

Department of Anthropology
College of Public Affairs and Community Service
The University of North Texas

PEOPLES AND CULTURES OF MESOAMERICA
ANTH 3210
Fall 2015
TU-TH 11:00-12:20 PM –Gateway #131

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Office Hours: T 12:30 – 1:30 PM
and by appointment.

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Office Hours: TH 9:30-11 AM
or by appointment

“Here is the story of the beginning,
when there was not one bird,
not one fish,
not one mountain.
Here is the sky, all alone.
Here is the sea, all alone.
There is nothing more
–no sound, no movement.
Only the sky and the sea.
Only Heart-of-Sky, alone.
And these are his names:
Maker and Modeler,
Kukulcan,
and Hurricane.
But there is no one to speak his names.
There is no one to praise his glory.
There is no one to nurture his greatness.”
(The Creation, *Popol Vuh*)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course focused on the cultural processes that have characterized a very particular region on the American continent. Even today, we do not have a clear definition of the term *Mesoamerica*. We will refer to it as ‘Middle America’ the geographical region from which a great diversity of cultures and civilizations emerged prior to the coming of the Spaniards. We will study the origins, complex transformations, and the historical development of these cultures through three major historical periods: Pre-Hispanic, Colonial and Contemporary. The Pre-Hispanic period is focused on the ways of life, including the crucial role of ideology, cosmology and astronomy in the emergence and development of Mesoamerican cultures and civilizations. The Colonial era is anthropologically examined to identify the political, economic and ideological factors still present in contemporary Mesoamerica. Finally, students will examine the effects of

the broad diversity of rural, urban, transnational and global processes in the lives of the people living in the region tied to the ancient Mesoamerican cultures. Course activities will include readings, lectures, class discussions, and ethnographic documentaries.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- Exercise the anthropological approach in the understanding of the Mesoamerica
- Exercise critical thinking in the analysis of past and present ideologies related to the diversity of Mesoamerican cultures, through general discussion
- Understand the broad diversity of past and current Mesoamerican cultures
- Articulate the political, economic, social, and cultural forces that have shaped Mesoamerica today.

STRUCTURE AND REQUIREMENTS

The course is a combination of lectures and seminar. Lectures provide the introduction to major debates surrounding the readings; students are expected to engage in class discussions. Everyone must come to class prepared; discussion will often take the form of a formal debate of the issues read for that class session. **All readings that are listed on the syllabus should be done prior to the class.**

Reading Comments (10% of grade)

Reading comments consist of a paragraph or two describing your thoughts-reflection to the reading(s) for **each** session. Do not summarize, but rather elaborate your response to the reading. In addition, prepare 2-3 questions that you might ask your classmates or discuss yourself. You need to post your comments on Blackboard before class meeting. Bring your comments and questions with you to class.

Two Take-Home Exams (60% of grade, 30% each)

Each student will write two take-home exams based on several integrative questions, which will be distributed one week in advance. Questions on the exam will be drawn from the readings, lectures, and discussions. Your response must include the references you used.

Presentations (20%)

Starting in the second half of the semester, students will be divided up in groups that will work on particular topics to be distributed in class. Students will use the material from the ethnography they select to work collectively on the presentations. Instructions for these presentation and the list of topics to present will be provided in class.

Course Participation and Attendance (10% of grade)

You are expected to come to each session having read the assigned material. Informed participation by everyone in discussions is expected. Those who fail to attend often disrupt class. Your regular attendance will be noticed by the performance in your presentations and discussions. Notify the instructor of any planned absences. More than

3 absences will result in the subtraction of 10% of your grade. Please note that 10% is one letter grade.

Extra Credit

Occasionally, additional assignments will be given to monitor how well you are absorbing the material. These assignments are likely to become more frequent if students are missing the class or failing to participate. These assignments will receive a checkmark (for an average response) or a plus (for an excellent response). These marks become important at the end of the term. If your final grade is on the margin between two marks, the accumulated points earned on these assignments are used to adjust your grade up or down.

Please turn off all electronic devices in class (cell phones, Blackberries, ipods, etc.). You may not receive or send text messages during class. Personal computers are allowed only for taking notes. **Any use of computers for other purposes will lead to a ban on all computers in the classroom.** The professor reserves the right to alter this syllabus via class announcements or email to students

PLAGIARISM POLICY

The Department of Anthropology does not tolerate plagiarism, cheating, or helping others to cheat. Plagiarism is defined as misrepresenting the work of others (whether published or not) as your own. It may be inadvertent or intentional. Any facts, statistics, quotations, or paraphrasing of any information that is not common knowledge, should be cited.

Students suspected of any of these will be provided the opportunity for a hearing; if found guilty they can receive an automatic "F" in the course. In addition, I reserve the right to pursue further disciplinary action within the UNT legal system, which may result in your dismissal from the university. For more information on paper writing, including how to avoid plagiarism, and how to use citations, see

<http://www.unt.edu/anthropology/writing.htm>. For information on the University's policies regarding academic integrity and dishonesty, see the UNT Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities, <http://www.unt.edu/csrr/>.

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

The Anthropology Department does not discriminate on the basis of an individual's disability as required by the Americans With Disabilities Act. Our program provides academic adjustments to individuals with disabilities in its programs and activities. Attempts will be made to meet all certified requirements.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Treat class time as an opportunity to learn.
2. Arrive on class on time.
3. Complete assignments on time. There will be no exceptions.
4. Cite all research, text and image sources.
5. Participate in all class discussions and critiques.
6. Confront difficulties in your work in the spirit of learning, creative exploration, and personal growth.
7. Ask for help from your instructor when needed.

8. Avail yourself of all available support services including advising, tutorials, and workshops.
9. Respect your fellow students at all times.
10. Disruptive behavior, including inappropriate language and talking in class, is not tolerated. Students whose behavior is disturbing the class will be asked to leave and will be marked absent.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Textbook:

Carmack, Robert, Gasco, J. and Gary Gossen (eds.) (2007). 2nd. Edition. *The legacy of Mesoamerica*. New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall
Identified in the schedule as (LM)

Ethnographies: (students must choose ONE)

Adler, Rachel. 2003. *Yucatecans in Dallas*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon

Castellanos, Bianet. 2010. *A Return to Servitude. Maya Migration and the Tourist Trade in Cancún*. University of Minnesota Press.

Holmes, Seth . 2013. *Fresh Fruits, Broken Bodies. Migrant Farmworkers in the United States*. University of California Press.

Manz, Beatriz. 2004, *Paradise in Ashes: A Guatemalan Journey of Courage, Terror, and Hope*. University of California Press.

Stephen, Lynn. 2013. *We Are the Face of Oaxaca: Testimony and Social Movements*. Duke University Press.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Burns, Allan. 1995. *Maya in Exile*. Temple University Press.

Coe, Michael D. 1992. *Breaking the Maya Code* . New York: Thames and Hudson

Coe, Michael D. 1999. *The Maya. Ancient Peoples and Places*. London: Thames & Hudson

Coe, Michael D., and Mark Van Stone. 2001. *Reading the Maya Glyphs* . London: Thames & Hudson

Ebers, Christine. 1995. *Women and Alcohol in a Highland Maya Town: Water of Hope, Water of Sorrow*. University of Texas Press, Austin.

Farris, N.M. 1985. *Maya Society under Colonial Rule: The Collective Enterprise of Survival*. Princeton University Press.

Kinz, Ellen. 1990. *Life under the Tropical Canopy: Tradition and Change among the Yucatec Maya*. New York: Wadsworth Publishers.

Lancaster, Roger . 1992. *Life is Hard: Machismo, Danger, and the Intimacy of Power in Nicaragua*. University of California Press

Lucero, Lisa J. 2006. *Water and Ritual: The Rise and Fall of Classic Maya Rulers*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Martin, Simon and Nikolai Grube. 2000. *Chronicle of the Maya Kings and Queens: Deciphering the Dynasties of the Ancient Maya*. London: Thames & Hudson,

Miller, Mary Ellen. 1999. *Maya Art and Architecture* . London: Thames & Hudson.

Powers, Karen V. 2005. *Women in the Crucible of Conquest: The Gendered Genesis of Spanish American Society, 1500-1600*. University of New Mexico Press.

Reed, Nelson 1996. *The Cast War of Yucatan*. Stanford University Press; Revised edition 2002

Re Cruz, Alicia. 1992. *The Two Milpas of Chan Kom*. Albany: SUNY Press

Rosenbaum, Brenda. 1993. *With our Heads Bowed: The Dynamics of Gender in a Maya Community*. Albany: Institute for Mesoamerican Studies, State University of New York.

Sharer, Robert J. *The Ancient Maya*, Sixth Edition. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006. (Called Sharer in

Simon, Martin, and Nikolai Grube. 2000. *Chronicle of the Maya Kings and Queens: Deciphering the Dynasties of the Ancient Maya* .London: Thames & Hudson.

Tedlock, Dennis (Translator). 1996. *Popol Vuh: The Mayan Book of the Dawn of Life* .Touchstone Books.

Wolf, Eric. 1959. *Sons of the Shaking Earth*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

ACCESSING COURSE MATERIALS: You can access course readings and material on Blackboard (Bb) Please let me know if you are having any difficulties accessing any materials.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week No.	Dates	Topics
1	August 25-27	Introduction Readings: (LM) chapt. 1 Documentary: <i>Culture and Math</i>

2	Sept. 1-3	<p>Pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica Readings: (LM) chapt. 2 Documentary</p>
3	Sept. 8-10	<p>The Mesoamerican World at Spanish Contact Readings: (LM) chapt. 3 Documentary: <i>Lost Kingdoms of the Maya</i></p>
4	Sept. 15-17	<p>The European Encounter Readings: (LM) chapt. 4</p> <p>Farris, N. <i>Maya Society under Colonial Rule</i> (Bb) Documentary: <i>The Other Conquest</i> (2007)</p>
5	Sept. 22-24	<p>Colonial Mesoamerica Readings: (LM) chapt. 5</p> <p>Matthew, Laura “Mexicanos and the Meanings of Ladino in Colonial Guatemala: Casta Designations in Central Mexico,” <i>Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History</i> 7(1) (Bb)</p>
6	Sept. 29 - Oct. 1st	<p>Religion. Messianic and Nativistic Movements Readings: (LM) chapt. 7; chapt 14 (pp.505-523)</p> <p>Carrasco, David, “Mesoamerican Religions: Origins, Ancestors, and Histories,” pp. 37-74 in <i>Religions of Mesoamerica</i> (Bb)</p> <p>Leon-Portilla, Miguel “Those Made Worthy by Divine Sacrifice: The Faith of Ancient Mexico,” pp. 41-64 In <i>South and Meso-American Native Spirituality</i> (Bb)</p>
7	Oct. 6-8	<p>Native Mesoamericans in the Modern Era Readings: (LM) chapt. 8</p> <p>Lauria-Santiago, Aldo “‘That a Poor Man Be Industrious’: Coffee, Community, and Agrarian Capitalism in the Transformation of El Salvador’s Ladino Peasantry, 1850-900,” pp. 25-51 in <i>Identity and Struggle at the Margins of the Nation-State</i> (Bb)</p>
8	Oct. 13-15	<p>Mesoamerican Peasants The Milpa System Reading: González, Roberto J. 2001. “The Craft of the Campesino: Measures, Implements, and Artifacts,” Ch. 3 in <i>Zapotec Science: Farming and Food in the Northern Sierra of Oaxaca</i>. Austin: University of Texas Press, pp. 70-101. (Bb) Documentary: <i>The Living Maya</i></p>
	Oct. 15	<p>FIRST TAKE-HOME EXAM</p>

9	Oct. 20-22	<p>Transnationalism and the Political Economy of Mesoamerica Readings: (LM) chapt. 9 Documentaries: <i>The Mayan Dreams of Chan Kom</i> <i>When the Mountains Tremble</i></p>
10	Oct. 27-29	<p>The Mayan Zapatista Movement Readings: (LM) chapt. 10</p> <p>Collier, G.(With E. Lowery Quaratiello), 1994. Chapter V. “The Toll of Restructuring on Lives and Communities” <i>Basta! Land and the Zapatista Rebellion in Chiapas..</i> Oakland: Food First, pp. 107-124.(Bb) Documentary: <i>The Sixth Sun</i></p>
	Oct. 27	<p>FALL FORUM Coliseum – UNT</p>
11	Nov. 3-5	<p>Women and Gender Readings: (LM) chapt. 12</p>
12	Nov. 10-12	<p>The Indian Voice Readings: (LM) chapt. 13</p> <p>McDowell, John. 2000. “Introduction” and Ch. 6, “Poetry Regulates Violence” in <i>Poetry and Violence: The Ballad Tradition of Mexico’s Costa Chica</i>. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, pp. 5-11, and 148-172.</p>
13	Nov. 17-19	<p>U.S/Mexico Border Immigrants and Asylum Seekers in the 21st Century Documentaries: <i>Maquiliapolis</i> <i>La Bestia</i> <i>Which Way Home</i></p> <p>American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting</p>
14	Nov.24-26	THANKSGIVING
15	Dec. 2-4	FINAL PRESENTATIONS and GENERAL REVIEW
	Dec. 4	SECOND TAKE-HOME EXAM

NOTE ABOUT SYLLABUS AND READINGS

The syllabus may change and professor will announce the changes in advance. In addition, the professor will announce in class additional readings required to cover the material presented in class. These additional readings will be posted in Blackboard (Bb)