



THE USPALLATA ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT, ARGENTINA

Course ID: ARCH XL159

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DIRECTOR:

Dr. Erik J. Marsh, CONICET. Laboratorio de Paleo-Ecología Humana & Universidad Nacional de Cuyo, Mendoza, Argentina (erik.marsh@gmail.com)



INTRODUCTION

The Uspallata Valley in Mendoza, Argentina lies below the snow-peaked Andes. The valley has been occupied since the Late Pleistocene. It includes 1) the site Agua de la Cueva, which dates to over 13,000 years ago and is earliest human occupation of this part of the Andes, 2) Mendoza's densest concentration of prehispanic rock art at Cerro Tunduqueral, and 3) the southernmost extension of the vast Inca Empire and its road system, including a high-altitude child sacrifice on Mount Aconcagua, the highest peak in the Americas.

The project's research focuses on the transition from foraging to pastoralism and agriculture. Both practices were present in the valley in the first millennium AD, but the timing and nature of the transition are unclear. This is most likely when the rock art at Cerro Tunduqueral was engraved, but this connection has not yet been demonstrated. We will investigate to what extent people remained people as they added novel subsistence strategies. These issues will be addressed with 1) survey data from a large area called Uspallata Norte (~8 km²) that includes dense and extensive surface dispersals of ceramics, ground stone, and expedient lithic tools and 2) excavations of a high altitude rock shelter, Paramillos. Both sets of data will complement the data from the 2016 field school, which excavated a surveyed and excavated rock shelter around Cerro Tunduqueral. We will focus on the following questions.

1. When were different parts of Uspallata Norte occupied? This is a challenge because the site is extensive but mostly limited to surface remains. Some parts of Uspallata Norte appear to have

stratified material, which will be evaluated with small excavation units. We will be collecting carbon and bone samples from surface dispersals and selecting secure contexts for dating. We will also be collecting ceramics for thermoluminescence dating. This technique has had produced anomalous results in this region, so we will pair these dates with radiocarbon dates to test their reliability and shed light on the reason for unexpected thermoluminescence results.

2. At some point, people in the valley transitioned to agriculture and pastoralism. What was the nature of this change? Was this it sudden or gradual? To what extent did foragers remain mobile as they incorporated ceramics and small scale agriculture? It is clear that these groups remained mobile to some degree, so do not appear to fit neatly into categories of nomadic or sedentary. We will explore how their lifestyles combined hunting, gathering, herding, and farming. We will specifically focus on material indicators of different degrees of mobility.
3. What did people do at the high altitude rock shelter of Paramillos? This site is located along a natural corridor to between the Uspallata valley and the eastern plains. Is there evidence of trade or items from the pacific coast (marine shell jewelry, Chilean ceramic styles)? Was this site occupied at the same time as Uspallata Norte? The sequence and chronology of Paramillos should be clearer than that of Uspallata Norte, and the two will be directly compared. Did people practice independent or complementary activities?

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>. 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/2bjAgmy>.

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>.

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

The objective of this field school is to introduce students to the basics of archaeology and the progression of the research process: generating questions, doing field work, processing artifacts, and interpretation. Students will be instructed on and actively participate in the practical realities of **archaeological field work** including survey, excavation, laboratory analysis, and artifact cataloging. This project is particularly interested in encouraging students' own research that may become part of undergraduate honors theses or publications. Students will participate in the following research activities:

Survey: Students will conduct survey south of Tundqueral and along the edges of the valley.

Excavation: Students will participate in excavations in Uspallata Norte and Paramillos.

Laboratory: Scheduled lab tasks will include washing, sorting, drawing, and cataloging of finds.

Integration and interpretation: Students will help integrate field and laboratory data in an Excel database, organize photographs, digitize field drawings, and explore initial interpretations and hypotheses.

The course begins on Thursday, June 1 and will meet every weekday until June 30. The first week is run as a discussion seminar. Students are expected to be prepared with detailed comments and questions on the readings. These discussions will include additional information on the cultural and archaeological background to the fieldwork. During this week the group will get acclimated to the climate and accommodations. Two days include field trips to archaeological sites to become more familiar with the Uspallata Valley.

DISCLAIMER – PLEASE READ CAREFULLY

Archaeological field work involves physical work in the outdoors. You should be aware that conditions in the field are different than those you experience in your home, dorms, or college town. This program operates at a typical high-altitude valley environment in the Andes. During the day, the climate is pleasant, sunny, and temperatures around 60–70°F or higher. Nighttime temperatures drop to around 30–40°F or lower, as the field school takes place during the Southern Hemisphere’s winter. The climate is very dry. We are away from urban areas so there are some mosquitoes or flies. In order to be protected from sunburn and insects you will not be allowed to work in shorts or tank tops at the site.

Argentinean culture is different from that of the US. When meeting, people kiss. Beef is a staple and Argentinian eat a lot of it. Wine is consumed in almost every meal but people rarely get drunk – public drunkenness is not socially acceptable. Argentines speak Spanish, fast and with a very distinct accent. Students should understand that while Argentina is part of the global economy, local culture is distinct and may be fairly different from the values practiced at home. We are not there to change local traditions but to observe, learn and appreciate the diversity of human culture – both past and present.

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

PREREQUISITES

There are no prerequisites for participation in this field school. 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 acceptance that this will not be the typical university learning environment. You will get sweaty, tired and have to work in the outdoors. Students are required to come equipped with sufficient excitement and adequate understanding that the archaeological endeavor requires real, hard work – in the sun, on your feet, and with your trowel.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

On successful completion of the field school, students will be able to:

- Understand and participate in the steps of archaeological research
- Apply standard excavation methods to archaeological contexts
- Apply standard survey techniques to eco-cultural landscapes
- Adequately record and organize information from the field to facilitate laboratory analysis
- Sort, wash, and inventory artifacts

- Debate potential interpretations of the archaeological data

GRADING MATRIX

50%: Attend and participate in all discussions, field work, and laboratory work

40%: Keep a notebook with daily reflections, which will be submitted at the end of the course

10%: An oral presentation at the end of the first week of field school. Students will present an article to the group and integrating the material from the required readings and lectures.

Students' overall grades will reflect their dedication to this learning experience.

TRAVEL AND MEETING POINT

Students will be met at the first day of the program at either the Mendoza airport (MDZ) or bus terminal by project staff members. Students must let project staff know their flight arrival time. The secondary meeting place is Lagares Hostel (www.hostellagares.com.ar; Corrientes 213, Mendoza, +54 9 261 423-4727). See below for further details on hotel.

If you miss your connection or your flight is delayed, please call, text, or email the project director immediately. A local emergency cell phone number will be provided to all enrolled students.

VISA REQUIREMENTS

A valid passport is required to enter and depart Argentina. Travelers entering Argentina on a US passport can stay for 90 days as tourists; no visa is required. Travelers entering on passports from other countries are asked to check the Argentine Embassy website page in their home country for visa requirements.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Students and staff will stay at the Hostel Cerro del Cobre, south of the town of Uspallata (www.hostelcerrodecobre.com). The elevation is around 2,100 meters above sea level (6890 feet) so a short period of adjustment to the altitude will be mandatory. Conditions are basic but comfortable with hot water, etc. Students will sleep on bunk beds in shared rooms and have access to the property's ample outdoor areas and communal rooms. Food is provided by the program Monday to Friday (breakfast, lunch, and dinner). Students are responsible for their weekend meals. All meals will be group events and will provide plenty of nutritious but basic food based on local dietary customs, including the famous Argentine barbecue. Compared some US diets, there is more bread, cheese, and meat. Vegetarian diets can be accommodated but options may be limited. More specialized diets (vegan, kosher, etc.) are difficult to cater to.

REQUIRED EQUIPMENT

1. A pointed archaeology trowel. We recommend a Marshalltown trowel: <https://marshalltown.com/4-stiff-london-style-pointing-trowel-wood-handle>.
2. A clipboard
3. Sleeping bag
4. Work gloves
5. Hiking boots. Students will not be allowed to work in light sneakers or sandals.
6. Sunglasses with UV protection
7. Sunscreen
8. Wide-brimmed hat

COURSE SCHEDULE

Readings and discussion (June 1–7)

Thursday	3–5 pm	Students and staff assemble in the lobby of the Lagares Hostel, Mendoza.
	7 pm	Group dinner
Friday		Topic: What is Archaeology? Readings: Drewett 1999: Chapter 1; Gamble 2008: Chapter 1
		Topic: Themes in Andean Archaeology Readings: Erlandson et al. 2007; Scheinsohn 2003; Silverman and Isbell 2008: Chapters 7–9
Monday		Travel to Uspallata, field trip to Inca sites
Tuesday		Topic: The Archaeology of Argentina and Mendoza Readings: García et al. 1999; Gil et al. 2009; Morales et al. 2009; Raffino and Stehberg 1999; Silverman and Isbell 2008: Chapter 30; Schobinger 1971 (maps and figures)
Wednesday		Topic: Field and Lab Methods 1 Readings: Gamble 2008: Chapter 8; Grant et al. 2008: Chapters 1–5
Thursday		Topic: Field and Lab Methods 2 Readings: Grant et al. 2008: Chapter 7 Student presentations
Friday		Field trip to pre-Inca sites in the Uspallata Valley
Tuesday–Friday	6–7pm	Individual talks with students about their own research and interests for the field school
	8 pm	Dinner

Fieldwork (Monday, June 12–Friday, June 30)

Weekday schedule:

9 am	Breakfast
10 am–5 pm	Survey and excavation with on-site lunch break
5–7 pm	Daily debriefings

Daily debriefings will review lecture material, especially as it relates to research questions or methodological issues encountered during fieldwork. Some days will include field by invited guests from on specific topics such as geomorphology and isotope analysis. On Fridays and Saturday mornings we will stay at the hostel to organize field forms, photographs, and artifacts. Artifact inventories will include basic analysis.

Students have free time Saturday afternoons and Sundays. There are ample tourist activities in the town and valley. One weekend will include an organized excursion to the Provincial Park to the base of Aconcagua Mountain.

June 29 and 30 are for backfilling and cleaning.

Saturday, July 1

Return to the Lagares Hostel in Mendoza. Students return home, continue traveling, or stay in Mendoza.

MANDATORY READINGS

The readings listed below will be posted online before the project begins.

Drewett, Peter L

1999 *Field archaeology: an introduction*. UCL Press, London. Chapter 1.

Erlandson, Jon M., Michael H. Graham, Bruce J. Bourque, Debra Corbett, James A. Estes, and Robert S. Steneck

- 2007 The Kelp Highway Hypothesis: Marine Ecology, the Coastal Migration Theory, and the Peopling of the Americas. *The Journal of Island and Coastal Archaeology* 2:161–174.
- Gamble, Clive
2008 *Archaeology: the basics*. Routledge, London. Chapters 1 & 8.
- García, Alejandro, Marcelo Zárate, and Marta Mercedes Paez
1999 The Pleistocene/Holocene transition and human occupation in the Central Andes of Argentina: Agua de la Cueva locality. *Quaternary International* 53:43–52.
- Grant, Jim, Sam Gorin, and Neil Fleming
2008 *The archaeology coursebook: an introduction to study skills, topics and methods*. Taylor & Francis, London. Chapters 1–5 and 7. Companion website:
<http://cw.routledge.com/textbooks/9780415462860/>
- Morales, M, R Barberena, J B Belardi, L Borrero, V Cortegoso, V Durán, A Guerci, R Goñi, A Gil, and G Neme
2009 Reviewing human-environment interactions in arid regions of southern South America during the past 3000 years. *Palaeogeography, Palaeoclimatology, Palaeoecology* 281:283–295.
- Raffino, Rodolfo, and Ruben Stehberg
1999 Tawantinsuyu. The Frontiers of the Inca Empire. In *Archaeology in Latin America*, edited by Gustavo Politis and Benjamin Alberti, pp. 167–181. Routledge, London.
- Scheinsohn, V
2003 Hunter-gatherer archaeology in South America. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 32:339–361.
- Schobinger, Juan
1971 Arqueología del Valle de Uspallata (Provincia de Mendoza), sinopsis preliminar. *Relaciones de la Sociedad Argentina de Antropología* 5:71–84. Only review maps and pictures.
- Silverman, Helaine and William H. Isbell
2008 *Handbook of South America Archaeology*. Springer, New York. Chapters 7, 9, & 30.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

- Ceruti, Constranza
2015 Frozen mummies from Andean mountaintop shrines: bioarcheology and ethnohistory of Inca human sacrifice. *BioMed Research International*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1155/2015/439428>
- Dillehay, Tom D, C Ramírez, M Pino, M B Collins, J Rossen, and J D Pino-Navarro
2008 Monte Verde: seaweed, food, medicine, and the peopling of South America. *Science* 320:784–786.
- Fernández, Jorge, Héctor O Panarello, and Juan Schobinger
1999 The Inka mummy from Mount Aconcagua: decoding the geographic origin of the “messenger to the deities” by means of stable carbon, nitrogen, and sulfur isotope analysis. *Geoarchaeology* 14:27–46.
- Lanata, José Luis, and Luis Alberto Borrero
1999 The archaeology of hunter-gatherers in South America: recent history and new directions. In *Archaeology in Latin America*, edited by Gustavo Politis and Benjamin Alberti, pp. 74–88. Routledge, London.
- Prates, L, G Politis, and J Steele
2013 Radiocarbon chronology of the early human occupation of Argentina. *Quaternary International* 301:104–122.
- Non-required chapters from Gamble 2008; Grant et al. 2008; Silverman and Isbell 2008