



Pohnpei Survey and Excavation, Federated States of Micronesia

*Course ID: TBD**

June 8th to July 5th, 2025

Academic Credits: *TBD Semester Credit Units**

FIELD SCHOOL DIRECTOR

Dr. Maureece J. Levin, School of Human Inquiry, Anthropology Program, University of Arkansas at Little Rock (mlevin@ualr.edu)



OVERVIEW

Pohnpei, nicknamed “The Garden Island,” is a lush, tropical island. Formed by a now extinct shield volcano, it rises to a height of 782 m (2,566 ft) in its center and is surrounded by barrier and fringing reefs. The climate is hot and humid year-round, although the heat is tempered by frequent rainfall; Pohnpei is one of the rainiest places on earth. Approximately 2000 years ago, people speaking Austronesian languages arrived in Pohnpei and on surrounding islands, most likely from eastern island Melanesia. The earliest arrivals brought plants and animals with them, including breadfruit, bananas, yams, taro, and dogs, fundamentally making the landscape a human one. Pohnpeians have long been farmers and fisherfolk, not only growing food, but also modifying their landscape in significant ways.

**Note: course ID and credits to be assigned by Connecticut College in February 2025*

In this project, we are interested in better understanding the trajectory of Pohnpeian food production and landscape management over the course of the island's settlement. Field School Director Dr. Levin has been conducting research on Pohnpeian subsistence and foodways since she was a master's student at the University of Oregon in 2008; this built on work initiated by her master's and doctoral advisor, Dr. William Ayres, who began a research program on the island in the 1970s. This work has shed light on the organization of food production systems and its relationship to the development of multi-level hierarchical chiefly social systems.

In recent years, collaborators have conducted LiDAR (light detection and ranging) imaging covering much of Pohnpei's surface. This type of imaging can cut through the thick vegetation on the surface of the island and reveal features underneath. Drawing on recent imaging from the island, we will conduct pedestrian survey to locate sites related to food production and consumption and engage in excavation to better understand promising sites. We will work closely and collaborate with local communities in the areas where we work, and you will play a key role in conducting research.

Your time here will be augmented by field trips to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Nan Madol and the Pohnpaid petroglyphs. Additionally, you will have the opportunity to hike Sokehs Rock, go swimming and snorkeling around coral reefs, and taste foods such as local bananas, breadfruit, and fresh reef fish

ACADEMIC CREDIT UNITS & TRANSCRIPTS

Credit Units: Attending students will be awarded * semester credit units (equivalent to * quarter 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). This field school provides a minimum of ** hours of experiential education. 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

There are no prerequisites for this field school. Prior coursework in archaeology or cultural anthropology will be helpful, but are not required. This is a hands-on, experiential course where you will learn by doing archaeology. Please be aware that archaeology involves strenuous physical work and attention to detail, and you will be performing this work in the hot and humid environment of the western Pacific with limited access to technological amenities. Field archaeology can be fun and immensely rewarding, but expect to do a lot of hard work in the process.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course is designed to teach the basics of archaeological field investigation, through a Pacific Islands and environmental lens. Over the course of four weeks, students will participate in survey, mapping, formal excavation, sample collection, and manual flotation, as well as community engagement. They will also be encouraged to develop questions based on their work. Students will learn by doing; they will form a critical role not just in the labor at the archaeological site, but in the production of archaeological

knowledge. They will gain a greater understanding of the way that archaeologists study food production systems as well as the critical role of ecofacts in archaeological sites. Furthermore, students can expect to learn more about the culture of Pohnpei and Micronesia, past and present.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Conduct pedestrian survey and shovel testing
- Draw accurate archaeological maps, plan views, and profiles
- Articulate the importance of archaeological provenience
- Design and carry out formal excavation
- Perform manual bucket flotation
- Take accurate and useful site notes
- Describe and interpret their work
- Understand scholarly journal articles

ASSESSMENT

You will be assessed on your participation and collaboration in the field, your field notes, field skills, and oral field reports. All work should incorporate both what you have learned in the field and in your readings.

Item	Percentage of Final Grade
Participation and Collaboration	50%
Field Notes	20%
Applied Field Skills (effort and improvement)	15%
Oral Field Reports	15%
Total	100%

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.

Day	Date	Activity	Readings
Su	June 8	Arrival at Pohnpei International Airport	
M	June 9	Orientation: Basics of Archaeology, Icebreakers, Field Safety, Meeting Stakeholders	
Tu	June 10	Field Work	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Comer et al. 2019 2. Levin and Ayres 2017

		Weekly Reading Discussion: Archaeology of Oceania, Micronesia, and Pohnpei	
W	June 11	Field Work	
Th	June 12	Field Work	
F	June 13	Field Work	
Sa	June 14	Excursion: Trip to UNESCO World Heritage Site Nan Madol and Pohnpaid Petroglyphs	
Su	June 15	Free Day	
M	June 16	Field Work	
Tu	June 17	Field Work Weekly Reading Discussion: Doing archaeobotany in Oceania	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Denham 2018 2. Levin 2017 3. Streuver 1968
W	June 18	Field Work	
Th	June 19	Field Work	
F	June 20	Field Work	
Sa	June 21	Excursion: Sokehs Rock	
Su	June 22	Free Day	
M	June 23	Field Work	
Tu	June 24	Field Work Weekly Reading Discussion: Sampling; Interpretations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Banning 2021 2. Petersen 2006
W	June 25	Field Work	
Th	June 26	Field Work	
F	June 27	Field Work	
Sa	June 28	Excursion: Ahnd Atoll (with opportunities for swimming & snorkeling on the reef)	
Su	June 29	Free Day	
M	June 30	Field Work	
Tu	July 1	Field Work Weekly Reading Discussion: Cultural Heritage	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ayres and Seikel 2014 2. Peterson et al. 2021
W	July 2	Field Work	
Th	July 3	Begin to wrap-up fieldwork	
F	July 4	Backfill; wrap up fieldwork	

		End of field school dinner	
Sa	July 5	Departure	

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.

Ayres, W.S., and K. Seikel (2014) Burial practices in the archaeological record on Pohnpei, Eastern Micronesia. In H. Martinsson-Wallin and T. Thomas, eds., *Monuments and People in the Pacific*, pp. 129-166.

Banning, E. B. (2021). Sampled to death? The rise and fall of probability sampling in archaeology. *American Antiquity*, 86(1), 43-60.

Comer, D.C., J.A. Comer, I.A. Dumitru, W.S. Ayres, M.J. Levin, K.A. Seikel, D.A. White, and M.J. Harrower (2019) Airborne LiDAR Reveals a Vast Archaeological Landscape at the Nan Madol World Heritage Site. *Remote Sensing* 11(18): 2152.

Denham, T. (2018) Origin and Development of Agriculture in New Guinea, Island Melanesia, and Polynesia. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Environmental Science*.

Levin, M.J. (2017) Archaeobotanical Approaches in the Study of Food Production in Remote Oceania. *Ethnobiology Letters* 8(1): 105-108.

Levin, M.J. and W.S. Ayres (2017) Managed agroforests, swiddening, and the introduction of pigs in Pohnpei, Micronesia: Phytolith evidence from an anthropogenic landscape. *Quaternary International* 434B: 70-77.

Petersen, G. (2006). Micronesia's breadfruit revolution and the evolution of a culture area. *Archaeology in Oceania*, 41(2), 82-92.

Peterson, J. A., Mauricio, R., & Kohler, A. (2021). Indigenous care of heritage monuments: The case of Nan Madol in the Western Pacific. In *Indigenous Peoples, Heritage and Landscape in the Asia Pacific* (pp. 168-182). Routledge.

Struever, S. (1968). Flotation techniques for the recovery of small-scale archaeological remains. *American Antiquity*, 33(3), 353-362.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Athens, J. Stephen, 'Archaeology of the Eastern Caroline Islands, Micronesia', in Ethan E. Cochrane, and Terry L. Hunt, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Prehistoric Oceania*, Oxford Handbooks.

Hanlon, D. L. (2019). *Upon a stone altar: A history of the island of Pohnpei to 1890*. University of Hawaii Press.

Kirch, P. V. (2017). *On the road of the winds: an archaeological history of the Pacific Islands before European contact*. Univ of California Press.