

ANTHROPOLOGY 3312:
MESO-AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY
Southern Methodist University, May Term 2014

Location: TBD, Time: 10-12 and 1-3pm, M-F

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Course Perspective:

The goal of this course is to give you a broad understanding of the peoples and cultures of Precolumbian and colonial Mesoamerica, a culture area that includes the southern two-thirds of Mexico and the northern half of Central America. We will explore the entire span of human occupation in this region, from its first settlement over 13,000 years ago to the present. We will focus in more detail on five of the most significant Pre-Columbian societies in a roughly chronological perspective: the great Olmec tradition of the Gulf coast, the Zapotec kingdom of the Valley of Oaxaca, the great metropolis of Teotihuacan in central Mexico, lowland Maya civilization in Central America and the Yucatan Peninsula, and the Aztec Empire of central Mexico. In examining these societies, we will discuss the political structure of these Pre-Columbian peoples, their worldviews and belief systems, their relationships with the environment, and their economic systems. These detailed case studies will provide a comparative sample to discuss the many similarities that these societies share, as well as some of the distinctions that separate them.

Throughout the course, we will also examine certain ancient practices and attempt to make sense of them in the context of their specific culture and worldview. For example: Why did Maya nobles pierce their tongues and genitals to draw their own blood? Why did the Aztecs perform massive human sacrifices that sometimes numbered in the thousands? What were the cultural reasons behind the practice of cannibalism? These “bizarre” practices will be addressed as scientific questions, and as we move along we’ll discuss some of the various methods archaeologists use- deciphering past writing systems, interpreting art, examining indigenous landscapes, reading primary conquest accounts, and of course, archaeological excavation itself. We will seek insights into the process of cultural evolution and the meaning of human difference. Finally, we will cast a critical eye on how the Mesoamerican past is reconstructed, how it has been exoticized and how these popular perceptions impact the indigenous people of today.

Professor Callaghan is a Mesoamerican archaeologist in the department of anthropology at SMU. He specializes in ancient Maya civilization and has been working at Maya sites in Honduras and Guatemala since 1997. He has an active research project at the site of Holtun, Guatemala where he is examining the rise of Maya civilization in relation to ritual and religion during the Preclassic period (600–300 BCE).

Learning Outcomes:

APPROVED for General Education Curriculum:

This course satisfies the General Education ***Human Diversity*** co-requirement:

- 6 VI. Human Diversity
 - o 6.1 Students explain basic issues related to race, ethnicity, gender, or to societies in the developing world

APPROVED for University Curriculum:

This course also satisfies the ***Individuals, Institutions, and Cultures Level 2*** Pillar:

Students will be able to analyze different theoretical or interpretive perspectives in the study of Individual, social, cultural, political, or economic experiences. (Level 2)

Students will be able to evaluate critically the research outcomes and theoretical applications in the study of individual, social, cultural, political, or economic experiences. (Level 2)

As well as the ***Historical Contexts Level 2*** Pillar:

Students will be able to analyze both secondary and primary historical evidence. (Level 2)

Students will be able to develop and support extended historical discussions in their own prose, based both on critical understanding of specific historical problems and on

evaluation of secondary and primary evidence. (Level 2)

And the *Information Literacy* proficiency:

Students will be able to select and use the appropriate research methods and search tools for needed information.

Students will be able to evaluate sources for quality of information for a given information need.

As well as the *Human Diversity* proficiency:

With respect to issues related to race, ethnicity, gender, or societies in the developing world, students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the historical, cultural, social, or political conditions of identity formation and function in human society, including the ways in which these conditions influence individual or group status, treatment, or accomplishments.

More specifically, the learning outcomes relevant to this particular course are:

1. To define what constitutes Mesoamerica, culturally, ethnically, and geographically.
2. To identify and describe the major cultural and political developments that occurred in Mesoamerica from the Paleoindian period through the Contact period.
3. To synthesize and evaluate theories and current research regarding these developments using well-supported and sustained arguments.
4. To appreciate the cultural, ethnic, and gender diversity that characterized the Pre-Columbian peoples of Mesoamerica expressed by sharing reflections verbally during discussions and on paper in exams and assignments.

These learning outcomes will form the basis for exams, assignments and papers.

Course Texts/Readings:

Two texts are required for the course, both of which are available at the bookstore and on reserve at the ISEM (Institute of the Study of Earth and Man) Library on the first floor of Heroy Hall:

The Ancient Maya, Heather McKillop, W.W. Norton and Company, New York, 2004.

The Aztecs, Michael Smith, Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, Third Edition, 2011.

Additional Readings. Additional readings are required at certain times throughout the course. You can download these articles from blackboard. Please let me know if you have any problem finding or downloading the readings.

Course Requirements:

Readings: In the schedule, specific page assignments are given for each week's lectures and must be read before class. Exams, quizzes, and class discussions will draw heavily on prior reading of assigned material.

Attendance (10%): Attendance will be taken beginning the first day of class. Because there are only 11 class days in the semester each class will count for almost 1% of the final grade.

Participation (10%): Participation is a crucial aspect of the course, as it is through in-class lecture and discussion where you are able to grow as scholars. Regular demonstration of having both read the assigned materials and being able to engage their content is a sign of discipline and intellectual curiosity. For this reason a portion of the grade will be determined by the quantity and quality of your in-class participation.

Short Research Papers (2 for 20% each = 40%)

Two short papers (3-4 pages) are required for this class and will deal with the material culture (artifacts) associated with a particular cultural institution of your choice (i.e., human sacrifice, creation myths, the ballgame, etc.). One paper will be based on an artifact/artifact class you identify through library and internet-based resources. The other paper will be based on an artifact on display at the Dallas Museum of Art in their Arts of the Americas collection. We will take a field trip to the museum on Friday, May 23rd. Admission to the museum is free and we can arrange car-pooling in advance.

Papers must be double-spaced and typed. Information sources (as well as direct quotes) must be acknowledged by citations in the text using typical social sciences citation conventions, as exemplified in your textbook and other readings. A list of references cited must also be supplied. Outside research and reading is required, and only legitimate scholarly resources will be accepted. In order to help you understand how to find and evaluate these sources we will perform much of the research for these papers in class using internet-based sources and at on-campus libraries using physical collections. All papers will be submitted through Safeassign to check for plagiarism.

Short Presentations (2 for 20% each = 40%)

In conjunction with your short research papers, you will create a short in-class presentation (10-12 minutes). Presentations will be judged on clarity, organization, and timing. A power point presentation or other type of visual aid is required.

Final grades for the course will be based on:

Attendance:	10%
Participation:	10%
Short Research Papers (2):	40%
Short Presentations (2):	40%

Disability Accommodations: Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first contact Services for Students with Disabilities (214-768-4557) to verify the disability and establish eligibility for accommodations. They should then schedule an appointment with the professor to make appropriate arrangements. (See University Policy No. 2.4.)

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)

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE HONOR COUNCIL OF SMU

PREAMBLE AND DEFINITIONS We, the students of Southern Methodist University, with the approval of the Provost and the Dean of Student Life, establish the Honor Council to uphold the standards of academic integrity set forth in the Honor Code. Acts punishable under the code include, but are not limited to the following:

ACADEMIC SABOTAGE Intentionally taking any action which negatively affects the academic work of another student.

CHEATING Intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise.

FABRICATION Intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.

FACILITATING ACADEMIC DISHONESTY Intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to violate any provision of the Honor Code.

PLAGIARISM Intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one's own in any academic exercise.

**The general principles for all honest writing can be summarized briefly.
Acknowledge indebtedness:**

1. Whenever you quote another person's actual words.
2. Whenever you use another person's idea, opinion, or theory, even if it is completely paraphrased in your own words.

3. Whenever you borrow facts, statistics, or other illustrative material - unless the information is common knowledge.

Plagiarism also encompasses the notions of citing quotations and materials from secondary sources that were not directly consulted in the preparation of the student's work, and copying the organizational and argumentation structure of a work without acknowledging its author.

****TENTATIVE** COURSE SCHEDULE (subject to change)**

AM=*The Ancient Maya*

AZ=*The Aztecs*

AR=Additional Readings available for download on blackboard and/or on reserve

Thursday, May 15

- Mesoamerica: Geography and Environment
 - AM: Chapters 2 and 3 (skim pps. 47-58)
- Cultural Evolution: Nomadism to Sedentism
 - AM: Chapter 4 pp. 71-78

Friday, May 16

- The Olmec: Shamanism, Sacred Objects, and Elite Power
 - AR: Toby-Evans (2004), pp. 129-181 (it's not as many pages as you think)
- The Origins of Maya Civilization
 - AM: Chapter 4, pp. 88-90

Monday 19

- Maya Ideology and Maya Creation Myths
 - AR: Schele and Freidel (1992)
 - AM: Chapter 8
- Film: *The Popol Vuh*
- Maya Politics and Early Classic Maya Civilization: Jungle Kingdoms and Teotihuacan Influence
 - AM: Chapter 7
 - AR: Sugiyama (2002)

Tuesday, May 20

- Reliable and Relevant Information: Library and Internet-based Research Day

Wednesday, May 21

- Maya Intellectual Achievements: Writing, Mathematics, Calendrics
 - AM: Chapter 10
- Film: *Cracking the Maya Code*
- Maya Superstates of the Classic Period
 - AM: Chapter 4, pp. 90-100
 - AR: Martin and Grube (1995)

Thursday, May 22

- Classic Maya Social Organization
 - AM: Chapter 6
 - AR: Hewitt (1991)
- Maya Economics and Material Culture
 - AM: Chapters 5 and 9
- **Student presentations**
- **Paper 1 due**

Friday, May 23

- Field Trip: Dallas Museum of Art (Arts of the Americas)

Tuesday, May 27

- Where Are They Now? The Mystery of the Classic Maya “Collapse”
 - AM: Chapter 4, pp. 100-102
 - AM: Chapter 11, pp. 307-313
- Northern lowlands and the Continuation of Maya Culture
 - AM: Chapter 4, pp. 102-105
- Aztec predecessors: The Toltecs and the Chichen Itza Connection
 - AR: Coe and Koontz 2008

Wednesday, May 28

- Rise of the Aztecs
 - AZ: Chapters 1 and 2
- Aztec Social and Economic Organization
 - AZ: Chapter 3, 4, and 5
- Aztec Daily Life
 - AZ: Chapter 6
- *Film: Aztecs: Engineering an Empire*

Thursday, May 29

- Aztec Religion and Ritual
 - AZ: Chapter 9 and 10
- Aztec Intellectual Achievements: Art, Writing, Science, and Propaganda
 - AZ: Chapter 11 and 12
- ***Patolli: an ancient Mesoamerican gambling game***

Friday, May 30

- Human Sacrifice and Cannibalism (the other, *other*, white meat)
 - AR: Harris (1977), pp. 99-110
 - AR: Harris (1979), pp. 333-341
 - AR: Sahlins (1978)
- The Encounter: Spanish visions of the Conquest
 - AZ: Chapter 13, pp. 278-290
- The Encounter: Indigenous visions of the Conquest

- AR: *The Broken Spears*, Excerpts
 - AZ: Chapter 13, pp. 290-303
- **Student presentations**
- **Paper 2 due**