

# OSSUARY EXCAVATION AND COMMINGLED REMAINS OSTEOLOGY RESEARCH WORKSHOP - LOST CHURCHES PROJECT -

**TRANSYLVANIA, ROMANIA**

**JUNE 2 - JUNE 29 / JUNE 30 - JULY 27, 2019**

This project is a specialized program within our on-going Medieval Cemetery Funerary Excavation. Students will learn and reinforce basic excavation techniques within an international bioarchaeological project. As part of a broader investigation of the abandonment of medieval churches in the region, this project provides an opportunity for students to gain experience in bioarchaeology while gaining a more comprehensive understanding of biological, archaeological, and cultural contexts.

Participants enrolled in this field school will have the unique opportunity to excavate a stone built, very well preserved ossuary associated with the medieval cemetery of the Lost Church of Valeni / Patakfalva. This particular project is geared towards students with some osteological and fieldwork experience. Students will receive additional experience in excavation techniques as well as osteological analysis of comingled human remains.



**DURATION:** 4 week sessions

**Field Program Fee (non-credit):** US\$2495 per session

**IT INCLUDES:** field program participation fee, most gear, museum clearance; housing in double/triple occupancy rooms in a newly renovated hotel; breakfast and dinner, Monday-Friday

**ACADEMIC CREDITS (6 cr.)**

available through WCU (session 1) and USF (session 2)

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:** [www.archaeotek-archaeology.org](http://www.archaeotek-archaeology.org)

**CONTACT US:** [archaeology@archaeotek.org](mailto:archaeology@archaeotek.org)



**COMMINGLED REMAINS  
OSSUARY EXCAVATION AND LABORATORY ANALYSIS**

**LOST CHURCHES PROJECT**

**June 2 – July 27, 2019**

**Session 1: June 2 – June 29, 2019 / Session 2: June 30 – July 27, 2019**

**Valeni (Odorheiu Secuiesc), Transylvania, Romania**

**OSSUARY PROJECT INSTRUCTOR:**  
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Expert Archaeologist  
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**Project Web Site:**

<https://www.archaeotek-archaeology.org/ossuary-excavation>

**Project Application Form:**

<https://www.archaeotek-archaeology.org/application-bioarchaeology>

**Academic Credits:**

- **Session 1: 6 undergraduate credits available through Western Carolina University - Not Mandatory (additional WCU credit tuition applies):** for more information, contact Dr. Katie Zejdlik-Passalacqua at [kzejdlik@email.wcu.edu](mailto:kzejdlik@email.wcu.edu)
- **Session 2: 6 graduate/undergraduate credits available through University of South Florida - Not Mandatory (additional USF credit tuition applies) - USF Program Brochure – Credit Application Page:**  
<https://educationabroad.global.usf.edu/index.cfm?FuseAction=Programs.ViewProgramAngular&id=23628>

**Requirements: intermediary to advanced human osteology experience; knowledge of human anatomy and morphology**

Ossuary Excavation and Commingled Remains Analysis  
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[archaeology@archaeotek.org](mailto:archaeology@archaeotek.org)



## **I. Historical and Archaeological Background:**

As Europe redefines itself in the wake of the Ottoman invasion, the Carpathian frontier still holds fast against the Southern invaders. As Transylvanian suzerainty has passed from the Hungarian Kingdom, to the Ottomans, to the Habsburgs from the 15-17<sup>th</sup> century, the local populations lived under constant social, political, economic and religious stress. Since the Neolithic, Transylvania has been at the crossroads of European identity. During the late Middle Ages, this region goes not only through major political changes, but also through a spirituality crisis, under the pressure of Islam from the East and Protestantism from the West.

During the 17th century, a series of stone, fortified churches in the region around Odorheiu Secuiesc cease to be used. According to our archeological evidence, most of these churches existed as far back as the 12<sup>th</sup> century. In the aftermath of the crisis that shook the foundation of European identity, these churches disappear from collective memory. At the same time, the use of these temples changes in a fundamental way during the last decades of their use.

Our continuing excavation of the exceptionally well preserved remains of lost church of Valeni / Patakfalva has already yielded in excess of 600 burial. The unexpected discovery, during our 2014 season of a pre-Christian / migration period burial complex, comprising several individuals and a horse, adds another level of perception to the evolution of the landscape. Another surprise was the discovery in 2017, of a stone build, very well preserved ossuary, for which more than the third of the sacristy was sacrificed. Its detailed excavation of analysis forms the basis of our Osteology Excavation and Commingled Remains Osteology Laboratory Research Workshop.

## **II. Project Objectives**

This project is a specialized program within our on-going Medieval Cemetery Funerary Excavation. Students will learn and reinforce basic excavation techniques within an international bioarchaeological project. As part of a broader investigation of the abandonment of medieval churches in the region, this project provides an opportunity for students to gain experience in bioarchaeology while gaining a more comprehensive understanding of biological, archaeological, and cultural contexts.

Participants enrolled in this field school will have the unique opportunity to excavate an ossuary associated with the medieval cemetery at Valeni / Patakfalva. This particular project is geared towards students with some osteological and fieldwork experience. Students will receive additional experience in excavation techniques as well as osteological analysis of commingled human remains.

Evenings and rainy days will provide opportunities for lectures, project analysis, and discussion. All excavation and analysis are conducted with the support of and in collaboration with BioArch (ArchaeoTek) Canada personnel, the Museul Haáz Rezső in Odorheiu Secuiesc, Romania, and the villagers of Valeni / Patakfalva.



### III. Experience

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

- Properly excavate commingled human remains
- Perform osteological analysis of commingled human remains
- Generate maps of ossuary context
- Safely remove human remains and prepare them for curation
- Process human remains for analysis
- Complete MNI and MNE using different methods
- Design a project, execute it, and present it at the workshop's capstone colloquium

### IV. Project Setting

*Patakfalva (RO: Valeni)*: The ossuary excavation will take place on the active site of the Lost Church of Patakfalva, first built around the 10-11<sup>th</sup> c. AD. Previous excavation of the cemetery has yielded the well-preserved skeletal remains of over 500 individuals, ranging from pre-natal to advanced elderly.

### V. Nature of Instructional Activities:

Each week will consist of three days of excavation on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays. Thursdays and Fridays will consist of intensive coursework and laboratory analysis. Typically, course material will be presented in lectures, seminars, and hands-on laboratory experiences during the morning. Afternoons will be dedicated to data collection, lab processing, and analysis.

#### Required Text:

*The Human Bone Manual*. 2005. Tim L. White and Pieter A. Folkens.

#### Suggested Text:

*Juvenile Osteology: A Laboratory and Field Manual*. 2008. Maureen Schaefer, Sue Black, and Louise Scheuer. Academic Press.

#### Required Equipment:

Trowel: 4 inch pointed trowel

Recommended: [MARSHALLTOWN The Premier Line 46 114S 4-Inch Heavy Duty London Style Pointing Trowel with Wooden Handle](http://www.marshalltown.com/Products/Tools/4-Inch-Heavy-Duty-Pointing-Trowel-with-Wooden-Handle.aspx)



**Required Readings:**

Daily readings will be available electronically via Google Drive. In addition, an electronic library of references will be available for those wishing to expand their personal library.

**Physical fitness requirement:**

Students will be working outside, up to 32 hours a week, in temperatures ranging from 65- 95 degrees Fahrenheit. Fieldwork consists of walking uneven terrain, climbing ladders, and extensive use of trowels and picks. Most of the workday will be spent in a kneeling or sitting position carefully excavating human remains. Students will be expected to be involved in all field and classroom activities. In the event that a student declines to participate or does not participate in group activities, they may be returned home at their own additional expense without a refund of expenses previously paid.

**VI. Tentative Course Schedule**

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
<b>Week 1</b>							
Morning	Orientation	Fieldwork	Fieldwork	Labwork	Labwork	Szekler region day trip (mandatory)	Saxon fortified churches day trip (optional)
Day	Orientation	Fieldwork	Fieldwork	Labwork	Labwork		
Evening	Free	Lecture	Free	Lecture	Free		
<b>Week 2</b>							
Morning	Fieldwork	Fieldwork	Fieldwork	Labwork	Labwork	Brasov weekend trip (optional)	
Day	Fieldwork	Fieldwork	Fieldwork	Labwork	Labwork		
Evening	Free	Lecture	Free	Lecture	Free		
<b>Week 3</b>							
Morning	Fieldwork	Fieldwork	Fieldwork	Labwork	Labwork	Free	
Day	Fieldwork	Fieldwork	Fieldwork	Labwork	Labwork		
Evening	Free	Lecture	Free	Lecture	Free		
<b>Week 4</b>							
Morning	Fieldwork	Fieldwork	Fieldwork	Workshop Summary	Presentations		
Day	Fieldwork	Fieldwork	Fieldwork	Workshop Summary	Presentations		
Evening	Free	Lecture	Free	Lecture	Free		



## Notes

1. Schedule is subject to change based on weather and resources. Rain days will be lab days.
2. There may be optional weekend tours provided by our collaborator ArchaeoTek. These will be provided for an additional cost outside of the course fees.
3. Breakfast is served from 7am- 8am and is not mandatory. Dinner is served at 7:30 sharp and is mandatory. If you cannot attend dinner, you must notify your instructor ahead of time.

## VII. Additional Weekend Field Trips:

Public transportation within Eastern Europe does not allow usually to optimize travel and sightseeing for visitors with limited time available. Furthermore, except for the main tourist attractions, getting to various sites can be very challenging due to the complete lack of public transportation to and from those sites. As a result, we are organizing transportation for several day/weekend trips to allow our participants to contextualize their work within the historical and cultural framework of Transylvania:

- Szekely Land Day Trip (mandatory - free): visit of the Lost Churches sites, including our active site of Patakfalva (Valeni), the Jesus Chapel (the oldest medieval monument around Odorheiu Secuiesc), and the ethnographic museum in Cristuru Secuiesc.
- Medieval Saxon Heritage Day Trip (optional – additional \$100): visit of some beautiful Saxon fortified churches (Cata, Homorod, Viscri) and the Rupea Fortress
- Brasov Weekend Trip (optional – additional \$60): visit of Brasov. From there, students can, if interested, arrange to explore Bram Stoker’s Bran Castle, Rasnov Fortress, and the amazing Peles Castle, the summer residence of the Romanian kings

## VIII. Syllabus Updates

This syllabus, including the course schedule, is based on the most recent information about the course content and schedule planned for this course. The contents are subject to revision as needed to adapt to new knowledge or unanticipated events. Updates will remain focused on achieving the course objectives and students will receive notification of such changes. Students will be notified of changes and are responsible for attending to such changes or modifications as distributed by the instructor.