



Buen Suceso Collaborative Heritage & Material Culture Field School

ANTH 4366/6366, ANTH 4395/6395

(Ecuadorian Archaeology & Fieldwork in Anthropology)

June 13-July 19, 2025

FIELD SCHOOL DIRECTORS:

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INTRODUCTION

Dating between 3800 and 1450 BC, the Early Formative Period Valdivia occupation of coastal Ecuador was one of the earliest ceramic traditions of the New World, marked the beginning of sedentary village life in this region, and saw the onset of widespread cultivation of maize and other crops.

The focus of this project is the Valdivia site of Buen Suceso, located along the Río Culebra in the Manglaralto River drainage. We will be emphasizing detail-oriented laboratory analysis within an overall

theme of community-based archaeology in cooperation with the comuna of Dos Mangas, where we will be staying.

Buen Suceso was occupied from 3750-1425 BC, and as such is one of the longest-occupied Valdivia sites. The site is circular in shape, characterized by a low plaza area surrounded by a raised midden ring. The persistence of this circular village form stands in contrast to patterns of spatial organization at other sites, and may indicate that the community at Buen Suceso emphasized more egalitarian and communal forms of social organization. Archaeological investigations will help us understand the daily lives of those who lived at Buen Suceso, and unravel some of the mysteries of power embedded in this enigmatic circular village.

Investigations at Buen Suceso are currently the central focus of our larger archaeological project in the region, the Proyecto Arqueológico de los Ríos Culebra-Colín (PARCC, Archaeological Project of the Culebra-Colín Rivers). PARCC's geographic foci are the lands alongside the Culebra and Colín Rivers, comprising the upper watershed of the Manglaralto Valley, and the lands of the *comuna* Dos Mangas. This area has evidence for the entirety of the Ecuadorian pre-Hispanic coastal sequence and as such is a rich ground to explore culture change through time. The goals of PARCC are to carry out research-driven archaeological investigations, assist with salvage excavations of archaeological remains within the study area when possible, and engage local community members in projects that raise the visibility of local cultural heritage and advocate for its conservation.

The 2024 Buen Suceso field season will focus on laboratory analysis of previously excavated material, including a workflow for 3D photogrammetry of artifacts. Students will also undertake archaeology and heritage projects within Dos Mangas with the cooperation of the *comuna*.

DOS MANGAS

Dos Mangas is a *comuna*, a registered political entity that holds common title to lands. It is home to around 1600 people, the majority of whom make their living from animal husbandry or agricultural production. It is not uncommon to see a mass of cattle being herded through the street by men on horseback, or to see chicken have free reign of house yards (and streets). Because of this Dos Mangas can feel quite rural, even though it is well connected to neighboring towns.

Dos Mangas is located 7km inland from the Pacific coast, at the environmental margin between the humid tropical forest and the cloud forest, which is created by coastal clouds bunching up against the Colonche-Chongon hills. It is an incredible environment in which to observe local flora and fauna including orchids, hummingbirds, leaf cutter ants, and howler monkeys, to name just a few. These spectacular surroundings support a tourism economy and local community guides who conduct ecological hikes. Additionally, artisans in the community use natural resources such as banana leaves, palm fronds, and palm nuts to craft a variety of objects including hats, handbags, and jewelry which they sell to tourists as well.

Archaeological investigations have been conducted in Dos Mangas since 2006, with the broad support of the community. This long-standing relationship has been possible because archaeologists have included community collaboration and service in their project design. Some examples of these activities, both large and small, include: employing local guides as field assistants; compiling prehispanic designs into a reference book for local artisans; giving presentations in the village primary school; conducting training workshops for community guides; and, collaborating on the design for a future site museum. These activities are ongoing and ever-evolving. Students are encouraged to participate and also to develop new ways in which to collaborate and give back.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

This course is designed to expose participants to a broad range of anthropologically informed research grounded in the archaeological threads and debates in South American archaeology. Students will participate in laboratory analyses and learn how archaeological data is collected and processed. By the end of the session, participants should be able to engage in comprehensive artifact analysis. They will also have the opportunity to collaborate with the local community on heritage projects.

To achieve these objectives, this study experience will:

- Introduce students to the diversity and richness of cultures prior to the conquest of South America by Europeans as well as major debates in the study of the region;
- Provide a practical working knowledge of archaeological lab methods, including analysis, cataloging, and conservation;
- Introduce the intellectual challenges of archaeological research, including research design, the interpretation of data, and the continual refinement of hypotheses and field strategies regarding information recovered in the field.
- Include students in heritage projects and collaborations with community members

PREREQUISITES

There are no prerequisites for this experiential learning course. Students will learn how to conduct archaeological research on-site. Participation in PARCC involves physical labor and rustic living which entails patience and professionalism distinct from a typical university learning environment.

Participants are required to come equipped with eagerness to engage in all aspects of archaeological field research, with a clear understanding of the challenges involved in this type of endeavor. While all are welcome, this program will most benefit students who 1) seek engagement with Spanish-speaking colleagues and community members, and 2) need additional experience to apply to graduate school or fellowship programs. Knowing Spanish is helpful, but not a requirement.

DISCLAIMER – PLEASE READ CAREFULLY

Field conditions are different than those you experience in your home or university. Buen Suceso is located in a forested equatorial coastal/riverine area. The temperature range is relatively consistent and generally mild to warm (18-30C/65-85F). It can be wet and uncomfortable, or sunny and humid. Biting flies, mosquitoes, snakes, spiders, ants, and prickly foliage can be challenging. You will be expected to walk several kilometers to and from the site every weekday, carrying field gear and archaeological materials. There are no formal bathrooms at the site, so you should prepare yourself accordingly. Dos Mangas, where project members will live, is a rural town with limited services. An important part of this project is learning to deal with the circumstances at hand, and to make the best of a given situation with the tools available. This is not a summer vacation. We expect all members of our project to be patient, flexible, and prepared. If you have any medical concerns, please consult with your doctor. For all other concerns, please consult with the project directors – as appropriate.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of the session, you will:

- Learn how archaeological data is collected in the laboratory
- Develop the practical and analytical skills necessary for the interpretation of distinct data sets
- Use standard recording techniques to document excavation results
- Undertake preliminary processing of archaeological remains and artifacts

GRADING MATRIX

10%	Quizzes & Worksheets
20%	Active Participation in Scholarly Activities
10%	Lab work
10%	Journal
20%	Heritage Project
20%	Final Report
10%	Mindfulness and Engagement

10% QUIZZES AND WORKSHEETS: Students will complete 3 worksheets, one worksheet at each site/museum that we visit. The purpose of the worksheets are to highlight pertinent information and encourage students to draw connections between the different places we visit. Students will also complete 2 quizzes. The first quiz will cover laboratory protocols and will be given at the end of the first week. The second quiz will be given at the end of the third week and will cover your understanding of the assigned readings on the Valdivia culture and past research in the area.

20%: ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN SCHOLARLY ACTIVITIES: You are expected to actively participate in all lectures, discussions, seminars, training sessions, and workshops. You are also expected to contribute to weekly discussions based on readings, field trips, and lectures, and other prompts. Remember, fieldwork is not easy, so you must be prepared for frustration, tedious assignments, slow, measured progress, and possible delays. Understand that you will be part of a team, working with professionals who expect you to work together as a unit and contribute as appropriate.

10%: LAB WORK: You are expected to participate in all lab work including: washing, labelling, cataloging or taking inventory, notetaking, drawing, measuring, sampling, sorting, counting, weighing, data entry, photography, bagging things, carrying or moving bags or boxes of objects, conservations work, cleaning, and other similar activities. You must keep accurate and complete records for all materials.

10% JOURNAL: You must keep a detailed notebook which will be submitted and evaluated weekly by supervisors. Remember, you are the first person in over four-thousand years to see and study these artifacts. As such, reliable registry and observation at every step of the process is the only way of saving this data for future analysis and interpretation. It is vitally important to record everything you saw and thought at the time. Those whose notes do not contain sufficient detail in this category assessment will be put on notice.

20% HERITAGE PROJECT: Students can work on their own or in teams, in collaboration with the *comuna*, to identify community needs related to cultural heritage and then develop and deploy those projects. Students will be evaluated on their responsiveness to community needs, and on the design and implementation of these projects.

20% FINAL REPORT: Each student will write a reflective report that incorporates the work they undertook in the laboratory (including successes and challenges) and the heritage project that they undertook with the community.

10% MINDFULNESS AND ENGAGEMENT: Your participation in this program explicitly acknowledges your intention and desire to contribute to archaeological scholarship. You'll have good days and bad days, but excessive complaining, bad attitudes, tantrums, freak-outs, sluggish enthusiasm, and anger management problems will not be tolerated. One way of avoiding these funks is being mindful and engaging in public education and outreach through planned activities and mini-projects. The goals of outreach are to gain support in preserving the archaeological record, and explain how archaeology informs on the past and the present. While Spanish is not a pre-requisite for such work, being open to cultures other than your own, to different ways of thinking of and interpreting the world is vital. Students are expected to learn as much from the local community tradition, heritage, ideology and social structure as from the archaeology itself. In the interest of encouraging this, we have assigned a reading dealing with culture shock and will have a specific lecture/discussion period dedicated to this topic in week two (see schedule below).

TRAVEL & MEETING POINT

You are responsible for making your own travel arrangements to Ecuador. International flights into Ecuador arrive in both Quito and Guayaquil. You will need to get to Guayaquil to meet up with the group but it may be more economical to fly into Quito first. Whichever airport you initially fly into, this is where you must go through customs and immigration.

Students are responsible to make their way to the designated meeting point, Grand Hotel Guayaquil, on June 8, 2024. Grand Hotel Guayaquil offers a free airport shuttle. We can help facilitate airport pick-up once we know your flight itinerary.

If you can't make it to the meeting point on June 8, we will still be in Guayaquil the following day visiting museums, leaving for Dos Mangas early on June 10 (see detailed itinerary below). The Project cannot reimburse you for any expenses if you fail to reach the meeting place on the scheduled date, or otherwise fail to meet staff due to your own actions. We will travel together to Dos Mangas on June 19 and get set up in our lodgings there. Travel to and from Dos Mangas at the start and end of the trip is included in the program fee.

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

VISA REQUIREMENTS

US students do not need a visa to travel to Ecuador. The US Department of State (<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/International-Travel-Country-Information-Pages/Ecuador.html>) lists the requirements for US travelers to Ecuador as being:

- 6 month passport validity
- 1 page per stamp
- No tourist visa required for stays shorter than 90 days in any 12-month period
- Vaccinations for yellow fever if traveling in the Amazon Basin or other parts of South America.

Citizens of other countries are asked to check the embassy website page at their home country for specific visa requirements.

STAYING HEALTHY

Students and staff are expected to maintain a reasonable level of hygiene that befits communal living. Also, despite precautions, you should expect mild bouts of stomach upset and possibly diarrhea during your travels. Over-the-counter remedies are adequate for most; serious infections require antibiotics. You may want to ask your doctor for a prescription of ciprofloxacin to have on hand in case you develop more serious intestinal issues. If you have any special health needs, talk with your doctor. You will be

covered by UTRGV travel health insurance for the duration of the program, but you are ultimately responsible for your health status, treatment options, and any medical costs (before any claims and reimbursements). If you have any conditions that require medications or treatments, or if a lack of treatment could result in you hurting yourself or others, you must inform the Project Directors in writing. The Centers for Disease Control minimally recommends vaccines against Typhoid and Hepatitis A for travel to Ecuador (<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/ecuador>). You should obtain all vaccinations at least 4-6 weeks before your trip to allow time for them to take effect.

*Note: Coastal Ecuador is technically listed as a malarial transmission zone by the CDC. The Dos Mangas/Santa Elena region is not known for malaria, but other mosquito-borne illnesses such as dengue and zika are known, however. These are not treatable and thus you will need to protect yourself from bites by effectively covering yourself and using DEET-based repellents. As these are generally effective at keeping mosquitoes at bay, you will also be protected from malaria. Thus, it is not necessary to use anti-malarial medications, though you are certainly welcome to if it would make you feel more comfortable (but be sure to read up on the potential side-effects of anti-malarial medications – they can be rough).

ACCOMMODATIONS

Participants will stay at a property just outside the community, which has common spaces and clean, but basic facilities. Conditions are simple, and participants share accommodations. There is running water for showers and other household needs, but all drinking water comes from a bottle. Rolling blackouts and interruptions of the water system occasionally occur. There is a kitchen and dining area with a stove, fridge, and other essentials like pots & pans, and dishes & flatware. Cellular and internet service may be limited in the village, but there are internet cafés in the neighboring towns. While rooms will be cleaned once a week, it is the students' responsibility to maintain the cleanliness of the house during the week. Cleaning supplies will be provided by the project.

With respect to diet, the project provides plenty of nutritious but basic meal offerings in the tradition of local coastal Ecuadorian cuisine. Breakfast usually consists of coffee, tea, powdered milk, bread, jam, and butter. We will prepare our own breakfasts at our lodgings, with responsibility to prepare meals for the group rotated among participants. Hot lunches, prepared and served at the comedor in Dos Mangas, are generally soup followed by a “segundo” of protein (chicken, pork, fish, or beef) and rice, usually with a salad and/or beans/lentils. Dinner is generally a hearty stew or small plate similar to lunch, which we will bring back to our lodgings from the village. Vegetarian diets can be accommodated with advanced notice but strict vegan, gluten-free, kosher, halal or other specialty diets cannot. Those with specialized diets may find their options very limited and should be prepared to bring their own food down, or purchase items locally to supplement their diet.

Note that the project provides meals when we are together as a group (Monday to Friday, weekend field trips), but you are responsible for all meals during your free time (weekends, except for days during field trips). If you decide to supplement a dish with a special ingredient, or fulfil a between-meal craving, the local stores have a variety of snacks and beverages and there are a number of individuals who drive through town daily selling baked goods and other products. Finally, if you want specific “western style” items like soft drinks, ramen noodles, and other imported snacks, you can buy them at the neighborhood bodega or pick them up in Guayaquil or on the few trips the project will make to La Libertad or Montañita.

COURSE SCHEDULE

The schedule below details the anticipated activities for the summer but is subject to change. Changes will be communicated to students as soon as possible.

Week 1: Orientation Friday June 13 to Sunday June 22 (Introduction to Valdivia Archaeology

Friday June 13

Students arrive in Ecuador and convene at Grand Hotel Guayaquil.

Saturday June 14

Morning safety orientation, tour of the Museo de Antropología y Arte Contemporánea (MAAC). Group lunch and city exploration. **Lecture on Ecuadorian prehispanic cultures in the museum by Dr. Rowe. Students will complete a worksheet during the visit.**

Sunday June 15

Morning travel to Dos Mangas, evening Safety Orientation and **lecture on project history and research goals by Drs. Duke and Rowe.**

Monday June 16

Eco hike – students will visit the site to get familiar with the location and the path they will be walking daily. The hike will continue with a community guide who will introduce them to aspects of the local environment including local flora and fauna. If lucky, students will be able to observe howler monkeys in the forest. Students will visit one of the community ecotourism destinations (waterfalls or natural pools) before returning to the village. **Evening lecture on Bioarchaeology by Dr. Sara Juengst (UNC Charlotte)**

Tuesday June 17

Introduction to field methods (laying out a unit, stratigraphy, total station, artifact collection, data recording).

Wednesday June 18

Continued introduction to field methods. **Evening lecture on food past and present by Dr. Duke**

Thursday June 19

Introduction to lab methods (processing materials, workflow, special items).

Friday June 20

Continued introduction to lab methods. **Afternoon Quiz on excavation and lab methods.**

Saturday June 21 and Sunday June 22

The weekend will be semi-structured with team-building activities and activities to get to know the community. Students will have the ability to travel locally to neighboring towns.

Week 2: Excavation Monday June 23 to Sunday June 29 (South American Geography & Ecology; weekend ceramic workshop in Dos Mangas)

All students will be on site for excavation Monday-Thursday. Fridays will be a lab day (these days may change depending on weather conditions). See Excavation Schedule below.

Monday June 23

Evening discussion on Culture Shock

Wednesday June 25

Evening archaeological theory lecture by Drs. Duke and Rowe

Thursday June 26

Evening lecture on South American Geography and Ecology

Saturday June 28 and Sunday June 29

Ancient ceramic technology workshop in Dos Mangas, led by experimental archaeologist Kathleen Klump and master potter Esteben Orrala, in conjunction with the Florida Atlantic University Salango field school. Students will have free time Saturday evening and Sunday afternoon onwards.

Week 3: Excavation Monday June 30 to Sunday July 6 (Formative Cultures of South America; Friday field trip and Saturday community day)

Each day Monday-Thursday, a different pair of students will stay back for extended lab tutorials. Fridays will be a lab day for all students (these days may change depending on weather conditions). See Excavation Schedule below.

Tuesday July 1

Evening community archaeology lecture by Dr. Rowe

Thursday July 3

Evening quiz on Formative cultures

Friday July 4

Trip to Santa Elena. Exact schedule TBA, but will include visits to the Real Alto site and museum, and the Los Amantes de Sumpa Museum. **Regional archaeology guest lecture TBA. Students will complete separate worksheets at *both* sites.**

Saturday July 5

Excavation and Community Day. Residents of Dos Mangas are invited to visit the site while we excavate

Sunday July 6

Free day.

Week 4: Excavation Monday July 7 to Sunday July 13 (Interregional Interactions; weekend field trip)

Each day Monday-Thursday, a different pair of students will stay back for extended lab tutorials. Fridays will be a lab day for all students (these days may change depending on weather conditions). See Excavation Schedule below.

Thursday July 10

Evening quiz on Valdivia culture (ANTH 4395/4390) and Connections to Other Regions (ANTH 4365/6365)

Friday July 11 - Sunday July 13

Trip to Puerto Lopez. Exact schedule TBA but will include visits to the Agua Blanca site and museum, and whale watching. **Regional archaeology guest lecture TBA. Students will complete a worksheet at Agua Blanca.**

Week 5: Lab Monday July 14 to Saturday July 19 (New Ideas on Social Complexity)

All students will be in the lab for final analyses and writing the site report. See Lab Schedule below.

Thursday July 17

Community despedida

Friday July 18

Pack up field house and lab, travel from Dos Mangas to Guayaquil. Stay overnight at Gran Hotel Guayaquil, evening meal as a group.

Saturday July 19

Students fly home or continue independent travel from Guayaquil.

EQUIPMENT LIST

Consider that anything you bring down could be LOST, BROKEN, or STOLEN, so plan accordingly.

- If you bring a tablet or laptop, back-up all your files.
- If you bring a digital camera, download your photos before you come to Ecuador.
- Don't bring expensive jewelry or ostentatious accessories.
- Check if your insurance company covers loss or theft of property.
- Make copies of your passport and leave one with a trusted relative.

Clothing and Sleeping: Bring enough clothes so that you can go one week without laundry. Try to pack as light as possible, and plan to wear your field clothes more than one day in a row. If you won't wear it more than 3 times, don't bring it.

Packing List:

- 2 pairs work pants (quick drying fabric recommended – not jeans!)
- 1 pair comfy pants (recommended)
- 4 tanks/t-shirts

- 2 long sleeve shirts
- 1 sweater or sweatshirt
- Enough underwear/socks/bras/etc. for at least one week
- Swimsuit
- Wide brimmed hat
- Rain jacket
- Hiking shoes
- House shoes (flip flops recommended)
- Towel(s)
- Eye-mask and earplugs (optional)
- Backpack
- Flashlight/ headlamp
- Sunscreen
- Any medication (prescription and/or over-the-counter) that you may need to last for the duration of the field school
- Sun glasses with UV protection
- Insect repellent (DEET-based strongly recommended)
- Reusable water bottle

Special Gear

- Clipboard – hard plastic boards or closable metal cases are the best
- Pencils – mechanical pencil with 0.7mm point are strongly recommended.
- Hard cover writing book for your journal entries. We will collect these at the end of the season and will return them after grading. Rite in the Rain journals are strongly recommended (<https://www.riteintherain.com/>).
- Personal fan (optional)