

Application for the *Salapia Exploration Project 2019*

Summer 2019: 17 June 2019-26 July 2019 (6 weeks)

Application Deadline: Friday, February 15, 2019

The Mediterranean Sea has long been a great connector, bringing together peoples from distant shores to trade together, exchange ideas, and sometimes wage war upon each other. Under the Romans, the Mediterranean became a sea of vast, consistent and reliable connections, shuttling goods and people from the many ports that dotted this very long and continuous coastline. In the *Salapia Exploration Project*, we set out to explore one of the sites and landscapes that formed part of this interconnected system: the Roman and Late Antique port of *Salapia* (in the province of modern-day Puglia). This site provides a spectacularly rich context through which to learn about the Roman economy, Mediterranean trade, and the effects of these activities on those living at *Salapia* over nearly eight centuries. At present, this area of Italy is one of the top sea salt producers in the Mediterranean. If the ancient site was involved in salt production also in Roman times, then *Salapia* was a very important place for production and trade; in fact, trade in salt would mean that *Salapia* was very widely and strongly connected to local and Mediterranean-wide trading networks. In addition to all this, *Salapia* was more than just a port: it was a fully outfitted Roman town, with a forum, domestic structures and evidence of craft production. It also played an important role in the development of Christianity in Late Antiquity, being one of the first towns in Italy to be named a diocese by the pope in Rome (already in the 4th c. CE!).

This excavation offers an incomparable opportunity to engage in complex questions about the relationship of humans to their environments as well. Located on the Adriatic coast of southern Italy, the port of *Salapia* formed part of the *Salpi* Lagoon, a rather precarious ecosystem that experienced many natural changes over time. Marshlands can bring incomparable ecological diversity and economic benefits when well-managed and respected. However, it is possible that sometimes the lagoon would have become inundated with water that flooded and covered the coastline. It is unclear at this point whether malaria developed in this context and if so, when, but it had the potential to create a rather unhealthy landscape for inhabitants, indicative of the push and pull of positive and negative influence of the lagoon environment. As it is not entirely clear yet to scholars how the environment in the lagoon developed during the Roman, Late Antique and even Medieval periods, we have been conducting rigorous geomorphological research along the coast and interior to understand the extent of the lagoon environment and its inter-relationship with the town.

Our own work in Summers 2013-2018 at the site of *Salapia* has revealed the remains of a Roman town, occupied from about the 1st c. BCE to the 7th c. CE on the plain adjacent to the lagoon. Subsurface investigations have demonstrated traces of both domestic, artisanal and potentially public structures, as well as urban infrastructure (city streets and porticoes) and that related to the site's role as a port (such as warehouses and a defensive tower). The excavations have revealed not only details of the Roman occupation, but also of a rather articulated and dense re-occupation in later centuries, contingent in part on the remains of the former urban plan. Atop the *Monte di Salpi*, to the west of this vast plain, we have reliable evidence of Medieval occupation from the late 13th to 15th c. CE due to successful excavations in 2017 and 2018, that have exposed domestic and storage spaces (as well as their reuse), and part of a road internal to the settlement, along with small material culture of daily life produced in the medieval period and also re-appropriated objects made in the Roman period. With these new

data, we have extended the study of long-term habitation in this landscape over more than one thousand years.

This 2019 field season, we will not only continue the excavation, but also our geologist colleagues will make a stop to speak to students (TBD); Dr. Laura Cerri will return to conduct magnetometry research in the area of the medieval town and around the lagoon as well. Student will also have an opportunity, should they wish, to participate in three weeks of field survey of the surrounding lagoon landscape and its interior (along with three weeks of excavation).

What you will learn

You will register for the summer course, CLAS349: *Fieldwork in Italian Archaeology*, designed to teach you the methods and interpretative reasoning that archaeologists use. You will do reading for this course, in addition to our daily fieldwork and keep a “dig journal”. We will have informal seminar meetings to discuss our work in the field, and move us towards broader interpretation. You will learn how to dig stratigraphically, how to prepare all the relevant paperwork for what you’ve excavated and uncovered, how to draw and photograph archaeological contexts, and how to collect and process finds. We will spend considerable time developing critical thinking skills on site and in the lab when we process finds: how do we go from the dirt and objects in the ground to reconstructing what life was like in the past? You will write a short final paper on a key topic of interest to you from the project.

Course credits can be applied to the Classics major and minor, or to elective credits for those not pursuing a degree in classics. **This is a 3-credit course**, with per-credit cost determined by student’s McGill status (Quebec resident, Canadian resident, international). **Students must pay for the credit hours in addition to the program fee and travel costs (see below).**

Program details

In addition to the cost of credit hours, there is a program fee of CAD\$2660.96. This includes (1.) lodging, (2.) board during the dig week (breakfast and lunch M-F and dinner M-Th), (3.) transportation from our residences to the dig site, and (4.) tools and materials used on site. This fee also includes the cost of travel and lodging for the instructor (equally divided among all student participants). **Students are responsible for the cost of airfare and making their travel reservations to Italy, as well as transportation from the arrival airport to the dig site.**

Access to all the tools and materials needed to participate in the excavation will be provided. Students are, however, responsible for purchasing or gathering in advance clothing for the dig (old t-shirts and shorts will suffice, a good hat and lots of socks), footwear for excavation (steel-toe work boots), and sheets/sleeping bags for their bed at the dig house.

Getting to Italy: ****IF YOU DO NOT HAVE A PASSPORT**, you will need to start the application process **NOW**. If your passport is set to expire within three months of your trip to Italy, you might need to renew your passport **NOW**. Please contact me with questions.

Daily Dig Schedule (M-F):

5:15am-6:15am: Wake up, breakfast, load dig vans, head to site

6:30am: Dig day starts

9:00am: First morning break

9am-11:30am: Back to digging

11:30am-11:45am: Second morning break

2:00pm-2:30pm: Pack up tools and head back to dig house

2:45pm-4:15pm: Lunch and break.

4:15pm-5:15pm: Laboratory work (washing and sorting pottery, updating site documentation)

5:15pm-8:00 Free time (for personal hygiene or other).

8:00pm: Dinner

****Remember**, archaeological fieldwork is physically rigorous. The temperatures in Puglia in July are high (between 30-40 degrees C) with strong sun. You will need to know how to manage the heat: wearing sunscreen and hats, staying hydrated and knowing your limits. On top of this, the physical work can be demanding and the hours long. We will be pickaxing, shoveling, carrying buckets and pushing wheelbarrows, in addition to the more fine-tuned work with trowels and brushes. We will continue the day in the lab, processing our finds and having class time in archaeological methods. I state this plainly again to give you a sense of the overall project. If you have any concerns about the demands of this work and your ability to participate in it, please speak to me privately so we can evaluate whether this is the best program for you.

Weekend Trips: We will have five available weekends to travel around Puglia and southern Italy, to learn more about the sites and archaeology there. **ALL TRIPS ARE OPTIONAL, and students will need to pay their costs out of pocket** (the optional nature of these trips are related to credit-hour regulations imposed by McGill). Travel will be on Saturday or Sunday, or both days depending on the trip. Full weekend trips might be to the Salento, the Bay of Naples and the final days in Rome. The places we might visit include:

- 1.) the city of Bari (cathedral of San Nicola, excavations under the Cathedral, among other sites)
- 2.) Salento: Lecce and Otranto (Amphitheater, Cattedrale)
- 3.) Egnazia (excavated Roman town) and Alberobello (trulli constructions)
- 4.) Bay of Naples (Pompeii, Herculaneum, and the Museo Archeologico)
- 5.) Rome!

READ CAREFULLY TO PREPARE YOUR APPLICATION

In selecting students for the project this summer, it will be helpful to know why you would like to join the project. There is no expectation that students are Classics majors.

Deadline: Friday, February 15, 2019. Please submit via email.

Essay: Please write a 1-2 page statement explaining your intentions and motivations for joining us in Italy and what you hope to learn. Additionally, detail why you would be a good member of the team (what are your particular strengths as a student and individual) and how you will help contribute to the experience and learning of the other students on the project.

Travel Experiences: Please also include a list of any experiences you have had traveling abroad, when, with whom, and why (leisure, research, study abroad, etc.).

List of Relevant Experiences Beyond Travel: Please list any coursework at McGill, in high school, or elsewhere that you think affords you important skills to undertake this excavation experience.

****Recommendation Letter:** A brief statement from a faculty member, former boss, or activities supervisor, attesting to your strengths and weaknesses, and abilities for participating in the field school. They can email this statement to me. It need not be a formal letter on letterhead. In selecting a recommender, it is far more useful for me to have someone write who has worked with you closely, especially in a team-work type setting. This is a much better choice than a letter from a professor who might have given you an “A” in a course, but doesn’t know you well at all.

****Required Meeting:** I would also like to meet with each of you to get a sense of your personality and oral communication skills. Please include your general availability on weekdays so that we can set up these meetings. They will take place in the last two weeks of February.

Please contact me at darian.totten@mcgill.ca if you have any questions whatsoever.