

# ARH 3653: Mesoamerican Art

University of Florida, Fall 2024 (3 credit hours)

Meetings: Monday Period (4:05 PM - 4:55 PM)/ Wed. Periods 8 - 9 (3:00 PM - 4:55 PM)

Room: FAC 201

Final exam: 12/11/2024 @ 5:30 PM - 7:30 PM

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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. The time period is from 1500 BCE (before common era, or BC) to about 1550 CE (common era, or AD). The class will also address the histories of discovery of this art and the major theoretical issues related to its interpretation.

## 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 textbook for this class:

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

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 and Participation

15% Assignments

25% Research Paper Assignment

25% Midterm Exam

25% Final Exam

**Attendance and Participation (10%):** 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. We will circulate a sign-in sheet each day in 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 in certain cases- eg. serious illness- absences can be excused with proper documentation; Also, note that excessive absences are grounds for receiving a failing grade for the class, and failure to sign in [if you are late, for example] will be counted as an absence.)

### **Assignments (15%):**

#### **Reading Analysis Assignments (3 x 3%: 9%):**

In preparation for class discussion on THREE days you will complete a two-page analysis worksheet for our assigned reading. These short assignments are designed to help you learn to read critically and engage with diverse approaches to artworks and visual culture. Your goal is to read the article with an eye toward the author’s approach, use of evidence, and main thesis or idea. These worksheets will help you to develop the skills required to engage with scholarly material, read critically, and identify strong organization and argumentation. The RAA’s will be discussed in-depth during class, but they should be completed *before* the start of class on the day indicated (when we cover the material in lecture) and uploaded to canvas. No late RAA assignments will be accepted.

#### **Dates Reading Analysis Due:**

Week 3: (Brittenham, “The Art of Assemblage”)

Week 9: (Schele and Friedel, “The Children of the First Mother”)

Week 13: (Matos Moctezuma, “Symbolism of the Templo Mayor”)

#### **Mesoamerica in Popular Media Project (6%):**

Over the course of the semester we will all learn a lot about Mesoamerican art traditions and your new knowledge (and attentiveness) will help you begin to notice Mesoamerican art all around us. It is in films, cartoons, advertising, mural paintings and architecture. This project will require you to select a single element of Mesoamerican art that has been “deployed” in another context and to analyze both its original meaning as well as its new significance. You will try to answer the questions: why was this element selected, and what meaning does it now hold for those who made it or view it? What are the implications of its re-contextualization? Your research will culminate in recorded presentations. More information on this assignment, including detailed requirements and a rubric, will be forthcoming.

### **Final Research Paper Assignment (25%):**

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 must 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:

1. You will turn in a **proposal of your topic and short, preliminary bibliography** in week 6
2. The **final paper** will be due in week 14: Before Thanksgiving Break.
3. Papers will be returned by the last day of class (week 16), to allow final **re-writes** of the paper (for those who need to improve their grade above a C to receive writing credit).

### **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>

### **Midterm (25%)/ Final Exam (25%):**

These exams are designed to evaluate your understanding of the big themes and issues raised in class, as well as the basic facts, concepts and historical realities we have learned about. At the end of each week, I will post the lectures and key artworks from that week on canvas, and you

can use those powerpoints as a guide for preparing for the test. That being said, the majority of the material on the exam will be delivered through lecture and class discussion- and so there is no substitute for attending class and taking thorough notes. The tests will include a combination of image-based short answer questions (requiring you to identify the image, talk about its content, and connect it to key themes and issues discussed in class) and longer essay style questions addressing larger themes that connect material from multiple sections of class. The tests will be offered only during the scheduled time, and absence may only be excused by a doctor's note.

### **Grading Scale**

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

-----	94–100 A	90–93 A-
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/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>

**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 Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Click here to read the Conduct Code. 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.

**Respect and Community:** 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.

**In-Class Recording:** Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or guest lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

### **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. This means beginning emails with a formal greeting, employing proper grammar, and avoiding unprofessional colloquialisms.

- **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 you will need for your work.
- **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. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. 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 <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

### **Campus Resources: Health and Wellness**

- *U Matter, We Care:* If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto: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).
- *UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center:* For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; [Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website](#).
- *GatorWell Health Promotion Services:* For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, visit the [GatorWell website](#) or call 352-273-4450.

### **Campus Resources: Academic Resources**

- *E-learning technical support:* Contact the [UF Computing Help Desk](#) at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at [helpdesk@ufl.edu](mailto:helpdesk@ufl.edu).
- *Career Connections Center:* Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.
- *Library Support:* Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.
- *Teaching Center:* Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352- 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.
- *Writing Studio:* 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.

# Course Schedule

**Week 1: No Class** (Thursday-Friday only)

**Week 2: Introduction and Mesoamerica**

M August 26: Introduction to the Course

W August 28: Intro to Looking at (Pre-Columbian) Art

- Miller, Ch. 1 “Introduction” (p.7-23)
- Pasztor. “Aesthetics and pre-Columbian art”

**Week 3: The Formative Period: The Olmec – Portraits and Origin Stories**

M Sept. 2: The Olmecs: San Lorenzo and La Venta and Ruler Portraits

- Miller, Ch. 2, “The Olmecs.”

W Sept. 4: Olmec Art cont.

- **RAA DUE**: Brittenham, “The Art of Assemblage” canvas

**Week 4: The Formative Period: Maya Calendar, Glyphs and Pyramids**

M September 9: The Early Maya/ Hieroglyphs and Calendar

- Miller “Ch. 3: The Late Formative- *Writing and Calendrical Systems*” (p 48-58)
- Miller “Ch 3: The Late Formative- *The Maya Region*” (p.68- 77)

W September 11: The Early Maya Continued

**Week 5: Teotihuacan: A Mesoamerican Metropole**

M September 16: 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.

W September 18: The Citadel, the Pyramid of the Feathered Serpents and Politics

**Week 6: Teotihuacan Continued: Monuments, Murals and Masks**

M September 23: 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”

W September 25: Teotihuacan Continued

**Paper Topic Due on Canvas**

**Week 7: Monte Albán (Oaxaca) and el Tajín (Veracruz)**

M September 30: 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.

W Oct. 2: TBD

- **Paper Topic Due (on Canvas, 11:59pm)**

### **Week 8: Midterm Exam**

M October 7: Midterm Review

W October 9: Midterm Exam in Class

### **Week 9: The Classic Maya: Cities and Kingship**

M October 14: Classic Maya “Centers” Emerge

- Miller, “Ch 6: The Early Classic Maya” (p.128- 151)
- Miller and O’Neil, “Early Classic Sculpture at Tikal,” 116- 126.
- Stuart & Stuart, *Palenque*, Selections

W October 16: Palenque: Splendors of a Maya Royal Court

- Miller, Ch. 7, “Classic Maya” (p.153- 160)
- **RAA DUE.** Schele and Friedel, “The Children of the First Mother” (216-237)

### **Week 10: Classic Maya: Ceramics and Mural Traditions**

M October 21: Small Scale Sculpture and Ceramics

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

W October 23: TBD

### **Week 11: The Maya heading into the Post-Classic Period**

M October 28: Yaxchilan and Bonampak: Warfare and Collapse

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

W October 30: The Maya in Chichén Itza

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

### **Week 12: The Post Classic: Tula and the Toltecs**

M November 4: Research Paper Check In

W November 6: Tula and the Toltecs

### **Week 13: The Mexica (Aztec): Tenochtitlan and the Templo Mayor**

M November 11: **The Aztecs:**

- The Aztecs and Tenochtitlan
- Miller, Ch. 9, “The Aztecs- *Aztec history*” (p.238- 250)



W November 13: The Templo Mayor and the Living Myth

-**RAA DUE**: Matos Moctezuma's "Symbolism of the Templo Mayor"

**Week 14: Aztec Manuscripts and Sculpture**

M November 18: Mexican Manuscript Painting

Miller, Ch. 9, "The Aztecs- *Manuscripts*" (p.267- 272)

- Elizabeth Boone, "Introduction: Writing and Recording Knowledge," in *Writing Without Words*, 3-26.

W November 20: Monuments to the Tlatoani: The Solar Disks and the Teocalli

- Miller, Ch. 9, "The Aztecs- *Sculpture*" (p.254- 259)

**\*Research Paper Due**

**Week 15: No Class All Week- Thanksgiving Break**

M: No Class

W: No Class

**Week 16: Final Exam Review and Legacy After the Conquest**

M December 2: Legacy of Mesoamerica After the Conquest

W December 4: Review For Final Exam In Class

**Final Exam Wednesday December 11<sup>th</sup> @ 5:30 PM - 7:30 PM**