

ANTHROPOLOGY 314g – THE NATURE OF MAYA CIVILIZATION
GFS 106, T/TH 12:30-1:50

Dr. Kenneth E. Seligson
Phone: (213) 740-1902
Email: Seligson@usc.edu
Office Hours: M/W 12-1
Office: Hedco 29A (HNB 29A)

TA: Dr. Kirby Farah
Email: kirbyfar@usc.edu
Office Hours: M 12-2
Office: THH B8

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.

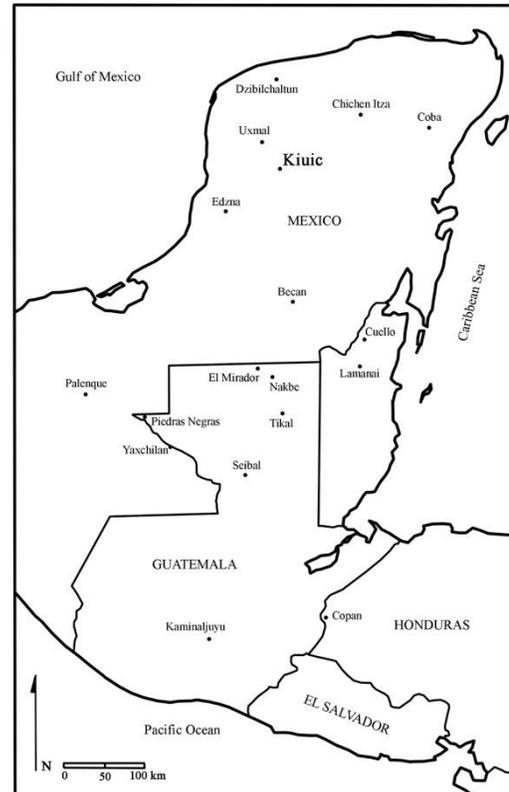
Course Aims and Objectives

The aims of this course are threefold:

- 1) To introduce you to Maya civilization and dispel modern misconceptions about the ancient Maya.
- 2) 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.
- 3) To help you learn how to make critical arguments about Maya civilization (and ancient civilizations more broadly) through the use of reliable source material.

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 knowledge to participate in fieldwork in the Maya world.



Introduction

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.

This course meets the requirement for the core literacy in Social Analysis because it teaches an interdisciplinary social science approach to the study of a specific human society. You will learn about the multivariate data sets that Mayanists use to achieve the most holistic interpretation of the Classic Maya people. Along the way, we will see how both individual and collective action altered the trajectory of ancient social, political, and economic institutions.

In order to achieve the aims and objectives of the course, you will be expected to attend weekly lectures on Maya culture and history. I have been conducting archaeological fieldwork in the Maya lowlands for nearly 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.

Description of Assignments

Your final grade will be calculated based on attendance, a midterm, three writing assignments, a final, and section quizzes and presentations. The first paper will be 1000-1250 words and will cover either the influences of other civilizations on the early Maya, or on the transitional period known as the Preclassic Maya Collapse. The second paper will be 1250-1500 words and will be a study of a single Maya site or deity. Finally, the third paper will be 2000-2500 words 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 Late Assignments, Attendance, and Workload

The writing assignments will be turned in online using Blackboard (via the TurnItIn system), and will be due in by 11:59pm PST on the assigned due date. Assignments handed in one day late will lose 1/3 of a letter grade (e.g. B+ becomes B). Each additional day late will result in the loss of a full letter grade.

Attendance in all classes is mandatory. Repeated absences will negatively affect your grade. The best way to reach me is through email (Seligson@usc.edu). I will try to respond to your email within 24 hours. Your out of class workload is about 75-150 pages of reading per week plus the time you need to spend on assignments and exam preparation.

Grading Breakdown

Assignment	% of Grade	Due Date
Section Grade	10%	Ongoing
Lecture Participation	5%	Ongoing
Writing Assignment 1	10%	Sept. 20
Midterm Exam	20%	Oct. 11
Writing Assignment 2	15%	Nov. 1
Writing Assignment 3	20%	Dec. 4
Final Exam	20%	Dec. 11

Required Readings

There are two books required for this course. The first, by Stephen Houston and Takeshi Inomata (2009), is an in-depth look at the Maya of the Classic Period. The second, by Simon Martin and Nikolai 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.

1. (H&I) Houston, Stephen D., and Takeshi Inomata 2009 *The Classic Maya*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
2. (M&G) Martin, Simon, and Nikolai Grube 2008 *Chronicles of the Maya Kings and Queens: Deciphering the Dynasties of the Ancient Maya*, revised edition. Thames & Hudson, New York.

Wk	Date	Lecture Topics	Readings	Assignment
1	8/21	Intro. to the Maya and the Course		
	8/23	Geography of the Maya Area	H&I pp. xiii-10; Dunning et al. 1998; Dunning et al. 2002	
2	8/28	A Brief History of Maya Archaeology	H&I pp. 10-27	
	8/30	The Preclassic Maya and Their Predecessors	H&I pp. 65-86	
3	9/4	The Late Preclassic Period	H&I pp. 86-104; Taube et al. 2010	
	9/6	Maya Sociality and Social Organization	H&I pp. 28-64	
4	9/11	The Nature of Maya Civilization	H&I pp. 105-127; Hansen 2013	
	9/13	External Relationships of the Maya	H&I pp. 98-113; Stuart 2000	
5	9/18	<i>Cracking the Maya Code</i> (documentary)	M&G pp. 6-21; Grube 2013	
	9/20	Time and the Maya	Voss 2013; Stuart 1996	1st Writing Assign. Due
6	9/25	Concepts of Classic Maya Identity	Houston et al. 2006	
	9/27	Maya Religion	Stuart 2013	

7	10/2	The <i>Ajaw</i>	H&I pp. 131-162	
	10/4	Maya Nobles	H&I pp. 163-192; Saturno et al. 2017	
8	10/9	Maya Glyphs Exercise and Midterm Exam Review Session		
	10/11	MIDTERM EXAM		
9	10/16	Tikal	M&G Tikal	
	10/18	The Snake Kingdom	M&G Calakmul; Martin 2017	
10	10/23	The Western Maya	M&G Palenque	
	10/25	The Southeast Periphery	M&G Copan and Quirigua	
11	10/30	The Maya Collapse?	H&I pp. 288-310; M&G pp. 226-229; Dunning 2013	
	11/1	Fieldwork in the Maya Area	Seligson et al. 2017	2nd Writing Assign. Due
12	11/6	Chichen Itza and Tula	Hoggarth et al. 2015; Cobos et al. 2014	
	11/8	<i>Quest for the Lost Maya (documentary)</i>	Bey 2006	
13	11/13	Postclassic Yucatan	H&I pp. 310-319	
	11/15	Conquest and Colonialism	H&I pp. 320-321; M&G 228-230	
14	11/20	Interpreting Maya Excavations Exercise		
	11/22	NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING		
15	11/27	<i>Of Gods and Kings (documentary)</i>		
	11/29	The Enduring Maya	Ardren 2002; Farah & Seligson 2018	
	12/4	3rd Writing Assignment Due		
	12/11	FINAL EXAM		

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 me or your TA as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in GFS 120 and is open 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776. The website is: <https://dsp.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:

<https://policy.usc.edu/files/2016/10/SCampus-2016-2017.pdf>

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://studentaffairs.usc.edu/scampus/>

Information on intellectual property at USC is available at:

https://policy.usc.edu/files/2014/02/intellectual_property.pdf

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>