological ratio? Who remained and who left?

The field school will allow students to acquire knowledge on the history of northwestern Croatia and the Lopor site itself, especially during the Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages. Students will approach these questions from the study of human bones. They will work in a trench and also indoors where they have the opportunity to work with human remains during lectures. In the trench, they have a possibility to investigate wall fortifications, human remains, small objects such as coins or earrings, pottery, brick and metal. The finds from the trench cannot be known in advance, prior to the excavation. That means, students can find a grave, an empty grave, a pit, a wall, remains of the house or a place for producing pottery. Until the excavations, we cannot guarantee all the things they could find, we can only say what is a possibility to be found and we would like to teach the students that science works that way. It is a way to grow curiosity, to learn how to be patient and to value every situation at the site and every object, because every object gives us more knowledge about the site. Students will further get familiar with the cultural heritage of Lopor (Lopor - Early Medieval Center of Power and Terra nullius - on the border and beyond the border from the 8th to the 12th century) and its environs while also visiting the most important archaeological sites in northwestern Croatia, capital of Zagreb, and optionally some of natural attractions in Croatia.

ACADEMIC CREDIT UNITS & TRANSCRIPTS

Credit Units: Attending students will be awarded 8 semester credit units through our academic partner, Connecticut College. Connecticut College is a highly ranked liberal arts institution with a deep commitment to undergraduate education. Students will receive a letter grade for attending this field

school (see assessment, below). Students are encouraged to discuss the transferability of credit units with faculty and registrars at their home institution prior to attending this field school.

Transcripts: An official copy of transcripts will be mailed to the permanent address listed by students on their online application. One more transcript may be sent to the student's home institution at no cost. Additional transcripts may be ordered at any time through the [National Student Clearinghouse](#).

PREREQUISITES

None. This is hands-on, experiential learning and students will study on-site how to conduct archaeological research. Archaeology 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, dirty and tired. Students are required to come equipped with sufficient excitement and adequate understanding that archaeology requires real, hard work, in the sun, rain and wind, hot and cold weather, on your feet, and with your trowel. The work requires patience, discipline, teamwork and attention to detail. It is vital that all students respect the IFR Student Code of Conduct, local culture, and local rules and laws.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To introduce students to the history of all periods present at the site of Lobar and the archaeology and culture of the northwestern parts of Croatia.
- To introduce students to contemporary standards of work in field archaeology.
- To introduce students to health and safety requirements at an archaeological site.
- To introduce basic field survey (dividing into groups, collecting funds from the ground, etc.)
- To prepare students to perform excavation tasks: the use of tools; digging techniques; sieving, etc.
- To introduce students to the basics of archaeology, archaeology and anthropology: possible excavation of skeletons; work indoors with skeletons; drawing; measuring; cleaning; determining sex, age, diet, traumas, etc.
- To prepare students to perform field documentation tasks: the use of measuring and documentation tools and devices; creating written documentation (context sheets, field notebooks, find labels, etc.); photographic documentation; drawing of stratigraphy, burials, skeletons, architectural structures, contexts; the use of a total station, etc.
- To introduce students to the basics of find processing procedures: cleaning, selecting and arranging archaeological finds; the organization of finds in storage, etc.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will be able to perform basic excavation tasks and will know how to use archaeological tools, digging techniques, sieving and protective positions during excavation. They will know how to perform basic field documentation tasks such as filling in context sheets, keeping a field notebook and labeling finds. They will learn the principles of archaeological photography and field drawing. They will be able to use measuring and leveling devices and process finds. They will learn how to identify and excavate human burials, and how to clean, pack, and prepare the bones for laboratory analysis. Students will be instructed in how to sex and age a human skeleton, and how to recognize the most common traumas.

ASSESSMENT

% of Grade	Activity
35 %	Excavation (use of tools, drawing, measuring, photography, etc.)
25 %	Archaeological or bioarchaeological workshop and lecture
25 %	Activity and examines
15 %	Final project

COURSE SCHEDULE

All IFR field schools begin with a safety orientation. This orientation addresses local and program protocols concerning student behavior, appropriate attire, local practices and sensibilities that may be unfamiliar, potential fauna and flora hazards, IFR harassment and discrimination policies, and the student Code of Conduct.

The Field School schedule consists of four Units:

Unit 1: Theoretical module consisting of three components:

- Lectures and instructions on field methods and practices;
- Lectures on different aspects of the Late Antiquity/Early Medieval archaeology (4th–11th century) in Croatia;
- Lectures on Archaeology and Bioarchaeology

Unit 2: Practicum consisting of two components:

- Archaeological fieldwork including basic practices of excavation and archaeological records;
- Bioarchaeological fieldwork (in the crypt and conference hall, working with ceramics and bones including basic practices of excavation and documentation such as sexing, aging, identifying traumas, washing etc.);
- Workshops dedicated to archaeological and anthropological finds processing and documentation.

Unit 3: Trips to the Prehistoric, Classical, Medieval and Late Medieval sites, accompanied by presentations and behind-the-scenes visits to the archaeological sites and museums.

Unit 4: Homework: assignments will be allotted to all students. These will consist of editing and processing field documentation (field notebook, context sheets, drawings, photos), and preparing presentations and reports.

Date	Morning	Afternoon
Day 1 June 14 Sun.	Arrival and check in (Zagreb)	
Day 2 June 15 Mon.	Zagreb / Orientation panel Lecture: Health and safety at the site	Sightseeing and orientation walk in Zagreb Museums in Zagreb

Day 3 June 16 Tue.	Zagreb / Posture in archaeology	Introductory lecture (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences - Zagreb): Croatian culture and customs Workshop: Use of Tools and Working Techniques
Day 4 June 17 Wed.	Labor / Field work Lecture: Introducing the site and surroundings	Starting the archaeological dig, setting up the grid Workshop: Posture, alignment and handling of archaeological tools
Day 5 June 18 Thur.	Labor Field work Lecture: Lecture: Basic Field Methods and Practices for Excavation and Documentation	Field work Workshop: Ergonomics in archaeology – exercise at the site
Day 6 June 19 Fri.	Labor Field work Lecture: Archaeological measuring instruments (Total Station)	Field work Workshop: Sieving, Documentation, Excavation
Day 7 June 20 Sat.	Labor Field work Lecture: Importance of the teamwork and Cooperation	Field work Workshop: Sieving, Documentation, Excavation
Day 8 June 21 Sun.	Day off / Free time	
Day 9 June 22 Mon.	Labor Field work Sieving, Documentation, Excavation Lecture: Students project - introduction	Field work Archaeological and bioarchaeological workshop
Day 10 June 23 Tue.	Labor Field work Lecture: Total Station, Sieving, Documentation, Excavation	Field work Archaeological and bioarchaeological workshop
Day 11 June 24 Wed.	Labor Field work Total Station, Sieving, Documentation, Excavation Lecture: Humans Remains excavation	Field work Archaeological and bioarchaeological workshop
Day 12 June 25 Thur.	Field trip: Krapina Neanderthal Museum, City of Krapina	
Day 13 June 26 Fri.	Labor Field work Excavation	Field work Archaeological and bioarchaeological workshop

Day 14 June 27 Sat.	Field trip: Medieval Zagreb	
Day 15 June 28 Sun.	Day off / Free time	
Day 16 June 29 Mon.	Labor / Field work Lecture: Forensic Anthropology Total Station, Sieving, Documentation, Excavation	Field work Archaeological and bioarchaeological workshop Workshop: introduction of archaeological finds Workshop: correct and incorrect position of archaeologists and team members during archaeological excavation
Day 17 July 30 Tue.	Labor/ Field work Excavation, Total Station, Sieving, Documentation Lecture: Students project – follow up	Field work Archaeological and bioarchaeological workshop Workshop: cleaning and sorting of archaeological finds
Day 18 July 1 Wed.	Labor / Field work Excavation, Total Station, Sieving, Documentation Lecture: Croatian archaeological monuments in the early Middle Ages	Field work Archaeological and bioarchaeological workshop Workshop: cleaning and sorting of archaeological finds
Day 19 July 2 Thur.	Labor / Field work Excavation, Total Station, Sieving, Documentation Lecture: Introduction to burial customs in northern Croatia	Field work Archaeological and bioarchaeological workshop Workshop: cleaning and sorting of archaeological finds Field trip: Zagorje county
Day 20 July 3 Fri.	Labor / Field work Excavation, total station, sieving, documentation Lecture: Antique and late antique pottery	Field work Archaeological and bioarchaeological workshop Workshop: cleaning and sorting of archaeological finds
Day 21 July 4 Sat.	Labor / Field work Excavation, total station, sieving, documentation	Field work: Archaeological and bioarchaeological workshop Workshop: cleaning and sorting of archaeological finds
Day 22 July 5 Sun.	Day off / Free time	
Day 23 July 6 Mon.	Labor / Field work Excavation, total station, sieving, documentation	Field work Workshop: cleaning and sorting of archaeological finds
Day 24 July 7 Tue.	Labor / Field work Excavation, total station, sieving, documentation	Field work Workshop: cleaning and sorting of archaeological finds
Day 25 July 8 Wed.	Labor / Field work Excavation, total station, sieving, documentation	Field work Workshop: cleaning and sorting of archaeological finds

Day 26 July 9 Thur.	Labor / Field work Student presentations of project	Student presentations of final works Final discussion
Day 27 July 10 Fri.	Picnic in Zagreb - Maksimir park	Time to explore Zagreb and local sites
Day 28 July 11 Sat.	Departure	

In case of unpredictable circumstances (e.g. sick leave), lectures from the syllabus will be postponed until a later date or replaced with other lectures or activities.

Typical work day at the site

6:00-7:00 am Breakfast

7:00-8:00 am Transfer to the site

8:00am-12:00pm Fieldwork, lectures or workshop

12:00-12:30 pm Break at the site

12:30-4:00 pm Fieldwork, lectures or workshops

4:30-5:45 pm Transfer to Accommodation

7:00-7:45 pm Dinner (or earlier depending on the accommodation location)

Homework/free time

In case of rainy days, lectures, excursions and other activities will be held in the work area or in Zagreb.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

The required minimum attendance for the successful completion of the field school is 90% 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 a medical or other personal reason 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.

REQUIRED READINGS

PDF files of all mandatory readings will be provided to enrolled students. Students are encouraged to download and/or print readings prior to traveling. Course participants are expected to be prepared to engage the discussions led by facilitators, all of whom will be looking for compelling evidence that

students have read and thought about the assigned readings prior to the scheduled day on which they are first discussed.

As noted above, the Lopor Project conscientiously combines experiential learning with formal instruction, including lectures and readings. Students will have access to front load resources written by the faculty and translated to English. Readings will be provided to the students before the excavation, so they could follow the lectures and understand the wider context of Lopor.

A. Dugonjić and A. Rapan Papeša, *Avars and Slavs - Two sides of a belt strap end: Avars on the north and south of the khaganate*. Arheološki muzej, Collectanea Archaeologica 5, Zagreb 2022.

K. Filipec and M. Bunčić, *Lopor – An Early Medieval Centre of Power, 20 Years of Archaeological Excavations*, Zagreb 2021.

K. Filipec and M. Filipec, *Introduction in Rescue Archaeological Excavation. Ergonomics in Archaeology*, Zagreb 2022.

H. Wolfram, *Germans, Langobards, History of the Goths*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1988

W. Pohl, *The Avars: A Steppe Empire in Central Europe, 567–822*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2018

B. Migotti, *The Archaeology of Roman Southern Pannonia, BAR International Series 2393, 2012 Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages in today's Croatia*

T. D. White, P. A. Folkens, *Archaeology, The Human Bone Annual*, 2005