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History students travel to Spain for archaeological dig



Above: Upper row from left, Ashwyn Grewal, Nadine Wyczolkowski, Carol Lee, Jessica Lomborg, Melisa Chulu, Emma Kuzmaski, Edwin Archbold, Serge Ruel, Megan Kingwell, and Professor Alejandro Sinner. Lower row, from left, Daniel Jankulovski, Michael Furfari, Kimberly McCullough, Sandra Grujin, Thomas Hopkins and Vivian Nguyen.

For many people archaeology is synonymous with excavation. Although we know that excavation is only one of the defining methods of a much broader discipline, for those who have had the chance to experience it, it is a unique personal experience and certainly something that students look back on fondly at the end of their degree course, and sometimes for the rest of their lives.

This summer, the History Department in the Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies worked in collaboration with York International to offer a new experiential education course abroad in classical archaeology. Course director Alejandro Sinner, a Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council of Canada Postdoctoral Fellow in History, led the course, which examines the historical value of archaeological evidence by focusing on the application of archaeological theory and method to the excavation of a late-Iberian/early-Roman site.

"This new course offers York students the possibility to be an active part of a research project that will make a contribution to the discipline and to our understanding about the past of northeast Spain," explained Sinner.

As part of their studies, students enrolled in the course participated in eight three-hour lecture and discussion classes taken over two weeks at the University. They then travelled to Cabrera de Mar in Barcelona, Spain to participate in an archaeological dig that spanned four weeks. While in Spain, the students went on guided study visits to four nearby archaeological sites.

"I gained experiences unparalleled to those of what occur in a traditional classroom setting, such as hands-on archaeological experiences, visiting museums on group field-trips, learning about the country's culture, and making strong friendships, which in turn revitalized my passion in academia and created a plethora of memories that I will fondly remember," said York history student Nadine Wyczolkowski

In the first dig, which took place from May 18 to June 12, 15 students from York University uncovered the remains of a complex house that was inhabited and abandoned approximately 2,150 to 2,100 years ago. The discovered house is part of an important late-Iberian/early-Roman settlement that dates to approximately 150 to 75 BC. This is part of a site that Sinner has been studying and excavating regularly since 2006.

"Not only did I get a solid grounding in archaeological technique, as a bonus I was immersed in a rich Spanish/Catalan culture," said Thomas Hopkins, a student enrolled in the course.

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