

ARHS 3383: THE ANCIENT MAYA MAY TERM 2019

This course examines the art, architecture, and calligraphic writing of the Maya of ancient Mesoamerica. Lectures, readings, and discussions will introduce students to the ancient Maya civilization 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 between AD 250 and 900, the Classic Period. We will also explore the linguistic mechanics and visual artistry of the Maya writing system: students will come away with a rudimentary understanding of Maya hieroglyphs.



This course is intended to bring students into contact with Maya art and hieroglyphs in a small-class learning environment. **THREE sessions will be held in the galleries of the Dallas Museum of Art; two sessions will be devoted to an in-class workshop in Maya hieroglyphic writing.**

- **UC2012: HD; GE; CREATIVITY AND AESTHETICS II; HISTORICAL CONTEXTS I**
- **UC 2016: HD; GE; Depth/HFA; Breadth/HC**

INSTRUCTOR: PROF. ADAM HERRING, DEPT. CHAIR, SMU ART HISTORY

COURSE BENEFITS/LEARNING OUTCOMES

After taking this course students will be able to:

- Knowledgably discuss the Maya and other indigenous peoples of ancient Mexico and Central America.
- Know the geography, topography, and ecology of the ancient Maya world, with a who's-who understanding of the great urban centers of the ancient Maya.
- Read Maya glyphs.
- Knowledgably discuss the principal formats and genres of ancient Maya art and visual expression.
- See with new eyes: students will come away with sharpened visual sensitivities and visual literacy in the art of ancient Mexico.
- Demonstrate improved skills of with art-historical thinking and writing, particularly research, analysis, and argumentation.
- Reflect on the deep cultural legacy of indigenous history and civilization in Mexico and the New World.

SYLLABUS/COMPREHENSIVE COURSE DESCRIPTION

ARHS 3383: The Ancient Maya

May Term 2019

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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.

Student Learning Outcomes

Human Diversity

- Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the historical, cultural, social and political conditions of identity formation among the ancient Maya and among the descendants of the Maya in contemporary Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, and El Salvador.
- Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of issues related to race, ethnicity and gender among the ancient Maya and among the descendants of the Maya in contemporary Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, and El Salvador.

Global Engagement

- Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the material culture, underlying values, beliefs, and practices that are central to the ancient Maya and among the descendants of the Maya in contemporary Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, and El Salvador.

Creativity and Aesthetics -- Level II

- Students will be introduced to Maya visual works and the Mayan artistic tradition. They will come away from the course having memorized the fundamental “monument list” of the ancient Maya.
- Students will consider the specific media of visual expression and their techniques of production employed by the ancient Maya.
- Students will grapple with the formal specificity and expressive nuance of particular pieces of the ancient Maya. Students will be able to recognize the range and consequences of the artistic choices the ancient Maya made.
- Students will articulate their enhanced comprehension of visual works during in-class discussion, and in writing assignments, and in independent research projects.

Historical Contexts – Level I

- Students will be able to identify the main events, actors, and evidence associated with the ancient Maya.
- Students will be able to summarize in their own prose the major changes that took place in ancient Mayan society.

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 will result in the student being dropped from the course.
- Students must respect the learning environment of the classroom: talking, passing notes, tardy arrival, sleeping in class, “multi-tasking” (newspapers, French homework, internet surfing) will result in the student being dropped from the course.
- Paper deadlines and exam dates are final. No extensions or make-ups will be granted. Late papers will be marked down.

- Students must keep a notebook in which in-class and reading notes are kept. Failure to complete readings may result in the student being dropped from the course.
- 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!
- 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 needing academic accommodations for a disability must first register with Disability Accommodations & Success Strategies (DASS). Students can call 214-768-1470 or visit <http://www.smu.edu/Provost/ALEC/DASS> to begin the process. Once registered, students should then schedule an appointment with the professor as early in the semester as possible, present a DASS Accommodation Letter, and make appropriate arrangements. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and require advance notice to implement.
- 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)

Course Schedule

Day 1: Thursday Introduction to the Maya and the Maya Region

Reading: Miller, *Art of Mesoamerica*, 9-82; Miller, *Maya Art and Arch.*, 72-87.

Afternoon: Introduction to the Ancient Maya and their Neighbors
Geography, Topography, and Ecology of the Maya region

Day 2: Friday Mesoamerican Precedents/ Mesoamerican Neighbors

MEET IN GALLERIES OF DMA: Dallas Museum of Art!

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!**

Day 3: Monday 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: Tuesday Rival Brothers: Dynasties of Tikal and Calakmul

MEET IN GALLERIES OF DMA: Dallas Museum of Art!

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: Wednesday The Feast in the Maya Palace: Painted Maya Chocolate Vessels

Five-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: Thursday 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: Friday 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**

Monday, May 27: NO CLASS—MEMORIAL DAY!

Day 8: Tuesday 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.

Day 9: Wednesday: The Late Maya of Yucatán

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

Afternoon: MEET IN GALLERIES OF DMA!

Day 10: Thursday: SUMMARY and REVIEW OF COURSE

***Bring questions for discussion based on readings and notes!**

Day 11: Friday, May 31: In-Class Final Exam