

**Shell Midden Archaeology:
A University of Maine Field School
ANT 477: Field Research in Archaeology**

Why a coastal field school in archaeology?

Some of the greatest windows to Maine's prehistoric Native American heritage are the coastal shell middens scattered along the ocean shore. Shell middens are living sites where the occupants collected and discarded shell, creating soil conditions that preserve food remains, tools, and evidence of activities that normally disintegrate in Maine's acid soils. However, we are losing these fragile sites at a rapid rate to coastal erosion, sea level rise, coastal development, and uncontrolled digging. Coastal shell middens provide an excellent opportunity to train students, preserve an important part of Maine's Native American heritage, and discuss the question of how archaeology helps Maine's modern Native communities.

When? June 1 – 26, 2009. This is a four-week field school.

What and where is the site?

This year we will continue excavating two or more shell middens on Machias Bay working in cooperation with Passamaquoddy research and preservation efforts on the Machias Bay petroglyphs (rock art), in association with the Malush-hikon Petroglyph Foundation. Machias Bay contains the highest concentration of petroglyphs, in the form of human and animal forms pecked on smooth bedrock surfaces, on the East coast of North America. The two sites that we worked on last year were badly disturbed in the past as is the case with most shell midden sites, but we were able to find two intact house floors related to Passamaquoddy and French occupation on Machias Bay. The sites are both about a 20 minute walk beyond the nearest parking area, so there is the usual burden carrying to do, but at low tide the walk is along the beach and bedrock exposures on Machias Bay.

Activities:

Field work will be conducted five days a week (not on weekends) for four weeks. Rain and wind days will be spent doing preliminary laboratory documentation. This is an intensive course. We will have speakers at least one evening a week, including representatives of Maine's Native communities, your supervisors, and other specialists.

Who can participate?

This is a field school for undergraduate students interested in archaeology and the archaeological heritage of Maine's Native people. The field school is actively seeking Native and non-Native undergraduate students, through the Department of Anthropology, the Wabanaki Center, and the Native American Studies Program. There is a limit of 12 students per year. Students need to submit an application letter as described below.

Notices will be dispersed when the field school is full, with a certain number of alternates if spaces become available. There will be some provision for graduate assistants who plan to conduct graduate research on the project.

Prerequisites?

In order for students to take full advantage of this field course some prior course work is required. Either ANT 101 or ANT 317 is required and ANT 479 would be very useful, but if you think you have other courses or field work experience that may be substituted, please include them in your application because we include people with different interests. We are looking for students who have enthusiasm for archaeology and Native American studies. Students should be aware that important qualifications also include enthusiasm for working outdoors and rising early, the ability to work in potentially cold and damp weather found in early summer on the Maine coast, and the ability to tolerate working in close quarters with fellow students and staff.

How much does it cost?

This University of Maine Field School is supported by a Maine Academic Prominence Initiative (MAPI) grant which will cover the cost of lodging, food, and tuition for in-state students. Thus all basic costs are covered.

Expectations:

The field school is supported by the University of Maine with anticipation that it will become a long term-program. The program is intensive, taking advantage of our relatively brief opportunity to work in the field. Field work generally requires good health and ability to excavate in cramped quarters, screen sediments and participate in regular field activities. The site is directly on the shore with moderate surface slope.

The course will be graded on the basis of participation, quality of field work and record keeping, and submission of a final paper or journal that should be compiled throughout the four-week period. Students will learn proper record keeping techniques and will be expected to keep accurate records as a regular part of their field experience. The final project should summarize: methods and issues encountered in the field and laboratory, issues presented by guest speakers and your views on how archaeology can contribute to the cultural heritage of Maine and more particularly to Maine's Native communities. The final report is not so much a research project, as it is a means for you to integrate your experiences (positive and negative) and the themes of the field school.

Field school participants directly represent the University of Maine to sponsoring communities and to private landowners who have generously made their resources available to us. We also represent the University at our lodging and laboratory facilities, in conjunction with other research and educational groups using those facilities. We must therefore maintain high standards, employing University policies regarding cooperation, drinking, drugs, etc. This is all the more important because you will be in a live-in situation connected with one course, which is seldom the case during the regular academic year. With proper warning, infringement on these standards may result in dismissal at the discretion of the directors

Lodging:

We will be staying at the University of Maine at Machias, with University Services providing meals as well.

Course Credit: ANT 477 is a four-week, four-credit course.

Application:

You will need to submit a letter of application by Monday March 16th, 2009, to Brian S. Robinson, 5773 South Stevens Hall, Anthropology Department, University of Maine 04469. Co-directors, Brian Robinson (Anthropology) and Lisa Neuman (Anthropology and Native American Studies), will evaluate applications with assistance from participating departments and programs.

Include your name, address, phone, email, student number, major, academic standing and year of undergraduate training. Write a letter describing your interest in attending the field school, indicating that you understand that field conditions can be challenging at times (weather, bugs etc.). What prior training have you had? We are looking for people with prior training (who can assist other students) and those for whom this is the first experience in the field. Daily attendance is mandatory but prior commitments should be detailed and can be accommodated to some degree. We understand the value of this course to Anthropology students and Wabanaki students for whom this work may directly reflect their interests and/or ancestry. Why do you feel the field school would be valuable to you?

Selection Process:

Upper level students will have some preference because they may not have the opportunity again. You should apply regardless of class standing because we do not know how many students to expect and because we will keep applications on file for future field schools. Academic standing, enthusiasm and recognition of social responsibilities within rather close quarters are important criteria for selection to the field school. We will evaluate the applications and talk with each individual and do our best to be fair to everyone. We are of course bound by University policies and standards.

With the MAPI grant, we consider the field school to be a great opportunity for education, scholarship and outreach. We look forward to working with you.