

Department of Anthropology
Kaprielian Hall
3620 S. Vermont Ave., Ste. 352
University Park Campus
University of Southern California
Los Angeles, CA 90089

Spring 2014
Course Syllabus

ANTH 314 – The Nature of Maya Civilization
TTh 12:30-1:50, GFS 223

Dr. Thomas G. Garrison
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Office Hours: T-Th 11-12
Office: AHF B40
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Course Description

This course provides an in depth examination of the Maya civilization from its shadowy beginnings in the 2nd millennium BC to current struggles faced by modern Maya peoples living in Latin American nation-states. A particular emphasis will be placed on the Maya of the Classic Period (AD 250-1000) including their own histories, which were recorded in elaborate glyphic texts. This course should make plain some of the mystery surrounding the Maya who have been the subject of much erroneous speculation in recent years.

Recommended Preparation

An introductory course in archaeology (ANTH 202) or the cultures of Mesoamerica is recommended prior to taking this class, but not required.

Introduction, Aims, and Objectives

The Maya have fascinated the public and scholarly communities ever since they were revealed in mainstream publications in the 1840s. As one of the few major ancient civilizations to have emerged in a tropical jungle setting, they are often labeled as “mysterious” or “enigmatic.” In the last decade the Maya have been in the public consciousness even more than ever as the so-called “December 21, 2012 Maya Apocalypse” came and went. This doomsday prophecy is just one of a number of false claims attributed to the beliefs of the Maya people that are entrenched in the popular perception of this brilliant civilization. This course seeks to present the true nature of Maya civilization as it is understood from the archaeological record and the ancient texts of the Maya themselves. The ancient Maya obtained some of the greatest achievements of the cultures of the New World and many of their beliefs survive in modified forms among their modern descendants who live throughout southern Mexico and Central America.

The aims of this course are threefold. First, is to introduce you to Maya civilization and dispel modern misconceptions about the ancient Maya. Second, is to take an in depth look at the history of Classic Period (AD 250-1000) Maya city-states by considering historical events found in ancient glyphic texts. Finally, you will learn how to make critical arguments about Maya civilization through the use of reliable source material.

In order to achieve these aims you will be expected to attend weekly lectures on Maya culture and history. I have been conducting archaeological fieldwork in the Maya lowlands for over a decade and will share some of my personal experiences to try to make the subject more interesting and relevant. We will also have a limited number of class activities and television specials in order to engage you more closely with the material. The Maya are an extremely complex culture about whom hundreds of books and articles have been written. We will only scratch the surface of this complexity during this course, so keeping on top of the reading will be critical to your ability to stay on pace with the lectures. You will also be required to do a number of short writing assignments, each with an increasing amount of required external research.

By the end of the course you should:

- Have a basic understanding of Maya culture and history
- Be able to identify reliable accounts of Maya culture in popular media
- Have strong research and writing skills relating to Maya archaeology
- Have the prerequisite experience to participate in fieldwork in the Maya world

Description of Assignments

Your final grade will be calculated based on attendance, a midterm, and three short writing assignments, each worth an increasing percentage of your grade. The first paper will be 5-7 pages and will cover the relationship between the ancient Maya and the central Mexican city of Teotihuacan. The second paper will also be 5-7 pages and will be a study of a single Maya site. Finally, the third paper will be 8-10 pages long and will be on a topic of your choosing. I will provide guidelines for researching each of these papers as well as grading criteria for writing assignments.

Statement on Internet Research

The Maya, and Mesoamerican civilizations in general, are the source of broad speculation and falsified claims made on the internet. As such, websites are extremely unreliable to use in Maya research. Whether it be erroneous claims on Wikipedia pages or discussions of “Pakal the Maya Astronaut” (<http://www.earthmatrix.com/serie26/pakal.htm>), it is best to steer clear of internet sources, which often mask their inaccuracies by providing references to some scholarly research. You may of course use Google Scholar or any other library database to search for scholarly articles, but **you should not simply do Google searches** to research topics about the Maya. Two websites that you are allowed to use and which have a number of credible articles and reports are: Mesoweb (www.mesoweb.org), FAMSI (www.famsi.org), and David Stuart’s blog (<https://decipherment.wordpress.com>).

Statement on Late Assignments

All writing assignments are to be turned in at the time specified on the assignment handout. If they are turned in within 24 hours after the deadline you will receive a deduction of 1/3 of a letter grade. You will receive a full letter grade deduction for each day late after that.

Statement on Attendance

Attendance in all classes is mandatory. Attendance contributes directly toward your final grade (5%). This grade will be determined by five random roll calls throughout the semester.

Statement of Contact Hours and Out of Class Workload

The best way to reach me is through email (thomas.garrison@usc.edu). If you send me an email before 8 PM, I will answer it the same day. Your out of class workload is about 75-150 pages of reading per week plus research, writing, and study time for your various assignments.

Grading Breakdown

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>% of grade</u>	<u>Due date</u>
Attendance	5%	Weekly
Midterm	20%	March 4
Writing Assignment 1	20%	February 18
Writing Assignment 2	25%	April 3
Writing Assignment 3	30%	May 3

Statement for Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to your course instructor (or TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open from 8:30am to 5:00pm, Monday through Friday. Website and contact information for DSP http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 740-6948 (TDD only), (213) 740-8216 (FAX) ability@usc.edu

Statement on Academic Integrity

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General Principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. Scampus, The Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A:

<http://usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/> Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: <http://usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/> Information on intellectual property at USC is available at: <http://usc.edu/academe/acsen/issues/ipr/index.html>

Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in Crisis

In case of emergency, when travel to campus is difficult, if not impossible, USC executive leadership will announce a digital way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of the Blackboard LMS (Learning Management System), teleconferencing, and other technologies. Instructors should be prepared to assign students a "Plan B" project that can be completed 'at a distance.' For additional information about maintaining your classes in an emergency, please access:

<http://cst.usc.edu/services/emergencyprep.html>

Readings

There are two books required for this course. The first, by Houston and Inomata (2009), is an in depth look at the Maya of the Classic Period written by two of the leading current authorities on Maya civilization. The second, by Martin and Grube (2008), is a synthesis of the dynastic histories of ancient Maya city-states as interpreted from glyphic texts and archaeology. In addition, a number of scientific articles will be assigned and made available on the course website to enrich your knowledge on certain topics.

Houston, Stephen D., and Takeshi Inomata

2009 *The Classic Maya*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Martin, Simon, and Nikolai Grube

2008 *Chronicles of the Maya Kings and Queens: Deciphering the Dynasties of the Ancient Maya*, revised edition. Thames and Hudson, New York.

Course Schedule

WEEK 1

Part I: Introduction

Tuesday, January 14

Lecture: Introduction to the Course

Thursday, January 16

Lecture: Geography of the Maya Area

Reading: Houston and Inomata 2009: xiii-10; Dunningetal1998.pdf; Dunningetal2002.pdf

WEEK 2

Tuesday, January 21

Lecture: A Brief History of Maya Archaeology

Reading: Houston and Inomata 2009:10-27

Thursday, January 23

Lecture: Maya Sociality and Social Organization

Reading: Houston and Inomata 2009: 28-64

WEEK 3

Part II: Becoming Classic

Tuesday, January 28

Lecture: The Preclassic Maya and their Predecessors

Readings: Houston and Inomata 2009: 65-86

Thursday, January 30

Lecture: The Late Preclassic Period

Readings: Houston and Inomata 2009: 86-104

WEEK 4

Tuesday, February 4

Lecture: The Nature of Classic Maya Civilization

Readings: Houston and Inomata 2009: 105-127

Thursday, February 6

Lecture: External Relationships of the Classic Maya

Readings: Stuart2000.pdf

WEEK 5

Tuesday, February 11

NO CLASS

Part III: Maya Writing and Calendrics

Thursday, February 13

Lecture: Time and the Maya

Activity: Deciphering Maya Glyphs

Readings: Stuart1996.pdf

WEEK 6

Tuesday, February 18

Movie: Cracking the Maya Code

Readings: Martin and Grube 2008: 6-21

WRITING ASSIGNMENT 1 DUE IN CLASS

Part IV: Maya Elites and their Worldview

Thursday, February 20

Lecture: The *ajaw*

Readings: Houston and Inomata 2009: 131-162

WEEK 7

Tuesday, February 25

Lecture: Maya Nobles

Readings: Houston and Inomata 2009: 163-192

Thursday February 27

Lecture: Maya Religion

Readings: Houston and Inomata 2009: 163-217

WEEK 8

Tuesday, March 4

MIDTERM EXAMINATION

Part V: Maya Political History

Thursday, March 6

Lecture: Tikal

Readings: Martin and Grube 2008: Tikal

WEEK 9

Tuesday, March 11

Lecture: The Petexbatun

Readings: Martin and Grube 2008: Dos Pilas

Thursday, March 13

Lecture: The Eastern Lowlands

Readings: Martin and Grube 2008: Naranjo and Caracol

WEEK 10

NO CLASS: Spring Break

WEEK 11

Tuesday, March 25

Lecture: The Snake Kingdom

Readings: Martin and Grube 2008: Calakmul

Thursday, March 27

Lecture: The River Kingdoms

Readings: Martin and Grube 2008: Yaxchilan and Piedras Negras

WEEK 12

Tuesday, April 1

Lecture: The Western Maya

Readings: Martin and Grube 2008: Palenque and Tonina

Thursday, April 3

Lecture: The Southeast Periphery

Readings: Martin and Grube 2008: Copan and Quirigua

WRITING ASSIGNMENT 2 DUE IN CLASS

WEEK 13

Tuesday, April 8

Movie: Lost Kings of the Maya

Part VI: Maya Economies

Thursday, April 10

Lecture: Subsistence Strategies and Trade

Readings: Houston and Inomata 2009: 218-287

WEEK 14

Part VII: Practicing Maya Archaeology

Tuesday, April 15

Lecture: Archaeology at El Zotz, Guatemala

Readings: None

Thursday, April 17

Activity: Interpreting Maya Excavations

Readings: None

WEEK 15

Part VIII: The Postclassic Maya

Tuesday, April 22

Lecture: The Maya Collapse?

Readings: Houston and Inomata: 288-310; Martin and Grube 2008: 226-229

Thursday, April 24

NO CLASS

WEEK 16

Tuesday, April 29

Lecture: Postclassic Yucatan

Readings: Houston and Inomata: 310-319

Part IX: The Maya after Columbus

Thursday, May 1

Lecture: Conquest, Colonialism, and the Enduring Maya

Readings: Houston and Inomata 2009: 320-321; Martin and Grube 2008: 228-230

Saturday, May 3

WRITING ASSIGNMENT 3 DUE VIA EMAIL BY 5:00 PM