

**Anth 2500 Cultures, Regions, Civilizations:  
THE MAYA WORLD  
Spring 2011  
New Cabell Hall 337  
MWF 12:00-12:50**

**Instructor Information**

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**Course Description and Goals**

Who are the Maya, and what does it mean to be Maya in a globalized world today? The current Maya are the recipients of one of the most important cultural legacies of the history of Mesoamerica. Some institutions and cultural traits that characterized the pre-Columbian Maya have survived after five hundred years of cultural contact, while others have blended with Western culture in many fascinating ways. In this course, although we will go through the basics of Mayan history, the predominant approach to the study of Maya culture(s) will be ethnographic, which means that we will focus on contemporary Maya culture(s). By the end of the course, you should have developed a good understanding of the following topics:

- What are the main regions, ethnic groups, and languages spoken in the Maya area.
- Fundamental traits that define Maya identity and worldview.
- The main stages in the history of the pre-Columbian Maya, and some of their most famous cultural accomplishments, such as the calendar and literacy.
- The current challenges of the socio-political context in which Maya people live.

**Requirements and Policies**

**Required Texts (Available for purchase at the Student Book Store)**

Coe, Michael. *The Maya*. Seventh Edition. Thames and Hudson. New York: 2005.  
Burgos-Debray, Elisabeth. *I, Rigoberta Menchú. An Indian Woman in Guatemala*. Verso Editions. London: 1984.  
Collab readings as assigned

**Grade Breakdown**

Presentation: 20%  
Midterm exam: 35%  
Final exam: 35%  
Participation: 10%

**Mid-term and Final Exam**

There will be a midterm and a final exam, each is worth 35% of the final grade. The final exam will be comprehensive. Check the course calendar and the course website for updates on the date and location of the midterm and final exam.

### **Attendance**

Attendance is absolutely mandatory. I will be taking attendance everyday in class. Every unexcused absence will result in the loss of 1 point off your final grade. If you cannot come to class because of a real problem, let me know *beforehand*. Being repeatedly late to class or leaving early may count as an absence. Please talk to me *in advance* if you have a justified reason to leave early. Absences for illness or university-related activities must be properly documented by written notice on official letterhead. Excuses by email are not acceptable.

### **Participation**

You start out with an “A” in your participation grade, and it is yours to keep or lose. Here is how to keep it:

- 1) Come to all the classes, and be on time.
- 2) Express yourself! I expect you to do a critical reading of the course materials, and come ready to ask and be asked about anything in the readings. I will be evaluating the quality –not the quantity– of what you say. You are encouraged to ask as many questions as you need in order to ensure your understanding of the concepts covered in class.
- 3) Prepare for the class. During the lectures, sometimes I may ask you questions that you need to keep in mind as you prepare your readings for the next session. Come ready to share your answers in class.
- 4) “Participating” also means “paying attention,” and therefore, the (mis)use of media in class is strongly discouraged. So please, no laptops during lectures; only old-fashion note-taking by hand. To sum up: if you come to all the classes, and you show me by actively participating in class that you have done your work, you get (keep) your “A”.

### **Presentation**

You will be assigned to a small group of 2-3 students, to present a research topic of your choice based on the material we cover in class. Please keep in mind that this is an exercise to enhance your research skills, which means that you are required to consult and do a critical reading of a good number of *scientific* publications. Here are some examples of possible topics you may choose:

- 1) A “classic style” ethnographic description of a Maya group (Please choose one which has not been covered in class).
- 2) A particular topic relevant to Maya ethnography or ethno-history (Cross-group comparisons welcome here. For instance: “differences and similarities in divination with crystals in the Lowlands and in the Highlands”).
- 3) An historical episode, an archaeological site, or the life of a leader or historical character important in history of the Maya region. (For example: “Copan”; “The Yucatecan War of Castes.”)

You will prepare a handout to distribute to the rest of the class. You will be evaluated on the quality of:

- The bibliography
- The handout
- The presentation
- Your responses in Question-and-Answer

Topic description due: Friday February 11.

Bibliography due: Friday February 25.

Presentation schedule: TBA.

### **Academic Honesty**

You are expected to comply with the University of Virginia Honor Code. For further information about what this means and for plagiarism guidelines, please check the University of Virginia Honor Committee website: <http://www.virginia.edu/honor/>

*Calendar of Weekly Topics and Assigned Readings*  
*Please continue to check this page during the semester: updates will be provided periodically.*



**INTRODUCING THE MAYA**

**Wednesday January 19.**

Introduction, review of the syllabus.

**Friday January 21. Ancient Mesoamerica and the Ancient Maya**

Webster, David and Susan Toby Evans. Mesoamerican Civilization. In *The Human Past: World Prehistory and the Development of Human Societies*, Chris Scarre (ed). London: Thames and Hudson. Pages 595-604.

Coe, Michael. *The Maya*. Seventh Edition. Thames and Hudson. New York: 2005.  
Pages: 10-14; 23-24; 26-31.

**Monday January 24. The Modern Maya. Similarities and differences within the Maya Region**

Coe, Michael. *The Maya*. Seventh Edition. Thames and Hudson. New York: 2005.  
Ch. 10. The enduring Maya. Read only 245-252.

Pitarch, Pedro, Shannon Speed and Xochitl Leyva-Solano. Human Rights and the Mayan Region. In *Human Rights and the Maya Region. Global Politics, Cultural Contentions and Moral Engagements*. Duke University Press. 2008. Read the sections on. "The Maya Region" & "Human and Indigenous Rights in Chiapas and Guatemala" Pages: 2-8.

**Wednesday January 26. How do we know what we know about the Ancient Maya? The Writing System I**

Coe, Michael. *The Maya*. Seventh Edition. Thames and Hudson. New York: 2005.  
"The nature of Maya writing." Pages: 229-234

Schele, Linda and David Freidel. 1990. *A Forest of Kings*. "Time Travel in the Jungle" pages 50 (second full paragraph) -55.

**Friday January 28. The writing system II**

Brown, Cecil H. 1991. *Hieroglyphic Literacy in Ancient Mayaland: Inferences from Linguistic Data*. In *Current Anthropology* 32 (4): 489-496.

Houston, Stephen and David Stuart 1992. *On Maya Hieroglyphic Literacy*. In *Current Anthropology* 33(5):589-92.



## FUNDAMENTAL ASPECTS OF MAYA CULTURE

### **Monday January 31. Life cycle, Family life, Gender relations. Kinship, Compadrazgo**

Vogt, Evon. *Tortillas for the Gods. A Symbolic Analysis of Zinacantecan Rituals*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976. Chapter 2, "The life cycle". Pages: 19-24.

Bunzel, Ruth. *Chichicastenango; A Guatemalan Village*. Locust Valley, N.Y., J.J. Augustin [1952]. Chapter 2: Betrothal; Ceremonies of marriage; Husbands and Wives. Pages: 109-122.

Vogt, Evon. *Zinacantan: a Maya Community in the Highlands of Chiapas*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1969. "Compadrazgo" Pages: 230-237.

### **Wednesday February 2. Economy and Subsistence Activities I **LAST DAY TO ADD****

Vogt, Evon. *Zinacantan*. Chapter 3: Subsistence Activities. Pages: 35-36, 44-65.

Bunzel, Ruth. *Chichicastenango*. Chapter 1: Agriculture. Pages: 48-54.

### **Thursday February 3. LAST DAY TO DROP**

### **Friday February 4. Economy and Subsistence Activities II**

Vogt, Evon. *Zinacantan*. Chapter 6. Economic and Social Aspects of Trading. The economic system. Pages: 118-120, 122-124.

Hernández Castillo, Rosalva Aída and Ronal Nigh. *Global Processes and local identity among Mayan Coffee Growers in Chiapas, Mexico*. In *American Anthropologist*. Volume 100 (1), 1998. Pages 136-147.

Redfield, Robert and Alfonso Villa Rojas. *Chan Kom. A Maya Village*. The University of Chicago Press. Chicago, 1962. Chapter 5. Midwife and Kax Baac. The sacred professionals: The maestros cantores. The casamentero. Pages 72-74.

### **Monday February 7. The Cargo system. Communal work (fagina)**

Vogt, Evon. *Tortillas for the Gods*. Chapter 2. Religious Organization. Pages: 27-30.

Cancian, Frank. *Economics and Prestige in a Maya Community*. Stanford University Press. Stanford, California, 1965. Chapter 8: The Functions of the Cargo System. Pages: 133- 138.

Redfield, Robert and Alfonso Villa Rojas. *Chan Kom*. Chapter 5. Cooperative labor and work-exchange. Communal labor; fagina. Pages: 77-80.

### **Wednesday February 9. Attitudes towards wealth and prestige**

Bunzel, Ruth. *Chichicastenango* Chapter 1. Economic Attitudes. Pages: 88-91.

Foster, George. 1965. "Peasant Society and the Image of Limited Good". In *American Anthropologist*, 67: 293-315.



## **SPIRITUALITY, WORLDVIEW, HEALING**

### **Friday February 11. Syncretism TOPIC DESCRIPTION DUE**

Watanabe, John. From Saints to Shibboleths: Image, Structure, and Identity in Maya Religious Syncretism. *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Feb., 1990). Pages: 131-150.

### **Monday February 14. The Maya and Time**

Schele, Linda and David Freidel. *A Forest of Kings: the Untold Story of the Ancient Maya*. New York: William Morrow, 1990. Chapter 2. The Shape of Time. Pages 77-84.

Tedlock, Barbara. *Time and the Highland Maya*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992. Chapter 5. Pages: 107-127. Chapter 7.

### **Wednesday February 16. The Hot-Cold System**

Redfield, Robert and Alfonso Villa Rojas. *Chan Kom*. Chapter 10. "Cold" and "Hot" Pages: 160-164.

Tedlock, Barbara. *An Interpretive Solution to the Problem of Humoral Medicine in Latin America*. In *Soc Sci Med*. 1987; 24(12):1069-83.

### **Friday February 18. Witchcraft and Shamansim. Pulsing**

Redfield, Robert and Alfonso Villa Rojas. *Chan Kom* Chapter 5: The H-mens. Pages: 74-77. Chapter 10: Witchcraft. Pages: 177-180.

Vogt, Evon. *Zinacantan*. Chapter 19. Pages: 406-415. Chapter 20. Pages: 416-422.

Tedlock, Barbara. *Time and the Highland Maya*. Chapter 6: The blood speaks. Pages: 133-147.

### **Monday February 21. Sickness and its cure**

Redfield, Robert and Alfonso Villa Rojas. *Chan Kom* . Chapter 10. The Evil Winds. Ojo. Nocturnal Birds. 164-170. Therapeutic ceremonies: read only 173-174.

Nash, June. *The Logic of Behavior: Curing in a Maya Indian Town*. In *Human Organizations* 26:3. 1967. Pages: 132-140.

### **Wednesday February 23. Nagualism**

Bunzel, Ruth. *Chichicastenango*. The nagual. Pages: 274-275.

Gossen, Gary. *Animal Souls and Human Destiny in Chamula*. In *Man*, New Series, Vol. 10, No. 3. (Sep., 1975), pp. 448-461.

Salser, Benson. *Nagual, Witch, and Sorcerer in a Quiché village*. In *Ethnology*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (Jul., 1964). Pages: 305-328.

**Friday February 25. Philosophies of Personhood BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE**

Pitarch, Pedro. *The Jaguar and the Priest. An Ethnography of Tzeltal Souls*. University of Texas Press. 2010. Chapter 2. Pages: 22-59. You may skim the sections: “Dreams”, “Death and the Ch’ulel” “The lab as Personal Power” “Complete Human Beings”, Further interpretations”.

**Monday February 28 & Wednesday March 2:**

No readings assigned. Review for the Midterm.

**Friday March 4: Midterm**

**Monday March 7- Friday March 11: Spring Break**



**HISTORY OF THE MAYA REGION**

**Monday March 14. The Pre-classic and The Classic**

Coe, Michael. *The Maya*.

The Rise of Maya Civilization: Pages: 59-60.

From Pre-classic to classic in the Maya Lowlands. Pages: 84-85.

Classic Splendor: The Early Period. 87.

The Late Period. Pages: 111-115.

Yaxchilan, Piedras Negras, and Bonampak 125-126

**Wednesday March 16. The Classic (Late Period) LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW**

Schele, Linda & David Freidel. *A Forest of Kings*. The Children of the First Mother: Family and Dynasty at Palenque. Pages: 216-228; 234 (bottom)-245.

**Friday March 18. Student Presentations**

Coe, Michael. *The Maya*. The Mirador Basin. Pages: 81-82

**Monday March 21. The Classic (Late Period, continued). The Collapse**

Coe, Michael. *The Maya*.

Copan and Quirigua. 115-118 (Don't read the section on Quirigua)

The Terminal Classic. The Great Collapse. Pages: 161-163.

**Wednesday March 23. The Post-Classic. The Popol Vuh**

Coe, Michael. *The Maya*.

The Post-Classic: 177

Teotihuacan: military giant. Pages: 88-90.

**Friday March 25. Student Presentations**

Coe, Michael. *The Maya*

Ch. 6 Puuk Sites in the Northern Area 165-168

Ch 7. The Toltec Invasion and Chichen Itza. Pages: 177-192.

**Monday March 28. The Conquest. The Books of Chilam Balam**

Robert M. Carmack, Janine L. Gasco, Gary H. Gossen. *The Legacy of Mesoamerica. History and Culture of a Native American Civilization*. Pearson Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey 2007. Chapter 4. Mesoamerica and Spain: The Conquest. Pages: 151-164.

Ralph Roys. *The Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel*. Carnegie Institution of Washington. Publication n.438. Washington DC, 1933.

Introduction. Pages: 3-6 (top "Seventeenth Century originals")

A prophecy for Katun 11 Ahau. Pages: 77-79.

A book of katun prophecies. First: 11 Ahau, when the foreigners first established the country. Pages: 147-149.

**CONTEMPORARY ISSUES**

**Wednesday March 30. Human Rights in the Maya region**

Speed, Shannon and Xochitl Leyva-Solano. Global Discourses on the Local Terrain. In *Human Rights and the Maya Region. Global Politics, Cultural Contentions and Moral Engagements*. Pitarch, Pedro, Shannon Speed and Xochitl Leyva-Solano (Eds.) Duke University Press. 2008. Pages: 208-231.

International Labor Organization. Convention #169.

<http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/convde.pl?C169>

**Friday, April 1. Student Presentations**

Coe, Michael. *The Maya*. Chapter 3. The Hero Twins and the Creation of the World. Pages: 65-66

Edmonson, Munro S. *The Book of Counsel: The Popol Vuh of the Quiche Maya of Guatemala*. Middle American Research Institute Publication 35. Tulane University, New Orleans. 1971. Introduction. Pages: vii-xvii.

**Monday April 4. Zapatism I**

Collier, George. *Basta! Land and the Zapatista Rebellion in Chiapas*. Collier. Oakland, Calif.: Food First Books, 2005. Introduction 1-10.

### **Wednesday April 6. Zapatism II**

Collier, George. *Basta! Land and the Zapatista Rebellion in Chiapas*. Chapter 8: The New Indigenous Movement. Pages: 159-182.

### **Friday, April 8. Student Presentations**

No readings assigned. Read ahead “Rigoberta Menchú”

### **Monday April 11. Maya languages and literatures**

Bricker, Victoria. *The ethnographic context of some traditional mayan speech genres*. 368-388. In *Explorations in the Ethnography of Speaking*. 1989, Cambridge University Press.

### **Wednesday April 13. Language endangerment and death in the Maya context**

Krauss, Michael E. *The World's Languages in Crisis*. *Language*. 1992: 68(1). 4-10.

Ladefoged, Peter. *Another View of Endangered Languages*. *Language*. 1992: 68. 809-811.

Hofling, Charles. *Indigenous Linguistic Revitalization and Indigenous Interaction: The Itzaj Maya Revitalization Case*. In *Human Organization*, 108-116. Vol 55. N° 1, 1996.

### **Friday, April 15. Student Presentations**

No readings assigned. Read ahead “Rigoberta Menchú”

### **Monday April 18. La Violencia**

Burgos-Debray, Elisabeth. *I, Rigoberta Menchú. An Indian Woman in Guatemala*. Verso Editions. London: 1984.

Ch.1: The family

Ch. 4: First visit to the finca

Ch.6: An eight-year old agricultural worker

Ch.7: Death of her little brother in the Finca. Difficulty of Communicating with Other Indians

Ch.14: A maid in the capital

Ch. 16: Period of reflection on the road to follow

Ch. 17: Self-Defence in the village

Ch. 19: Attack on the village by the army

### **Wednesday April 20. The Debate between Menchú and Stoll**

Burgos-Debray, Elisabeth. *I, Rigoberta Menchú. An Indian Woman in Guatemala*. Verso Editions. London: 1984.

Ch.22. The CUC comes out into the open

Ch.23. Political activity in other communities. Contacts with Ladinos.

Ch. 24. The torture and death of her little brother, burnt alive in front of members of their families and the community



Ch. 25. Rigoberta's father dies in the occupation of the Spanish Embassy. Peasants march to the capital.

Ch. 32. Strike of agricultural workers and the first of May in the capital

Ch.33. In hiding in the capital. Hunted by the army

Ch.34. Exile

Stoll, David. *Rigoberta Menchú and the Story of All Poor Guatemalans*. Boulder, Colo. : Westview Press, 1999. Preface. Pages: 8-15.

**Friday, April 22. La Violencia continued**

Carlsen, Robert. *War for the Heart and Soul of a Highland Maya Town*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997. Chapter 6. La violencia comes to Atitlan. Pages: 143-149.

**Monday April 25**

Coe, Michael. *The Maya*. Tikal. Calakmul. 122-125.

**Wednesday April 27- Friday April 29**

No readings assigned. Review for the Final.

**Monday May 2**

Final in-class test.