

ARH 3653: Mesoamerican Art

Derek Burdette, Ph.D., Assistant Professor

University of Florida, Fall Semester, Jan 11- April 30, 2020 (3 credit hours)

Tuesdays Period 7 (1:55–2:45) and Thursdays Periods 6-7 (12:50- 2:45) in FAC 201

Final exam: No exam scheduled (4/29 3:00-5:00pm)

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Course Description

This course examines the art and architecture of ancient Mesoamerica, a region that corresponds to the modern-day countries of Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and Belize. We survey artworks from roughly three thousand years (1500 BCE- 1550 CE), and examine the role of art within a variety of cultural contexts- including Olmec, Teotihuacano, Maya and Aztec empires. In addition to studying many of the region’s most canonical artworks and architectural monuments, we will think critically about how the legacy of Mesoamerican art resonates within our contemporary world.

Expected Learning Outcomes

- Comprehend the cultural diversity of Pre-Columbian Mesoamerica and recognize its shared features.
- Recognize, interpret, and analyze art and architecture from the major Mesoamerican cultures based on comprehension of Mesoamerican worldviews and visual systems.
- Comprehend the historiography of the region—that is, the history of the discovery, decipherment, and display of Mesoamerican art.
- Compare Mesoamerican worldviews with those of our modern-day culture.
- Learn how U.S. scholarship and tourism have affected Mesoamerican cultural heritage, and recognize how Mesoamerican art has entered U.S. visual culture.
- Improve writing skills by completing a research paper, receiving instructor feedback and rewriting if necessary.

Assigned Reading

We have one required textbooks for this class. It is:

- Miller, Mary Ellen. *The Art of Mesoamerica from Olmec to Aztec*. 5th edition. London and New York: Thames and Hudson, 2012.

Other required readings are available as pdf’s on the **Canvas (E-learning)** site for the course, under Files or in the weekly modules. Additional class materials, including a copy of this syllabus, terms lists, and images, will also be posted there.

Requirements and Grading:

Requirements:

All students must:

- (1) attend class (see attendance policy below)
- (2) complete assigned readings **before** the classes for which they are assigned
- (3) participate in class discussions and activities
- (4) complete homework assignments, including reading analysis and popular media project
- (5) write a research paper (2000 words) investigating the significance of a single Mesoamerican artwork
- (6) Attend and complete the in-class midterm and final examinations.

Grade Break Down:

10% Attendance

20% Class Discussion Assignments

30% Research Paper Assignment

 Proposal (2.5%)

 Annotated Bibliography (5%)

 Thesis/Evidence (2.5%)

 Final Draft (20%)

20% Analysis Essay #1

20% Analysis Essay #2

Attendance: Attendance is extremely important for this class, as many of our learning outcomes can only be achieved by attending class and participating fully in the lecture and discussion. I will take roll at the start of class. You will be allowed **TWO** un-penalized absences, which assumes that you will need a day here or there because you are sick, etc. For each subsequent absence you will lose 2 points from the "Attendance and Participation" portion of your final grade. Note that this system doesn't distinguish between excused and unexcused absences, so plan accordingly. Note that in certain cases- eg. serious illness (COVID-19)- absences can be excused with proper documentation. Also note that excessive absences are grounds for receiving a failing grade for the class.

Class Discussion Assignments:

Throughout the semester we will have a series of discussion assignments that are designed to help you respond to and process the lectures and readings. The exact nature of these assignments will vary from question to question. Some might be a single question based on the readings, some might ask you to respond to or analyze an artwork, some might ask you to reflect on the lecture. Regardless of the exact nature of the question, they offer us an opportunity to enrich our engagement with the material and to do so in community with one another. These assignments and their precise due-dates will evolve over the semester, based on our conversations and class dynamic.

Final Research Paper Assignment:

Each of you will select a single artwork rooted in a topic/culture/theme we touch upon in class and write a research paper that both situates that artwork within the field of Mesoamerican art history and advances an argument about the artwork. Papers should be 2,000- 2,500 words (8-10 pages) in length (2x spaced, times new roman, normal margins). The assignment will be completed in several steps:

- Week 8: Thursday, March 2: Paper proposals (an image, brief description of the topic, and research question) is due. We will focus on generating topics together in week 6 (Thursday, Feb. 18th)
- Week 9/10: Tuesday March 16th. Annotated bibliography is due (week 9 will have asynchronous instruction on this exercise).
- Week 11: Thursday, March 25. Thesis/Evidence exercise due (in class and uploaded at the end of class)
- Week 13: Thursday April 8- Final Draft Due
- Week 15: Tuesday, April 20- Papers will be returned by the last day of class to allow final re-writes of the paper if you receive a grade of C or below and you choose to do so.

The Writing Requirement

This course is designed to fulfill the 2000-word UF Writing Requirement (E2). The Writing Requirement (WR) ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. Course grades now have two components: to receive writing credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course.

Each writing assignment will be graded following a rubric that values the essay's organizational structure, including its thesis, body, conclusion, and bibliography. Points will be assigned for these elements as well as proper support of the thesis, overall clarity, proper citation of sources, and correct style (punctuation, spelling, grammar, syntax). Written assignments will be returned prior to the last class meeting with instructor feedback, and students receiving a grade of C or below will have the option to rewrite in response to the feedback. A couple of writing tips:

- For assistance with writing, students can find help at the Writing Studio: <https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>
- Since the Chicago Manual of Style is preferred for art history, this style guide is recommended: <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>

Analysis Essays:

Twice this semester you will compose brief "essays" (4 pages) that gives you an opportunity to prove that you have engaged with and understood the material we covered. These are, in essence, assignments that take the place of a traditional exam. These assignments will ask you to map out the connections between three things: key artworks, key ideas and key academic

arguments we covered during the first and second half of the term. More precise information about these papers will be forthcoming during the semester.

- Analysis Essay #1 Due: Thursday, February 18 (Week 6)
- Analysis Essay #2 Due: Tuesday, April 20 (Week 15)

Grading Scale

Grades are tabulated on a 100-point scale and a letter grade is assigned as follows:

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87–89 B+	84–86 B	80–83 B-
77–79 C+	74–76 C	70–73 C-
67–69 D+	64–66 D	60–63 D-
59 and below	F	

If you have questions about how grade points are assigned by the University, go to:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

Reminders and Requirements

UF Requirements and Policy: Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Statement Regarding the Honor Pledge: UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. [Click here to read the Honor Code](#). Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

Accommodations: I, along with the rest of the University community, am working to create inclusive learning environments. Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center. [Click here to get started with the Disability Resource Center](#). It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with instructors and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester. So, please notify me if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation as soon as possible and we can work to find a solution.

Diversity Statement: The intent is that we explore the content of this course in a way that is

respectful of diversity: gender identity, sexuality, ability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, and culture. The intent is also to present content that explores diverse points of view, which might be challenging. Maintaining a respectful environment will be our responsibility. The intent is that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course and that the diversity that the students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated.

Changes to the Syllabus: While this document provides guidelines for the class, I do reserve the right to change the syllabus at any time during the semester if the need arises. Each class is different, and sometimes it takes some tweaking to get the right readings, topics, and assignments. Being flexible with the syllabus allows us to get it right.

Notes on Technology and Communication

- **Communication and Respect:** We all must strive to be good communicators to make this class successful. This means listening respectfully to others in class (faculty and students) and engaging in respectful conversation. It also, perhaps just as importantly, means maintaining professional standards while communicating via email and outside of class. With that in mind, please use formal, respectful, and professional standards when corresponding via email and on zoom. This means beginning emails with a formal greeting, employing proper grammar, and avoiding unprofessional colloquialisms. It also means not multi-tasking when on zoom and being a good listener.
- **Canvas:** Please make sure that you are familiar with our course site on Canvas so that you will have access to announcements, assignments and readings, and pptx presentations and study guides.
- **Course Evaluations:** Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. [Click here for guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner.](#) Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via ufl.bluera.com/ufl/. [Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students here.](#)

Notes on Covid-19 and Online Education

- **Tech Support:** Given the online format, we will all need to be sure our technology is working soundly. Please be aware of the support that can be found at the UF Help Desk: <https://helpdesk.ufl.edu>
- **Recording and Privacy:** Our class sessions may be audio visually recorded for students in the class to refer back and for enrolled students who are unable to attend live. Students who participate with their camera engaged or utilize a profile image are agreeing to have their video or image recorded. If you are unwilling to consent to have your profile or video image recorded, be sure to keep your camera off and do not use a profile image. Likewise, students who un-mute during class and participate orally are agreeing to have their voices recorded. If you are not willing to consent to have your voice recorded during class, you will need to keep your mute button activated and

communicate exclusively using the "chat" feature, which allows students to type questions and comments live. The chat will not be recorded or shared. As in all courses, unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded materials is prohibited.

- **Health and Wellness**

- *U Matter, We Care*: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit [U Matter, We Care website](#) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.
- *Counseling and Wellness Center*: [Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website](#) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.
- *Student Health Care Center*: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or [visit the Student Health Care Center website](#).
- *University Police Department*: [Visit UF Police Department website](#) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).

Course Schedule

Week 1: Introduction to Course and

T January 12: Introduction to the Course

TR January 14: Intro to Considering (Mesoamerican) Art

- Pasztory, "Aesthetics and pre-Columbian art"
- Dean, "The Trouble with the Term Art"

Week 2: Mesoamerica

T January 19: Introduction to Mesoamerica

- Miller, Ch. 1 "Introduction" (p.7-23)

TR January 21: A Historiographic Crash Course

Week 3: The Olmec – Portraits and Origin Stories

T January 26: The Olmecs: San Lorenzo and La Venta and Ruler Portraits

- Miller, Ch. 2, "The Olmecs."

TR January 28: Olmecs Cont.

Week 4: Teotihuacan: A Mesoamerican Metropole

T February 2: Teotihuacan- The City and the Pyramids

- Miller, Ch. 4 "Teotihuacan: *Intro* and *Architecture*" (p. 78- 89)
- Annabeth Headrick, Ch. 1, "Approaching the City," in *The Teotihuacan Trinity: The Sociopolitical Structure of an Ancient Mesoamerican City*, pp. 1–22. Canvas.
- Selection, "Teotihuacan: City of Water, City of Fire," 2017.

TR February 4: The Citadel, the Pyramid of the Feathered Serpents and Politics

Week 5: Teotihuacan Continued: Monuments, Murals and Masks

T February 9: Murals, Apartments and the Making of a Metropolis

- Miller, "Ch. 4 "Teotihuacan: *Sculpture* and *Painting* and *The End...*"(p.90- 105)
- Pazstory's "Teotihuacan Unmasked: A View through Art"

TR February 11: The "Great Goddess" – An Evolving Interpretive Case Study

- Elisa Mandell, "A New Analysis of the Gender Attribution of the "Great Goddess" of Teotihuacan," *Ancient Mesoamerica* 26:1, March 2015, pp. 29–49. Canvas. For discussion Thursday.

Week 6: Monte Albán and Research

T February 16: Monte Albán and Burial Arts

- Miller, *Art of Mesoamerica*, Ch. 3, "The Late Formative," only pp. 58–68, and Ch. 5, "Monte Alban, Veracruz and Cotzumalhuapa"
- Judy Sund, "Beyond the Grave: The Twentieth-Century Afterlife of West Mexican Burial Effigies" *Art Bulletin* 82:4 (December 2000): 734-67. Canvas. For discussion Thursday.

TR February 18: Research Paper- Starting our Projects (Due next TR, Feb. 25)

- **Analysis Essay Due (Covering weeks 1-5)**

Week 7: The Maya: Cities and Kingship

T February 23: Classic Maya "Centers" Emerge

- Miller "Ch. 3: The Late Formative" (p 48-58, and 68- 77)
- Miller, "Ch 6: The Early Classic Maya" (p.128- 151)
- Miller and O'Neil, "Early Classic Sculpture at Tikal," 116- 126.

TR February 25: COTA STUDENT RECHARGE DAY- NO CLASS

Week 8: Palenque

T March 2: Palenque: Splendors of a Maya Royal Court

- Miller, Ch. 7, "Classic Maya" (p.153- 160)
- Stuart & Stuart, *Palenque*, Selections

- **Paper Proposals Due**

TR March 4: Palenque Continued

- Schele and Friedel, "The Children of the First Mother" (216-237)

Week 9: Research and Annotated Bibliography assignment

T March 9: Research tutorial (no synchronous class)

TR March 11: Individual research for annotated bibliography (no synchronous class)

Week 10: Classic Maya: Ceramics and Mural Traditions

T March 16: Small Scale Sculpture and Ceramics

- Miller, Ch. 7 "Classic Maya- *Figurines and Ceramics*," (p. 190- 198)
- Coe, *The Art of the Maya Scribe* (selection)

- **Annotated Bibliography Due**

TR March 18: Yaxchilan and Bonampak: Warfare and Collapse

- Miller and Brittenham, *The Spectacle of the Late Maya Court* (selection)

Week 11: The Post-Classic- Tula and Chichén Itza

T March 23: The Toltecs of Tula and Chichén Itza

- Miller, *Art of Mesoamerica*, Ch. 8, "Mesoamerica after the Fall of Classic Cities."

TR March 25: Thesis/Evidence Exercise in Class

- **Thesis/Evidence Exercise Due at end of class**

Week 12: The Aztecs: Tenochtitlan and the Templo Mayor

T March 30: The Aztecs and Tenochtitlan

- Miller, Ch. 9, "The Aztecs- *Aztec history*" (p.238- 250)

TR April 1: The Templo Mayor and the Living Myth

- Matos Moctezuma's "Symbolism of the Templo Mayor"

Week 13: Manuscripts and Picture-Writing

T April 6: Aztec Writing Systems and Manuscripts

- Miller, Ch. 9, "The Aztecs- *Manuscripts*" (p.267- 272)
- Elizabeth Boone, "Introduction: Writing and Recording Knowledge," in *Writing Without Words*, 3-26.

TR April 8: Manuscripts Continued

- **Research Paper Due**

Week 14: Aztec Monumental Sculptures

T April 13: Monuments to the Tlatoani: The Solar Disks and the Teocalli

- Miller, Ch. 9, "The Aztecs- *Sculpture*" (p.254- 259)
- Umberger, "Art and Imperial Strategy in Tenochtitlan," 85-108.

TR April 15: The Aztec Sun Stone

- Villela, Robb and Miller, "Introduction," in *The Aztec Calendar Stone*, 1-41.

Week 15: Contemporary Issues: Relevance and Repatriation

T April 20: Contemporary Issues

- *The Aztec World*, ch. 12, Matos Moctezuma "The Aztec World's Presence in Colonial and Modern Mexico." 209-240.

- **Analysis Essay Due (Covering weeks 6-14)**
- **Research Paper Handed Back**