

Art History 3382
The Ancient Maya: Art and History

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Course Description This course examines the art and architecture of the ancient Maya of Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras and El Salvador. Special emphasis will be given to the complex and evolving roles of art in ancient Maya society, AD 250-900. We will also explore the linguistic mechanics and visual artistry of the Maya hieroglyphic writing system. **Two sessions will be held in the galleries of the Dallas Museum of Art.**

Course Objectives 1) introduce students to the ancient Maya cultural artistic tradition. 2) To improve students' skills of visual literacy and analysis; 3) To equip students with the techniques of writing and researching art

Assigned Reading All books are available for purchase from the SMU bookstore & from on-line booksellers. Total textbook cost: around \$35

- Mary Ellen Miller, *The Art of Mesoamerica*, rev. ed. (Thames and Hudson).
- Mary Ellen Miller, *The Maya Art and Architecture* rev. ed. (Thames and Hudson).
- Simon Martin and Nikolai Grube, *Chronicle of the Maya Kings and Queens*, rev. ed. (Thames and Hudson)

Course Requirements

- 2 Papers (5 pp. each)
- In-Class writing exercises
- Final Exam
- Regular class attendance

Evaluation Final grades will be based upon attendance, participation in class discussion, on two in-class quizzes, two essays, and a final exam.

- Papers and Exercises: 50%
- Final Exam: 20%
- Attendance and Class Participation: 30%

All requirements must be fulfilled to pass this course.

Course Mechanics

- Attendance and participation in class: mandatory. Repeated absence or failure to respect the classroom environment will result in the student being dropped from the course. Please consult the University's policies regarding absences due to illness, travel, family or other personal reasons.* **Please do not come to class late or leave early; either will count as an absence.**
- Students must respect the classroom environment—please, no naps, talking, or “multi-tasking”
- Paper deadlines and exam dates are final. No extensions or make-ups will be granted. Late papers will be marked down.
- Note-taking in class is essential to this course. Maya studies is a fast-moving field of inquiry—too fast for most presses to keep up. Many of the ideas and problems we will address will not be found in your reading!
- At the DMA: please respect the Museum environment. Check your bags. And remember: **Use pencil in the Galleries.**
- Honesty Policy: all exams and papers must constitute your own work. Cheating or plagiarism will result in a failing grade and Honor Council action.

Disability Accommodations Students with certified learning disabilities are welcome. Students needing academic accommodations for a disability should contact Disability Accommodations & Success Strategies (DASS) at 214-768-1470 or www.smu.edu/alec/dass.asp to establish eligibility for accommodations. They should then email the instructor to make appropriate arrangements. (University Policy No. 2.4.)

Course Schedule

Day 1 Introduction to the Maya and the Maya Region

Reading: Miller, *Art of Mesoamerica*, 9-82; Miller, *Maya Art and Arch.*, 72-87.
 Morning: Introduction to the Ancient Maya and their Neighbors
 Afternoon: Geography, Topography, and Ecology of the Maya region

Day 2 Mesoamerican Precedents/ Mesoamerican Neighbors

Reading: Miller, *Art of Mesoamerica*, pp. 103-122; Miller, *Maya Art and Arch.*, 22-35, 88-104.
 Morning: Mesoamerican precedents: The Olmec Legacy; Teotihuacan
 Afternoon: **In the galleries of the Dallas Museum of Art!**

* **Excused Absences due to Religious Observance:** Religiously observant students wishing to be absent on holidays that require missing class should notify their professors in writing at the beginning of the semester, and should discuss with them, in advance, acceptable ways of making up any work missed because of the absence. (See University Policy No. 1.9.) **Excused Absences for University Extracurricular Activities:** Students participating in an officially sanctioned, scheduled University extracurricular activity should be given the opportunity to make up class assignments or other graded assignments missed as a result of their participation. It is the responsibility of the student to make arrangements with the instructor prior to any missed scheduled examination or other missed assignment for making up the work. (University Undergraduate Catalogue)

Day 3 The Rise of the Maya Kings and Dynasties

Five-page essay due. Your essay will address a work in the DMA.

Morning: New Discoveries of the most ancient Maya: Nakbé, Mirador, and San Bartolo

Afternoon: Early Classic Kings of the Petén

Day 4 Rival Brothers: Dynasties of Tikal and Calakmul

Reading: Martin and Grube, *Chronicle of the Maya Kings and Queens*, 6-53; Miller, *Maya Art and Arch.*, 22-71, 88-135.

Morning: Tikal and Calakmul: Lords of *Mutal* and the Snake Lords.

Afternoon: **In the galleries of the Dallas Museum of Art!**

Day 5 The Feast in the Maya Palace: Painted Maya Chocolate Vessels

Three-page essay due. Your essay will address a work in the DMA.

Morning: "To dine splendidly": Maya foods and Maya feasting

Afternoon: Masterpieces of Maya Vase painting

Day 6 Rivals of the Western Lowlands: Yaxchilán, Piedras Negras, and Palenque

Reading: Martin and Grube, *Chronicle*, pp. 116-189; Miller, *Art of Mesoamerica*, 123-161.

- Tatiana Proskouriakoff, "Historical Implications of a Pattern of Dates at Piedras Negras, Guatemala." *American Antiquity* 25 (1960), 454-475.
- Nikolai Grube, "Classic Maya Dance: Evidence from Hieroglyphs and Iconography." *Ancient Mesoamerica* 3 (1992), 206-18.

Morning: Yaxchilán, Piedras Negras, Palenque

Afternoon: **How to read Maya writing: In-class glyph workshop I**

Day 7 The Margins of the Lowland Maya World; Decline and Fall of the Lowland Maya

Reading: Martin and Grube, *Chronicle*, pp. 190-225.

Morning: Copán and Quiriguá

Afternoon: **How to read Maya writing: In-class glyph workshop II**

Day 8 Northern Exposure: Chichén Itzá and Mexico, AD 1000-1521

Reading: Reading: Martin and Grube, *Chronicle*, pp. 226-230; Miller, *Art of Mesoamerica*, pp. 162-198.

Morning: Uxmal, Chichén Itzá, and the late Maya florescence

Afternoon: Review

Take-home final exam: This exam will be due three days after last class meeting. The exam will be given out on the final day of class.