

Department of Anthropology
College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CLASS)
The University of North Texas



Mesoamerica Culture
ANTH 3210 - Fall 2022
WH 216
T – Th 11:00 am – 12:20 pm

Dr. Alicia Re Cruz
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**Instructor
Assistant**

Alicia Re Cruz
Marsh

Office Hours: *by appointment* on
pm

Tuesday & Thursday 10 – 11 am
or
pm

Wednesday & Thursday 12:30 – 1:30 pm

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Instructional

Fallon

Office Hours: Tuesday 1:30 – 2:30

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Course Description

We will study the origins and the historical development of Mesoamerica 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 emerging from Spanish colonialist regime, with significant influences in modern and contemporary cultural and political processes throughout the Mesoamerican region.

Finally, students will examine the broad diversity of rural, urban and transnational Mesoamerica today. Course activities will include readings, class discussion, and documentaries.

Course Vision

This course is conceptualized to be transformative by exposing students to the understanding of CULTURE using the complex diversity of Mesoamerica as a study case. For this, students will

learn about anthropological perspective and how to use it to analyze the past and present cultural processes in the Mesoamerica region.

Course Objectives

The general purpose of this course is:

1. To learn and extend understanding of basic anthropological principles.
2. To provide in-depth cultural analysis
3. To strengthen critical thinking skills in the context of the discipline of Anthropology
4. To enhance written and oral communication skills.

Specific course objectives include:

1. Exercise the anthropological approach in the understanding of Mesoamerica.
2. Exercise critical thinking in the analysis of past and present ideologies related to different cultural traditions in the Mesoamerica region, through general discussion
3. Understand the broad diversity of past and current cultures in Mesoamerica.
4. Understand the participation, impact and resistance of Mesoamerica toward global trend

Required Readings

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

This textbook will be identified in the syllabus as (LM)

*Other course readings available via Canvas course page.

Communication

I hope to create an open and responsive communication system in several ways:

1. **Emails** will be responded to within 24 hours. If you don't hear back within 24 hours, try again to insure it didn't get lost in clutter.
2. **Office appointments** are encouraged so that you can be sure that you are understanding the material and the expectations for assignments. Appointment availability is set across a wide range of times to facilitate work schedules.
3. **Class seminar discussions** are a great time to ask questions about content and assignments. If you have the question, the chances are someone else does too and everyone can learn from one another.

ADA Policy

Please discuss your accommodations (whether “verified” or not) with me as soon as possible so that we can make a plan to ensure your success. UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one’s specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time; however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the [ODA website](https://disability.unt.edu/) (https://disability.unt.edu/).

Student Objectives, Requirement Options, Point Allocations & Criteria

Grading Scale	
A= 100-90 points, B=89-80 points, C=79-70 points, D=69-60points, F= 59points or below	

Activity	Objectives	Points
Reading Comments	Reading comments consist of a 200-300 words post describing your thoughts-reflection to the reading(s) and seminar for each week. These comments are due on Sunday at midnight.	30 points
First Comprehensive Exercise	Students will write an essay-based exam on the material covered during the first half of the semester. These essays need to show the use of anthropological perspective. Students have to provide quotes and references linked to the readings and discussions	30 points
Second Comprehensive Exercise	Students will write an essay-based exam on the material covered during the second half of the semester, following the same requirements as in the First Comprehensive Exam. One of the essays will focus on one of the selected ethnographies by the student.	40 points

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About the Requirements

Reading Comments

This assignment gives me valuable feedback on how you read and understand the material and where your biggest questions are. The Reading Comments will always have four segments:

1. **Quotes.** Selection of quotes from the material that stand out to you, with citation of page number and title or author. Example: (Re Cruz, 1996: 26).
2. **Reflection/Commentary.** Your synthesis/analysis of what was most important to you in the reading(s).
3. **Questions.** Several questions that you would like to share with me, and your classmates.

Comprehensive Exercises

These essay-based exercises are based on several integrative questions, which will be distributed one week in advance. These questions on the exam will be drawn from the readings, and discussions. Your response must include the references you used.

Required Ethnographies

Students **select one** of the ethnographies below. This is an opportunity to use the anthropological perspective in the understanding of the particular contemporary case addressed by these different authors. With this essay, students will demonstrate their anthropological analysis and their understanding of the material provided throughout the semester.

Castellanos, Bianet. 2020. *Indigenous Dispossession: Housing and Maya Indebtedness in Mexico*. Stanford University Press.

De Leon, Jason. 2015. *The land of Open Graves. Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail*. University of California Press.

Manz, Beatriz. 2005. *Paradise in Ashes. A Guatemalan Journey of Courage, Terror and Hope*. University of California Press

Menchú, Rigoberta. 1983. *I, Rigoberta Menchú, An Indian Woman in Guatemala*. Verso Books.

Rules of Engagement

Rules of engagement refer to the way students are expected to interact with each other and with their instructors online. Here are some general guidelines:

- Treat your instructor and classmates with respect in email or any other communication.
- Use standard fonts such as Ariel, Calibri or Times new Roman and use a size 10 or 12 point font
- Avoid using the caps lock feature AS IT CAN BE INTERPRETTED AS YELLING.
- Be cautious when using humor or sarcasm as tone is sometimes lost in an email or discussion post and your message might be taken seriously or sound offensive.
- Be careful with personal information (both yours and other's).
- Do not send confidential information via e-mail

See these [Engagement Guidelines](https://clear.unt.edu/online-communication-tips) (https://clear.unt.edu/online-communication-tips) for more information. Feel free to discuss these – some include implicit bias, others not.

Student Support Services

UNT provides mental health resources to students to help ensure there are numerous outlets to turn to that wholeheartedly care for and are there for students in need, regardless of the nature of an issue or its severity. Listed below are several resources on campus that can support your academic success and mental well-being:

- [Student Health and Wellness Center](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center) (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center)
- [Counseling and Testing Services](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services) (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services)
- [UNT Care Team](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/care) (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/care)
- [UNT Psychiatric Services](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center/services/psychiatry) (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center/services/psychiatry)
- [Individual Counseling](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services/services/individual-counseling) (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services/services/individual-counseling)

Other Student Support Services Offered by UNT Include

- [Registrar](https://registrar.unt.edu/registration) (https://registrar.unt.edu/registration)
- [Financial Aid](https://financialaid.unt.edu/) (https://financialaid.unt.edu/)

- [Student Legal Services](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-legal-services) (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-legal-services)
- [Career Center](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/career-center) (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/career-center)
- [Multicultural Center](https://edo.unt.edu/multicultural-center) (https://edo.unt.edu/multicultural-center)
- [Counseling and Testing Services](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services) (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services)
- [Pride Alliance](https://edo.unt.edu/pridealliance) (https://edo.unt.edu/pridealliance)
- [UNT Food Pantry](https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources/food-pantry) (https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources/food-pantry)

Academic Support Services

- [Academic Resource Center](https://clear.unt.edu/canvas/student-resources) (https://clear.unt.edu/canvas/student-resources)
- [Academic Success Center](https://success.unt.edu/asc) (https://success.unt.edu/asc)
- [UNT Libraries](https://library.unt.edu/) (https://library.unt.edu/)
- [Writing Lab](http://writingcenter.unt.edu/) (http://writingcenter.unt.edu/)
- [MathLab](https://math.unt.edu/mathlab) (https://math.unt.edu/mathlab)

Academic Integrity Policy

Academic dishonesty of any kind, including plagiarism, cheating, forgery, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, and sabotage, will result in, at minimum, a grade of F for the product, and may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University. . As defined by UNT policy 06.003, Student Standards of Academic Integrity (https://policy.unt.edu/sites/default/files/06.003_AcademicIntegrity_2009_0.pdf), plagiarism is “Use of another’s thoughts or words without proper attribution in any academic exercise, regardless of the student’s intent, including but not limited to:

1. the knowing or negligent use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgement or citation.
2. the knowing or negligent unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or by an agency engaged in selling term papers or other academic materials.”

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

Cook, Garrett and Thomas Offit with Rhonda Taube. 2013. ***Indigenous Religion and Cultural Performance in the New Maya World***. University of New Mexico Press.

Cook, Garrett and Thomas Offit, 2009. ***Pluralism and Transculturation in Indigenous Maya Religion***, *Ethnology* vol. 47, no. 1, Winter 2008, pp. 45'59.

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.

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.

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

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.

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

Our Course Plan

*The syllabus is the expected course plan. Dr. Re Cruz may make relatively minor changes based on contextual factors.

Week	Date	Topics	Readings & Activities
1	Aug 30 – Sep 1	Review Syllabus. Introductions	(LM) Introduction (1-37)
2	Sep 6-8	Anthropology in a Few Words Origins and Development of Mesoamerica Civilization	(LM), Introduction & Chapter 1 (38-56) Sept 6 Dr. Sofia Pacheco-Forés
3	Sept 13-15	The Classic Civilizations Films: The Popol Vuh Maya Base-20 Numerical System	(LM) Chapter 1(56-77)
4	Sept 20-22	PostClassic Mesoamerica THE AZTECS Film: The Aztecs	(LM) Chapter 2 (78-102) Lopez-Austin readings
5	Sept 27-29	PostClassic Mesoamerica THE MAYAS Films: The Lost Kingdom of the Mayas Sun, Corn and the Calendar	(LM) Chapter 2 (102-119)
6	Oct 4-6	Mesoamerica at the Time of European Contact	(LM) Chapter 4 (151-181)
7	Oct 11-13	Spanish Colonial Regime in Mesoamerica Colonial Native Rebellions Religion The Virgin of Guadalupe	(LM) Chapter 5 (182-221)

8	Oct 18-20	Indigenous Literature from Colonial Mesoamerica First Comprehensive Exercise Due Oct 20th at 11:59pm	(LM) Chapter 6 (222-254)
9	Oct 25-27	Mesoamericans in the Neocolonial Era Nativist Movements THE CAST WAR	(LM) Chapter 7 (255-295)
10	Nov 1-3	Native Americans in the Modern Era	(LM) Chapter 8 (296-346) First half of the selected Ethnography
11	Nov 8-10	Transnationalism and the Political Economy of Mesoamerica Film: The Mayan Dreams of Chan Kom Celebration of <i>Día de los Muertos</i> (Day of the Dead) Creation of Maya Altar on Nov 2	(LM) Chapter 9 (347-378)
12	Nov 15-17	The Mayan Zapatista Movement Film: The Sixth Sun U.S/Mexico Border in the 21 st Century Films: La Bestia Which Way Home	(LM) Chapter 10 (379-406)
13	Nov 22	Women and Gender in Mesoamerica	(LM) Chapter 12 (439-475) "Comandanta Esther in the Congress of the Union" (PDF). Schools for Chiapas. 2001. "Who killed Berta Cáceres? Behind the brutal murder of an environment crusader" . the Guardian. 2 June 2020. Retrieved 2 June 2020.
14	Nov 29- Dec 1	Central American immigrants and asylum seekers	Second half of the selected Ethnography
15	Dec 6-8	Review	

16	Dec 13	Second Comprehensive Exercise Due Dec 13th at 11:59pm	
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