BRESTO, A PREHISTORIC FORTRESS IN THE MOUNTAIN FROM THE TIME OF TROY (BULGARIA)

Course ID: ARCH XL 159
July 24–August 21, 2017

DIRECTORS:
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INTRODUCTION

The Bresto Excavation Project in the mountains of southwestern Bulgaria explores a fortified settlement from the second half of the 2nd millennium BCE. Bresto was founded in the 13th cent. BCE at the time of the last heyday of Troy and both the Hittite Empire in Anatolia and the Aegean palatial civilizations. In the 12th cent. BCE, after the collapse of these polities, new kinds of networks emerged in the Aegean, where former “fringe” areas became important hubs for the exchange of objects, ideas, and practices. Only 80 miles away from the Aegean Sea, the fortified site at Bresto presents many of the challenges for excavations, including complex stratigraphy. The settlement is protected by two large fortification walls. An international team of scholars from Bulgaria, Germany and the USA with a wide range of specialties is currently attempting to better understand the story behind Bresto and its place in the transition from the Bronze to the Iron Age. The excavation conducted for the last five years shows that despite Bresto’s location in a marginal mountain valley, economic and social life flourished at the site during the 13th–12th century BCE, benefitting from Bresto’s position on an important route for communication and exchange between the Aegean and Central Europe. This position was proven by our most important find from the 2016 campaign. An almost complete Mycenaean vessel in the shape of alabastron, is currently being analyzed for organic residues in order to shed light on the type of ointments or other precious subsistence, kept in this rare object.

Archaeological context: The transition from Bronze to Iron Age in the Eastern Balkan Peninsula corresponds to the end of the Bronze Age in Anatolia, the Late Helladic IIIB and IIIC periods in the Aegean and the Greek mainland and the beginning of the Urnfield Period in Central Europe.
The excavation project at Bresto aims to answer specific and general questions regarding Eastern Mediterranean and European Prehistory:

- What kind of economic and social processes marked the transition from Bronze to Iron Age in the river valleys north of the Aegean?
- What was the reason for the economic prosperity of Bresto, located in an area with restricted agricultural resources?
- What was the role of animal husbandry and wild animals in Bresto as well as the scale of mobility of domestic animals (investigated by isotopic ratio analyses)?
- How can we imagine the 'social lives' and biographies of everyday and valuable objects found at the site (small finds, pottery, and architecture) in Bresto?
- What was the role of fortification, warfare and conflict in Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age communities in the Eastern Balkans?
- What kinds of intercultural encounters can be observed in this part of Europe at the transition from the Bronze to the Iron Age. How did functions and meanings of objects (artifact biographies) change in this contact zone?
- What associated practices of adaption, acceptance or rejection of foreign objects and ideas can be traced?
- What was the role of the river valleys and the mountain ranges in the economic, social and political landscape at the end of 2nd-millenium BCE?

In 2017 faculty and students will seek together the answers of these questions and take part in further excavation of a big apsidal building and fortifications from the 13th - 12th cent. BCE.

### ACADEMIC CREDIT UNITS & TRANSCRIPTS

**Credit Units:** Attending students will be awarded 12 quarter credit units (equivalent to 8 semester units) through our academic partner, UCLA Extension. UCLA is a top ranked research university and its archaeology program is ranked amongst the best in the country. All IFR field schools instructors and curricula are approved both by the corresponding academic department and the Academic Senate at UCLA. This field school provides a minimum of 192 direct instructional hours.

**Transcripts:** Transcripts are available through UCLA UnEX and instructions for ordering transcripts may be found at [http://bit.ly/2bD0Z3E](http://bit.ly/2bD0Z3E). Grades will be posted and transcript available usually within six weeks after the end of this field school. All IFR field schools are designated XL classes – courses that are equivalent to undergraduate courses offered by the UCLA regular session. All XL courses are transferable for unit and subject credit toward the Bachelor's Degree at all campuses of the UC and CSU systems. Classes numbered 100 to 199 are considered upper division (junior/senior). For more information, go to [http://bit.ly/2bjAqmy](http://bit.ly/2bjAqmy).

**UCLA students:** Students can take classes through UCLA Extension to complete requirements. However certain considerations must be taken into account. For more information, go to [http://bit.ly/2bjWeHK](http://bit.ly/2bjWeHK).

**Credit Units Transfer:** Most universities accept UCLA credit units – there are very few exceptions. Students are strongly encouraged to discuss the transferability of the credit units with school officials BEFORE attending the field school.

### COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. To introduce students to field archaeology and finds processing methods.
2. To prepare students to actively perform the main excavation tasks and techniques: to properly use excavation tools, to recognize artifacts and soil characteristics. A special emphasis is placed on the identification the identification of activity areas and their meticulous excavation by the students themselves.
3. To develop the capability of students to perform a series of field documentation tasks during an ongoing excavation project: using measuring and documentation devices, creating written records and graphic documentation.

4. To teach students how to recognize and evaluate stratigraphic relationships and contextual information and to create hypotheses about the formation of the archaeological site.

5. To train students in the fundamental find processing procedures: cleaning, sorting, labeling, and documenting of archaeological finds.

6. To encourage students to contribute interpretations of artifacts that goes beyond their date and classification. In order to accomplish this we offer a series of theoretical and practical classes entitled "Artifact Biographies and Cultural Encounters in the Past".

7. To present the most important archaeological information on the Late Bronze and Early Iron Age in the Eastern Mediterranean (Mycenaean Greece, Hittite Anatolia, Homeric Greece).

Field school students are considered team members (colleagues) and advanced students who show a desire to learn and excel can become co-authors.

DISCLAIMER – PLEASE READ CAREFULLY

Archaeological fieldwork involves physical work outdoors. You should be aware that conditions in the field are different than those you experience in your home, dorms or college town. Note that mountainous climate (influenced by the South-European climate) dominates the region. Days are hot (25-35°C) and nights may get chilly (15-25°C). Rainy and cold days in this season are rare but not unheard-of.

If you have any medical concerns, please consult your doctor. For all other concerns, please consult the project director, as appropriate.

COURSE SCHEDULE

The Field School schedule consists of four modules:

MODULE I - Theoretical module (app. 25 hours). Consists of three components:

1. Lectures and instructions about the field methods and practices;
2. Lectures about theoretical concepts (classes on artifact biographies and cultural encounters in the past);
3. Lectures about the archaeology of Bresto and its broader context in the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean in the time of the turn from Bronze to Iron Ages.

MODULE II – Practicum (app. 155 hours). Consists of two components:

1. Fieldwork including basic practices of excavation and archaeological record;
2. Workshops on archaeological finds processing and documentation.

MODULE III – Excursions accompanied by lectures, presentations and behind-the-scenes visits to sites of historical/archaeological significance (app. 15 hours), such as the Rila Monastery (UNESCO World Heritage Site), the Blagoevgrad Regional Museum of History, the traditional town and well-known European ski resort of Bansko, the Vihren hut (1950 m a.s.l.) in the Pirin Mountains (UNESCO World Heritage Site), Kavala on the Aegean coast and Philippi (UNESCO World Heritage Site), both in Greece.

MODULE IV – Homework (app. 10 hours) will be assigned to all students. Consists of editing and processing of students’ field documentation (field journal, context sheets, drawings, photos, etc.), preparing of presentations and reports.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Morning</th>
<th>Afternoon</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mo, 24.07.</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.00 pm - pick-up from Sofia airport. Arrival</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Lab:</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tue, 25.07.</td>
<td>Orientation panel.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Day 2</td>
<td>Orientation in the village of Banya</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Day 4</td>
<td>Orientation panel.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Fri, 28.07.</td>
<td>Lab:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Day 5</td>
<td>Orientation panel.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Day 6</td>
<td>Orientation panel.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Sun, 30.07.</td>
<td>Lab:</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Mon, 31.07.</td>
<td>Lab:</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Day 8</td>
<td>Fieldwork Instruction: Stratigraphy and record of sediments and features</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Tue, 01.08.</td>
<td>Lab:</td>
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<td>Day 9</td>
<td>Fieldwork Instruction: Formation Processes of the Archaeological Record</td>
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<td>Day 10</td>
<td>Fieldwork Instruction: Field Diary: Describing Excavation Process, Features and Their Stratigraphic</td>
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<td>Position</td>
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| Thu, 03.08. Day 11 | **Site:** Fieldwork  
**Instruction:** Archaeological Photography of Sites and Structures  
**Lab:** Lecture 6: Dating Methods in Prehistoric Archaeology (Lab) |
| Fri, 04.08. Day 12 | **Site:** Fieldwork  
**Instruction:** Drawing of Plans and Sections  
**Site:**  
**Lab:** Workshop: Drawing of Plans and Sections |
| Sat, 05.08. Day 13 | **Site:** Fieldwork  
**Lab:** Lecture 7: Presentation of Preliminary Project Results |
| Sun, 06.08. Day 14 | Day-off |
| Mon, 07.08. Day 15 | **Site:**  
**Instruction:** Stratigraphy - Horizontal and Vertical  
**Lab:** Workshop: Finds Processing & Documentation. |
| Tue, 08.08. Day 16 | **Site:** Fieldwork  
**Lab:** Lecture 8: Orthophotographic documentation in Archaeology |
| Wed, 09.08. Day 17 | **Site:** Fieldwork  
**Lab:** Lecture 10: Introduction to Conservation and Restoration in Archaeology |
| Thu, 10.08. Day 18 | **Site:** Fieldwork  
**Lab:** Lecture 11: Making Sense of the Data: The Social Life of Objects. Use-wear Analysis, *Chaine operatoire* and Artifact Biographies |
| Fri, 11.08. Day 19 | **Site:** Fieldwork  
**Lab:** Lecture 12: Biographies of Prehistoric Ceramic Vessels |
| Sat-Sun 12-13.08. Day 20-21 | Excursion to Philippi (UNESCO World Heritage Site), Kavala and the Aegean coast |
| Mon, 14.08. Day 22 | **Site:** Fieldwork  
**Lab:** Lecture 13: Cultural Encounters, Part 1 – Theory. |
| Tue, 15.08. Day 23 | **Site:** Fieldwork  
**Lab:** Workshop: Finds Processing & |
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<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Lab:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wed, 16.08. Day 24</td>
<td>Fieldwork</td>
<td>Lecture 14: Cultural Encounters, Part 2 – Case Studies</td>
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<td>Thu, 17.08. Day 25</td>
<td>Fieldwork</td>
<td>Workshop: Finds Processing &amp; Documentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fri, 18.08. Day 26</td>
<td>Fieldwork</td>
<td>Lecture 15: Presentation of the project results</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat, 19.08. Day 27</td>
<td>Fieldwork</td>
<td>Time for research, exam preparation and individual work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sun, 20.08. Day 28</td>
<td>Excursion to the Rila Monastery (UNESCO World Heritage Site) and the Regional Museum of History in Blagoevgrad</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mon, 21.08. Day 29</td>
<td>Departure. Check-out by noon</td>
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*Course structure may be subject of change upon directors’ discretion*

A typical work day:

- 5:30-6:00 am: Breakfast
- 6:00-6:20 am: Drive to site
- 6:30am-1:40 pm: Fieldwork
- 1:40-2:00 pm: Drive back to hotel
- 2:00-4:00 pm: Lunch and break
- 4:30-7:30 pm: Lectures, Workshops, Finds processing, Research
- 7:30-8:30 pm: Dinner

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

**GRADING MATRIX**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of Grade</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20 %</td>
<td>Exam</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 %</td>
<td>Excavation (use of tools, digging, scraping, brushing, cleaning, sieving, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 %</td>
<td>Field journal and context sheets/labels</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 %</td>
<td>Leveling, measuring and scale-drawing (ground plan/ cross section/ specific archaeological structure or feature);</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 %</td>
<td>Photography</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 %</td>
<td>Finds processing: washing and sorting, labeling and registration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 %</td>
<td>Artifact drawing (pottery)</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 %</td>
<td>Statistic forms</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 %</td>
<td>Flotation and processing of flotation samples.</td>
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**ATTENDANCE POLICY:**

The required minimum attendance for the successful completion of the field school is 85% of the course hours. Any significant tardy or early departure from an activity will be calculated as an absence from the activity. An acceptable number of absences for which a medical or reasonable
excuse is provided will not be taken into account if the student catches up on the field school study plan through additional readings or personal consultations and tutorials with program staff members.

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 and tired. Students are required to come equipped with sufficient excitement and adequate understanding that archaeology requires real, hard work, in the sun and wind, on your feet, and with your trowel. The work requires patience, discipline and attention to detail.

The field school at Bresto will host students and professionals of archaeology from all over the World. With such an international team it is vital that all students respect the IFR code of conduct, each other’s cultures, and local social and cultural rules and laws.

EQUIPMENT LIST

- Work shoes (preferably closed toe shoes like sneakers or running shoes)
- An additional set of walking and hiking shoes.
- Clothing suitable for outdoor activities (consider weather conditions from hot and sunny to rainy and chilly).
- Wide brim hat for fieldwork.
- A light raincoat for possible rainy and windy days is recommended.
- Medication - It is not necessary to bring over-the-counter medicine from your country since you can buy all common types in Bulgaria (e.g. aspirin and anti-insecticides, sunscreen/tanning lotion, etc.). It is recommended, however, that you bring any individual prescription medicines.
- Don’t forget to bring a converter to EU type electricity wall-plug if needed.
- A good attitude for work, fun, study, and discoveries.

ACCOMMODATION

In Hotel Pri Spaska (Spaska’s) in Banya, Municipality of Razlog, Bulgaria. Comfortable rooms with 2-3 beds and private bathrooms with shower and WC (tap hot water comes from a geothermal spring). Cheap laundry service and free Wi-Fi are provided. Students are not expected to bring any additional equipment, sleeping bags or towels. Higher standard accommodation is provided in Aquilon SPA Hotel located next to the field school lab for an additional fee of 200 EUR per week.

The village and the site: The hallmark of the village of Banya is its thermal mineral waters. There are several spa-hotels with swimming pools and restaurants, small supermarkets, a drug-store, a pharmacy, an ATM and a medical office in the village. A communal open air hot water swimming pool (50 m long) is located 15 minutes away from Spaska’s Hotel.

The distance from the hotels to the site is app. 2.5 km/1.5 mi, and it takes an app. 5-7 min drive. Daily BHF shuttle service is arranged for the participants to bring them to the site and back. The site has no running water or electricity but the team organizes drop-offs to the hotel WC upon request.

Meals: Three meals (Balkan cuisine) per day are provided. Meals usually take place in the hotel’s restaurant. Brown-bag-lunches will be provided during excursions. This field school can accommodate vegetarians and individuals with lactose-intolerance. Vegan, kosher and gluten-free restrictions are impossible to accommodate in this location.

Students must pay on their own for extra days and/or for single room accommodation as well as for extra meals, beverages, services and products!

TRAVEL & MEETING POINT/TIME
Students shall meet at 4:00 pm on July 24, at the OK Taxi (Balkan Heritage Foundation Travel partner) Desk in the Sofia International Airport Terminal 2 arrival area. From there students will be driven by taxi/shuttle to Banya. The trip takes app. 3.5 hours but the duration depends on traffic. It is recommended to exchange/withdraw up to 20 Bulgarian Lev (app. 11 USD) and buy a bottle of water and visit the restroom before the trip.

If you missed your connection or flight was delayed/canceled, call, text or email to the project staff (email: bhfs.admissions@gmail.com). Local contact information will be provided to enrolled students.

Students can get general information, essential travel basics, and tips concerning the project location and the country at www.bhfieldschool.org/countries/bulgaria (for Bulgaria) and http://www.bhfieldschool.org/project/bresto (for the project / see the map on the bottom of project web site). All students will receive a travel info-sheet with specific travel details prior to departure.

VISA REQUIREMENTS

Citizens of EU, EEA, USA, Canada, Japan, Republic of Korea, Australia and New Zealand do not need a visa to visit Bulgaria for up to 90 days. Citizens of all other countries may need a visa. The Balkan Heritage Foundation can send an official invitation letter that should be used at the relevant embassy to secure a visa to the program.

For more information about visas, visit the Balkan Heritage Foundation web site at http://www.bhfieldschool.org/information/visa-help and the links provided there.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Safety and health orientation will take place at the beginning of the program. There is a first aid medical care and a pharmacy in the village of Banya. The closest hospital with specialized doctors (e.g. pediatrician, dermatologist, gynecologist, trauma care etc.) is located in the municipal center of Razlog (8 km/5 mi or 12 min drive away from Banya).

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Bulgarian dialing code: +359

Time Difference (Summer time): UTC/GMT +2 hours (March through October).

Measure units: degree Celsius (ºC), meter (m.), gram (gr.), liter (l)

Money/Banks/Credit Cards: The Bulgarian currency is the Bulgarian LEV (BGN). You cannot pay in Euros or other foreign currency, except in casinos and big hotels (where the exchange rate is really unfair)! Since 1997, the Bulgarian LEV has been pegged to the EURO at the exchange rate of 1 euro = 1.955 lev (usually sold for 1.94 lev). Bulgarian banks accept all credit cards and sometimes travellers’ cheques. Usually banks open at 8.30-9.00 am and close at 5.00-6.00 pm. They work from Monday to Friday. Shopping malls, supermarkets, and many shops in Sofia and/or bigger towns and resorts will also accept credit cards. This is not valid for smaller “domestic” shops throughout the country where the only way of payment is cash! You can see Bulgarian notes and coins in circulation at:

http://www.bnb.bg/NotesAndCoins/NACNotesCurrency/index.htm?toLang=_EN

Exchange of foreign currencies is possible not only at banks but also at numerous exchange offices. NB, Most of them don’t collect a commission fee and have acceptable exchange rates (+/- 0.5-1,5% of the official rate) However, those located in shopping areas of big cities, resorts, railway stations, airports, etc., can overcharge you varying amounts. Ask in advance how much money you will get!

ATMs are available all over the country and POS-terminals are in every bank office.
If you plan to use your credit/debit card in Bulgaria, please inform your bank of your intention before departure! Otherwise it is very possible that your bank will block your account/ card for security reasons when you try to use it abroad! Unblocking your card, when abroad, may cost you several phone calls and a lot of money.

**Electricity**

The electricity power in the country is stable at 220 - Volts A.C. (50 Hertz). Don’t forget to bring a voltage converter, if necessary!

Outlets in Bulgaria generally accept 1 type of plug: two round pins. If your appliance’s plug has a different shape, you will need a plug adapter.

**Emergency**

National emergency number is 112.

**REQUIRED READINGS**

*Important Notice: Only selected parts of the following texts will be discussed in our courses. Registered students will become additional information on topics and pages from these texts which are of relevance for our teaching.*


**RECOMMENDED READINGS**


Roskams, St. Excavation. Cambridge Univ. Press. 2001.


