From April 26 to 29, the Maya Maniacs, in partnership with Davidson Day School, will once again descend upon Lake Norman for the eighth installment of the Maya at the Lago Conference. The event will be hosted on the campus of Davidson Day School and include a lineup of 20 Maya scholars. We are pleased to announce, the theme of the 2018 conference will be “Art of the Maya World.”

Leading this year’s lineup will be our 2018 Lifetime Achievement Award winner, Dr. Mary Miller. Dr. Miller, Sterling Professor of History of Art, served as dean of Yale College from 2008 to 2014. She specializes in art of the ancient New World and has contributed an immeasurable amount of knowledge and discovery through teaching, publications, and museum exhibits. We are thrilled to honor her achievements and contributions over the course of the weekend, surrounded by her colleagues and students.

Our exciting agenda this year is led by an incredible cast of scholars including some familiar faces as well as some first-time attendees. Our program begins with three Glyph Workshops:

Introductory Glyphs taught by Mary Kate Kelly (Thursday) Intermediate Glyphs and Iconography: Classic Maya Mythologies taught by Marc Zender and Stan Guenter (Thursday) Intermediate Glyph workshop, The Royal Court of Vulture Mountain: The Inscriptions of Bonampak taught by Marc Zender, Stan Guenter, Simon Martin, and Mary Kate Kelly (Sunday).

Friday and Saturday’s agenda include 17 lectures ranging in length from thirty minutes to one hour, led by a host of esteemed scholars. Lectures cover work in all facets of the Maya world and include exciting topics like Chacmools, Jaina figurines, and severed heads.

In addition to our scholarly offerings, lunch and dinner events will be organized throughout the weekend. We’ve partnered with some of the best restaurants in the area to provide great venues and delicious meals. Some meals will have fixed menus and will require selections to be made in advance. Other meals are reserved space at a local venue and attendees can select and purchase a meal of their choice. Lunches and dinners are a great opportunity to socialize with scholars.

If you desire further details or are interested in registering, please visit mayaathelago.com.
AFAR 2018 Field Research Outlook

AFAR will celebrate its 13th field season this summer. Our growth has been phenomenal over the years, and we’ve moved from a project consisting of four students with the Belize Valley Archaeological Reconnaissance (BVAR) Project in 2006 to close to one hundred students and adults working on four different archaeological sites over the entire summer. In my wildest dreams, I wouldn’t have imagined we would be working at such historically significant sites in Belize, Spain, Greece, and Portugal. It has been an archaeological thrill ride filled with great times and amazing discoveries, and this summer promises to be even more exciting than the prior twelve.

Our operations with the BVAR Project still remain the flagship in our growing research armada. Since 2006, we have worked alongside Dr. Jaime Awe and many great scholars investigating the classic Maya city of Cahal Pech in Western Belize. Our joint efforts have yielded a wealth of knowledge about this once great city and our focus on site preservation has allowed the site to make it a top tourist destination in the region. This summer our team, consisting of six archaeologists and sixteen students, will return to the site from July 22 to August 5. We will focus our efforts on continued excavations on the site’s western ball court. Our team first investigated the ball court in 2016, exposing the feature’s central playing field and the interior walls of the two structures. Our research goal is to excavate the exterior walls of these two structures, seeking to better understand their utility and structural layout.

Although it is difficult to believe, this will be the fifth season of excavations at the medieval castle of Zorita de los Canes in central Spain. The welcoming residents and idyllic landscape are not the only things that have left us in awe over the years. Ever so timidly, the gorgeous castle has revealed its secrets. In 2016, we caught the first glimpse of subterranean chambers located west of the Area 4 cistern. In 2017 we expanded our excavations to discover three connected underground rooms. Carved into the mountain, these rooms give us hope that there will be an entire level below and potentially undisturbed rooms filled with the remains left by the original occupants. Our team of twenty-three students will continue surface excavations in addition to chasing the limits of the underground construction during the summer of 2018.
In 2017, AFAR had the great fortune to participate in the first excavation of the ancient Macedonian site of Mieza since 1954. This site saw many occupations throughout the years but the most famous residents would have to be Aristotle and Alexander the Great. In 2018, we will have the privilege to return again to dig a bit deeper in this little-understood crossroads of civilization with a team of 21 students. Our focus of this season will be a previously uncharted section of the ancient city discovered in 2017. We hope to ascertain the time period of this area’s occupation as well as the function of its structures.

AFAR will launch its fourth project this summer with the addition of the Roman city of Troia on the Atlantic coast of Portugal. Our team will bring new life to the ongoing research of Dr. Inéz Pinto as we investigate the largest fish processing facility currently known of the Roman Empire. Fourteen pioneering students along with a half dozen professional archaeologists will uncover the story of this important coastal town that supplied the snack food for an empire.

This summer, AFAR will be offering a special field school session just for adults. This session will take place immediately following the high school session at Troia. Dr. Inéz Vaz Pinto and Dr. Stanley Guenter will lead the team for two weeks of excavations, lectures, and day tours at the picturesque Roman seaside city. This will be our first team of adults to participate in an AFAR project and although we expect that there will be more troublemakers than we’re used to, it will be an excellent and educational time.

If you are interested in following our progress in the field this summer, please visit us at goafar.org or visit our Facebook page. If you are considering joining us in Portugal for first hand experience, please reach out to us immediately for more details.

AFAR Student Profile: Matthew Hines

I sat down with, graduating senior, Matthew Hines and asked him to reflect on his time working with AFAR over the last five years. Matthew was a founding member of the Zorita de los Canes project in Spain and has worked every year since. In addition to being an awesome student and archaeologist, Matthew keeps himself busy with loads of extra curricular activities. Matthew is an athlete, leading the Davidson Day School varsity basketball and cross-country teams. He was also a cornerstone of the school theatre program, acting in 13 plays during his time at Davidson Day. If this doesn’t keep him busy enough, Matthew is co-editor in chief of the school’s yearbook, volunteers and works for Promising Pages (literacy non-profit in Charlotte), a member of the school’s STEM Club, Science Olympiad, and Math Club.
MS: If you had to pick a favorite movie of all time, what would it be?
MH: Arsenic and Old Lace

MS: List three groups that would land on your deserted island playlist.
MH: One Republic, Imagine Dragons, and Alessia Cara

MS: We know that you have been in 13 plays at Davidson Day. What was your favorite one and what character did you play?
MH: That’s a tough one. My favorite play was probably Thebes. I loved the character development and the unique story it tells. I played Oedipus.

MS: I know you very well as will many of the people who read this. Can you share something few people know about you?
MH: I really love globetrotting. I've been traveling since 6 months when I visited Alaska with my parents and I haven’t stopped.

MS: What sort of job do you see in your future?
MH: I want to be a STEM entrepreneur.

MS: What is a STEM entrepreneur?
MH: I want to be someone who works at the intersection of business, biotech and applied physics. I essentially want to work to develop new technologies that help people.

MS: Thanks for helping me there!

MS: When and where did you work with AFAR?
MH: I worked in Spain every summer from 2014 until 2018.

MS: What is your fondest memory of working in Spain?
MH: It would have to be when we slept under the stars on top of the castle in 2017.
MS: Oh yeah. That is a special experience!

MS: We all know that working on an AFAR project can be challenging. What would you consider the toughest thing you had to face during your experience?
A: It would have to be trying to stay consistent with note taking while working onsite. I always knew that journaling was extremely important but I got caught up with physical aspects of the project and I always found myself wanting to keep excavating.

MS: If you could thank one person that you worked with other than me, who would it be?
MH: Dio and Catalina for sure. Thank you for dealing with all of the quirkiness and interesting nature of us Americans on the dig site. Thanks for teaching me a deeper appreciation of history that went beyond books in school. Thanks for being two of the most genuine people I’ve ever met and thanks for being so gracious and welcoming.

MS: Tell me about your experiences with AFAR outside of the field seasons in Spain.
MH: I was able to attend the 49th Annual University of Calgary Chacmool Conference in 2016. It was an amazing opportunity that allowed me the opportunity to interact with professional archaeologists and it opened up my eyes to the extreme academia side of archaeology.

MS: Speaking of college, what are your plans for next Fall?
MH: I will major in economics and engineering in a special program that allows me to get a BA from Claremont McKenna and BS at Harvey Mudd.
MS: Taking the easy route to graduation I see!

MS: What advice would you give yourself if you could go back to the first field season?
MH: Pay attention to the small details when you first participate in a project. You will be excited about the whole experience. When onsite, don’t blow past details such as elevations in your notebook. The process can be tedious but at the same time it makes it exciting. If you don’t document the details, it will never be done. Have a better appreciation for the smaller details. It’s cool to discover an underground room but without proper recordings nothing will be learned.

MS: If you had to pick one non-essential item to pack for a project, what would it be?
MH: Sense of humor! You will be onsite 7 hours a day sweating in the sun so jokes are essential.
Since its inception 2006, American Foreign Academic Research (better known as AFAR) provided nearly 400 pre collegiate students the opportunity to work on an archaeological project at one of four sites around the world. We interviewed Mat Saunders the founder and Executive Director of AFAR to understand more about how the organization began and where it is headed.

**What sparked you to create AFAR?**

Mat: We originally created AFAR to raise funds for highly qualified students with financial challenges that wished to participate on an archaeological dig. We ran our first field season in 2006 (before AFAR was officially formed) and we turned away some of my best students due to financial issues. That didn’t sit well so I met with a local banker, Alan Douglas, and we figured the best way to remedy this challenge was to establish a 501c3 company and raise funds for these students. Although AFAR has added a few more layers since then, providing financial support remains core to our mission.

**What benefits do participants gain after they leave the fieldwork behind and return to school?**

Mat: Participants take away something different but there are a few things I hope they all obtain. The international experience is priceless and the social interaction between the students and those from the host country is powerful. It is very healthy to see the world from a new perspective. Getting to do that while working on an actual research project amplifies this impact. Archaeology is an amazing vehicle to expand understanding of new cultures and expanding the student’s awareness. A student’s accomplishments over two weeks are very tangible. They gain confidence and because of how "real" the research project is, it forces students to work well with others, which builds their collaboration skills.

**What makes a good participant on an AFAR project?**

Mat: All of our students are different and contribute uniquely to the success of the project. A good attitude and flexibility are the most important attribute for our team members. Although our team goes to great lengths to make sure everything runs like clockwork, our projects are genuinely "without a net" and you never know what will happen and how schedules will be altered. Flexibility is key. I also love a student that takes initiative. This is a skill that exists in our more seasoned archaeologists.
What's next for AFAR?

Mat: We will build it together! At this time, we have four amazing projects operating, two amazing conferences, and an amazing piece of land in Belize ready to build a research campus. Continued growth in projects and number of students is a certainty. We will continue to grow our project experiences to include students from all corners of the globe. I expect our conferences and our research programs to expand in both their content and their delivery to a greater audience through both academic and online channels. We are at an exciting period for AFAR and I have never been more optimistic.

AFAR on the Horizon

April 26-29 - 8th Annual Maya at the Lago Conference

May 29 - June 1 - Davidson Day School Archaeology Camp

June 2 - 17 - Troia Archaeology Project Session I

June 17 - July 1 - Troia Archaeology Project Session II

June 17 - July 1 - Zorita de los Canes Archaeology Project

July 1 - 15 - Mieza Archaeology Project Session I

July 15 - 29 - Mieza Archaeology Project Session II


September 20 - 23 - 12th Annual Maya at the Playa Conference

AFAR's mission is to provide an opportunity for students without the means to participate in our archaeological programs and to ensure the preservation of historically significant sites for future generations. Please consider making a tax deductible contribution to support our students and our sites.

Donations can be made at www.goafar.org