Exploring Ancient Maya Settlement in the fields of Yalbac, Belize  

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Department of Anthropology University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

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The six-week UIUC field school provides students with hands on experience in the techniques of archaeological survey and excavation in the context of a large research project in central Belize. The course will consist of field and lab work and weekly lectures while in Belize. The project will focus on excavating Maya houses near Yalbac.

Settlement studies inform on landscape use, rural-urban interaction, population estimates, trade networks, and other aspects about society—and center of Yalbac and its hinterlands are no different. However, a 2010 hurricane and subsequent wildfires resulted not only in loss of economically viable trees, but in the landowners, Yalbac Ranch, selling over 55,000 acres of jungle to an agricultural corporation. The ancient Maya center of Yalbac is protected from plowing, its surrounding settlement is not. We plan a survey and excavation program with the goal of acquiring as much information as possible before continued plowing completely erases settlement. The field plans, as part of the VOPA project, will be conducted under the auspices of the Institute of Archaeology (IOA), National Institute of Culture and History, Government of Belize.

There will also be a required trip to Tikal, Guatemala. Visits to other sites are arranged as well (e.g., Xunantunich, Actun Tunichil Muknal, Caracol, etc.).

Estimated cost: approximately $8000 (includes tuition, Institute of Archaeology fee, CISI Insurance, lodging, meals, Tikal trip, roundtrip airfare, and $500 spending money). Of this amount, $2500 needs to be paid before departure for IOA fees, lodging, and meals.

Non-anthropology majors welcome. Individual senior capstone and other research projects possible (upon approval) Consent of instructor required. Application required. Signed hard copy of liability statement required before application will be assessed.

Application deadline March 15; notification March 20, 2016. Applications and other info are on Anthropology Department website (http://www.anthro.illinois.edu/)