

## **ARHS 3383: THE ANCIENT MAYA J-TERM 2017**

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. **Two 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.**

**UC: HUMAN DIVERSITY; GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT; CREATIVITY AND AESTHETICS II; HISTORICAL CONTEXTS I**

### **INSTRUCTOR: PROF. ADAM HERRING, SMU ART HISTORY**

Adam Herring received his PhD in the History of Art from Yale University in 1999. At SMU he teaches courses on the art and culture of the Maya, Inca, and other peoples of ancient Mesoamerica and the Andes.

### **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**

**J-Term 2017**

M-F 9 AM – 4 PM

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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 (7 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.
- Students with certified learning disabilities are welcome, and must consult with the instructor early in the term. (See attached sheet on disabilities and excused absences.)
- Disability Accommodations: Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first contact Ms. Rebecca Marin, Coordinator, 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)

## 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!**

### Day 3 The Rise of the Maya Kings and Dynasties

**Seven-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**  
**Seven-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.