St. Johns Archaeological Field School
Department of Anthropology
University of Florida

July 2 – August 10, 2012

A nine-credit field practicum in all aspects of archaeological field work, including reconnaissance survey, site mapping and testing, and stratigraphic excavation. Evening laboratory sessions and lectures provide additional training in analysis, research design, and regional archaeology. Students also gain experience in the use of electronic survey equipment and other hi-tech applications in mapping and surveying.

The St. Johns River valley of northeast Florida was home to prehistoric hunter-gatherers for over 11,000 years. Some 7000 years ago, certain groups began to harvest the rich shellfish resources of the river and mound the inedible remains in locations of repeated occupation. Most of these shell mounds were mined for road fill long ago, but many still preserve information of scientific value. Research currently focuses on the circumstances surrounding the formation of these mounds. Because they consist of the remains of species eaten by humans, shell mounds have tended to be interpreted as simply refuse heaps. Field school research is designed to test the idea that many of these mounds were constructed for ritual purposes.

The 2012 field school will return to the western shore of Lake George for a fifth year after a five-year stint on Hontoon Island. In the 19th century, Jeffries Wyman described the shell deposits at the mouth of Silver Glen Run, which drains into Lake George, as the largest in all of northeast Florida. The U-shaped outline in the diagram to the upper left shows the extent of the deposits Wyman observed in 1871. Although this massive deposit was mined for shell in 1923, portions of its basal deposits remain intact below the present-day surface. To the west of this deposit is an area of some 20 hectares with the remnants of a 6000-year-old shell ridge, at least two villages, and a sand burial mound. This year we will expand our efforts to document the basal deposits of the shell ridge. We will also continue work at a St. Johns II village (ca. AD 1200-1300) to west of the ridge (right) and expand reconnaissance survey to the south, where two additional shell mounds are located.

Accommodations for field school are provided courtesy of our host organization for the five-week field session (July 9 - August 10). Beyond the fee for nine undergraduate credit hours (ANT 4123/4124), students will pay their share of communal subsistence and equipment costs (estimated at about $400). One additional week of lab orientation in Gainesville (July 2 - July 6) is mandatory, with July 4 off.

The St. Johns Archaeological Field School is directed by Dr. Kenneth E. Sassaman. Several of Dr. Sassaman’s graduate students (Jason O’Donoughue, Elyse Anderson, and Andrea Palmiotto) instruct and supervise field school students on various aspects of the research, and we will be joined this year by Dr. Asa Randall and his students from the University of Oklahoma.

Contact Dr. Sassaman (sassaman@ufl.edu) for an application form. Due date for applications is March 31, 2012. Students will be notified about admission decisions by April 15, 2012.