

Ethnoarchaeology of Tattoos Austin, Texas

Program Information

PROGRAM SPECIFIC FIELD CONDITIONS

What are the average weather conditions during the time of the field school?

Austin in January has fairly mild weather. The daily highs and lows fluctuate between the 40s at night and the 60s in the day. Occasionally there will be a cold snap in the winter, but that often happens in February. While it is generally sunny, there are winters where it is rainy and cloudy, so checking the weather beforehand will be key to packing correctly.

Please describe the site(s) where the students will work.

Students will be working primarily inside tattoo studios in the city of Austin. Austin is a growing metropolitan city and is the state capital of Texas. The bulk of data collection will happen indoors within the studios, but there will be walking between sites and around the city and possible walking tours.

Are there special features of the program site?

This program offers unique opportunities to bridge scientific data collection with artistic and social engagements within the context of the vibrant cosmopolitan city of Austin. Students will gain firsthand experience using innovative methodology to gain insight into the embodied practices of tattooing, while having a lot of fun in the process! Austin also offers many restaurants, coffee shops, markets, bars, and trails to experience the city's lively culture of music, art, and technology.

Will there be other people onsite with the field school or working in the same area?

Austin has both thriving archaeology and tattooing scenes. It is likely that local archaeologists will visit the field sites. We will also be interacting regularly with tattooers from whose studios we are studying.

What does an average week look like?

The field schedule is planned around a balance of field activities, lectures, and discussions on essential and relevant course topics. Since the program is short, there will not be free days; however, the course activities involve going to fun events like local markets, museums, and exploring the east side of Austin. The daily schedule will remain flexible to accommodate tattooers' schedules, but the morning will typically consist of discussions on course readings, reflections from previous days activities, and pre-field preparation. The afternoon will consist of conducting fieldwork within tattoo studios and talking to tattooers. Finally, the day will end with debriefs on the day's activities over a shared meal.

What are the options for students to access money?

There are several ATMs and banks in East Austin, near the accommodation. Local establishments accept credit and debit cards. Cash is accepted at most establishments, although many businesses are switching to cashless. At local markets Venmo, Zelle, and CashApp are typically accepted as well. Students may bring \$20-\$50 in emergency cash funds, should they desire.

ACTIVITY LEVEL & ACCESSIBILITY**Please provide information about the physical requirements of the program.**

Data collection during this program entails low to moderate levels of strenuous physical activity. Students will be learning mapping techniques, photography, and inventorying inside studios, as well as walking between studios. Each of these activities requires the ability to move within spaces, including crouching, kneeling, and possibly lifting objects. Students should be prepared to walk up to two to three miles per day and be on their feet for periods at a time while conducting data collection. Space within tattoo studios will vary depending on the type of location.

Please comment on how accessible your site is for people with mobility challenges.

Data collection may be limited for people with mobility challenges. Each tattoo studio is designed differently, and while some may be accessible to mobility-challenged individuals, others may be more difficult. If you are interested in the program, please reach out, and we can discuss possible accommodations.

PROGRAM COUNTRY & CULTURAL INFORMATION**What do you love about the country and area you work in? What do you think students will be most excited to discover?**

Austin is a very fun and vibrant city to spend time in. The culture of the city is open-minded, creative, and welcoming to new people. There is always something to do, whether it's going to see live music, a comedy show, a gallery opening, or a 24-hour coffee shop. As the capital of Texas and an ever-growing tech hub, Austin features a diverse population where artist cowboys meet tech bros, coming together to create a unique city. I think students will be excited to explore the hidden gems of the city, like the spring-fed pools of Barton Springs and Deep Eddy or the iconic music venue in a local gas station, and meet the cool, weird, and creative people who make up the Austin tattoo scene.

How large is the community where students will be staying? Will students have opportunities to interact casually with local residents? Please describe.

Students will have ample opportunity to meet with the local community. The accommodation lies in the heart of East Austin, located within walking-distance or a short rideshare away from bars, music venues, restaurants, and galleries. We will take frequent trips to nearby tattoo studios allowing students to talk to local tattooers and see the diversity of spaces.

Primary languages spoken by people in the area:

English is the primary language spoken in Austin, although Spanish is frequently used in some locations as well.

What are some things students may find surprising about the local culture?

Austin is a liberal city in a very conservative state, and people are generally very friendly.

Are there cultural aspects that students should be aware of before they come?

Although Austin is known for its freedom of self-expression, it is important to remember that it is still Texas. While it is unlikely that students will encounter many close-minded individuals in the spaces we will be studying, it will be important to keep in mind that the state is politically conservative. That said, students are welcome to wear clothes they would normally select when going to school or hanging out with friends.

What cultural enrichment opportunities are students likely to have outside of the program?

Since the program is short, there will not be ample time for extracurricular activities, but there will be enrichment opportunities built in throughout the program. This will include attending a market on the weekend, visiting the local springs and Zilker park during our orientation, and going to a tattoo museum. Students will have time to visit local coffee shops and go to live music shows, should they desire.

Will students have opportunities to explore other areas of the country?

There will not be enough time to visit other parts of Texas during this program. However, if students wish to explore other regions, there are buses to San Antonio, Houston, and Dallas, as well as airports.

ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS**Please describe student accommodations.**

Students will be staying in an Airbnb in East Austin. There will be two students assigned to a room, with shared bathrooms. The house will have common areas and a kitchen where we will make group meals. Bed linens and towels will be provided at the Airbnb.

How are room assignments made?

Students will fill out a short questionnaire, and room assignments will be made based on the answers.

Are there options for single rooms?

There are no options for single rooms at this time.

Please describe how/how often students can do laundry.

There will be a washer and dryer in the house, so students can do laundry as often as they like.

Will the program provide meals?

The program will provide many of the meals for students, including breakfasts and lunches made at the Airbnb. Students will prepare their own breakfasts with food items provided through the program. Lunches will be similarly available. If there is time and students would like to go out for that meal, they are responsible for purchasing. Dinners will mostly be held communally at the Airbnb and will be an important time to gather and reflect on that day. There are several nights where students are allowed to go out on their own for dinner. Dietary restrictions will be accommodated as best as possible, specifically vegetarian, vegan, and gluten-free. Please let me know if you have other restrictions! The Airbnb will be close to a grocery store where students may acquire extra food items if they desire.

VISA AND PERMIT REQUIREMENTS

No visas or permits are required for US citizens for this program.

TRAVEL (TO AND DURING THE PROGRAM)

What airport should students fly into?

Students should fly into Austin-Bergstrom International Airport (AUS).

If there are other ways students can get to the program, please describe.

There are airports in Dallas (DFW), San Antonio (SAT), and Houston (IAH, HOU), but those would require taking a bus to Austin, which could take several hours. This is not recommended.

Students may also take a bus (there are several bus terminals in the city), and they may drive. There will be parking near the Airbnb.

Where will you meet students?

For students arriving by plane in Austin, I will pick students up from the airport at their designated time of arrival. If you are considering arriving another way, please consult with me beforehand so we can arrange where to meet.

If the field site is not close to student accommodations, how will students get there? How long does it take?

Depending on the studio we are going to, I will either drive students or we will walk. All of our destinations will be within a fifteen-minute drive.

Are there any other aspects of the program, site, or location you want students to be aware of before they arrive?

Tattoo studios can be intimate and vulnerable spaces for both practitioners and clients. Please come prepared to be respectful and curious of the people and places around you!

PACKING LIST

Please read the Syllabus and pack the quantity of clothing accordingly

- Comfortable clothes for being in a city
- Layers for unpredictable weather and for being inside a tattoo studio (it can get cold!). I recommend looking at the weather the week before. The weather in Austin in January can be unpredictable. Sometimes it's freezing, and sometimes it's warm enough to swim.
- Comfortable, closed-toe footwear for walking and for inside the tattoo space
- Swimsuit (if the weather is nice!)
- Shoes to wear after swimming
- Identification/passport/travel documents
- Prescription medication for the entire program period
- Extra glasses or contacts if worn
- A laptop for working with the database and QGIS
- A field journal: this can be any kind of notebook where you document your reflections, thoughts, and observations.
- Water bottle

Students should *NOT BRING* firearms, weapons, or substances illegal in the state of Texas ([Texas Health and Safety Code](#)).