

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Buen Suceso Archaeological Field School

ANTH 4385/6385, ANTH 4395, ANTH 6390

*(Special Topic: Ecuadorian Archaeology; Fieldwork in Anthropology; and
Directed Studies in Archaeological Methods)*

June 17-July 22, 2023

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.

This project will excavate and analyze materials from the Valdivia site of Buen Suceso, located along the Río Culebra in the Manglaralto River drainage. We will be emphasizing slow and meticulous excavation techniques and 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 3700-1425 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.

Excavations 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 2023 Buen Suceso field season will focus on a raised area of the site with evidence of successive construction episodes and possible landscape modification. Some of the earliest dates from the site were recovered from this area as well. Our goal is to reveal the extents of a packed-earth structure encountered during the 2019 field season and examine the ways in which the uses of this one area of the site changed through time.

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 excavations and laboratory analyses and learn how archaeological data is collected and processed. By the end of the session, participants should be able to excavate a unit and 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 field and lab methods, including excavation, 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 field and the laboratory
- Develop the practical and analytical skills necessary for the interpretation of distinct data sets
- Apply standard excavation methods to archaeological contexts
- 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
20%	Field & Lab work
20%	Field Journal
20%	Final Unit 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 fieldwork and 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.

20%: FIELD & LAB WORK: You are expected to participate in all field activities which may include, survey, excavation work like digging, sweeping and bucket lifting, screen sifting, bagging and tagging artifacts, mapping units or finds therein, and carrying things which may be bulky or heavy. For all lab work, you must keep accurate and complete records for all materials. In general, lab activities may include: 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.

20% FIELD 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 contexts and 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% FINAL UNIT REPORT: Each student will contribute to a collaboratively-written report on the season's excavations. This report will include a detailed description of the context of the unit itself as well as in-depth description of each level and all materials/features uncovered within it. This report should be based on the notes taken throughout the field season, the field laboratory analysis of materials, and the background readings for the site and the project in general. The report will be finalized before students depart for Guayaquil on July 18. The daily evening discussions (see schedule below) are a means to begin developing this report right from day one.

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 17, 2023. 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 17, we will still be in Guayaquil the following day visiting museums, leaving for Dos Mangas early on June 19 (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 14 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 director 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 health insurance for the duration of the program, but 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 in a house in the community which has common rooms and clean, but rustic and 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. The project house has 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 a local individual will be hired to come in to clean the house once a week (on the weekend), 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. 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. Vegetarian diets can be accommodated with advanced notice but strict vegan, gluten-free, kosher, halal or other specialty diets cannot. Those with specialized diets will 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 Saturday June 17 to Sunday June 19 (Introduction to Valdivia Archaeology

Saturday June 17

Students arrive in Ecuador and convene at Grand Hotel Guayaquil.

Sunday June 18

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

Monday June 19

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

Tuesday June 20

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)**

Wednesday June 21

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

Thursday June 22

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

Friday June 23

Introduction to lab methods (processing materials, workflow, special items). **Afternoon Quiz on excavation and lab methods**

Saturday June 24 and Sunday June 25

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 26 to Sunday July 1 (South American Geography & Ecology; weekend field trip)

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 26

Evening discussion on Culture Shock

Wednesday June 28

Evening archaeological theory lecture by Drs. Duke and Rowe

Thursday June 29

Evening lecture on South American Geography and Ecology

Saturday July 1

Day trip to Santa Elena, visit to the Los Amantes de Sumpa Museum. **Regional archaeology guest lecture TBA. Students will complete a worksheet at the museum.**

Week 3: Excavation Monday July 3 to Sunday July 9 (Formative Cultures of South America; 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.

Tuesday July 4

Evening community archaeology lecture by Dr. Rowe

Thursday July 6

Evening quiz on Formative cultures

Friday July 7 – Sunday July 9

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 4: Excavation Monday July 10 to Sunday July 16 (Interregional Interactions; weekend ceramic workshop in Dos Mangas)

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 13

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

Saturday July 15 and Sunday July 16

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 5: Lab Monday July 17 to Saturday July 22 (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 20

Community despedida

Friday July 21

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 22

Students fly home or continue independent travel from Guayaquil.

THE EXCAVATION SCHEDULE (Weeks 2-4)

This is the schedule we will keep during the excavation period, with the exception of dates noted above.

Monday through Thursday

6:00 am – breakfast

6:30 am – begin hike to site (note: this is a firm departure time. Get up as early as you need to in order to prepare for the day)

2:30 pm – return hike from site

3:00 pm – lunch and post-field downtime

6:30 pm – lecture/discussion time

7:30 pm – dinner

Fridays:

7:00 am – breakfast

8:00 am – lab

1:00 pm – lunch break

2:00 pm – lab

4:00 pm – downtime (our weekend excursions will leave at this time, students who wish to travel away from Dos Mangas on the weekends may leave at this time)

7:30 pm – dinner

Saturdays and Sundays:

Free time outside of scheduled activities

THE LAB SCHEDULE (Week 5)

This is the schedule we will keep during the lab period, with the exception of dates noted above.

Monday through Friday:

7:00 am – breakfast

8:00 am – lab

1:00 pm – lunch break

2:00 pm – lab

4:00 pm – downtime

6:30 pm – lecture & discussion time

7:30 pm – dinner

EQUIPMENT LIST

Consider that anything you bring down could be LOST, BROKEN, and 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.

Required Gear:

- 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
- 4½” Pointing Trowel (Marshalltown is a common brand used by archaeologists): <https://marshalltown.com/4-12-stiff-pointing-trowel-wood-handle>
- Knee-high waterproof rubber/PVC work boots such as these: <https://www.amazon.com/Tingley-31151-10-31151-General-Purpose/dp/B0768JK9H3/>
- Sun glasses with UV protection
- Insect repellent (DEET-based strongly recommended)
- Reusable water bottle
- Snake guards (optional)
- Work gloves (optional)
- Knee pads/gardening mat (optional)
- Clipboard – hard plastic boards 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/>).