

# **ART 268-2 2019: Pre-Columbian Mexico thru Art & Architecture**

**Block Two: 9/23/2019 - 10/16/2019**

*\*Please do not be overwhelmed by the length of the syllabus. It includes several images, sample assignments, study tips, information on visiting scholars, as well as descriptions of what we will be doing each day. These extra descriptions have taken up some additional space, but I think they will be valuable to you. Most of the information here is provided to you as reference material for later in the course and we will spend plenty of time reviewing it so that you are comfortable with the structure of the course and course expectations.*

*\*Given the nature of the block plan, we may have to adjust some things as we progress in order to ensure your success in the course. However, we will work as closely as possible from the content and dates given in the syllabus. Please use this as your guide in scheduling your time.*

**Professor:** Dr. Khristin Landry-Montes (you may call me Khristin and I use she/her/hers pronouns)

**Office and Office Hours:** McWethy 116/ Office Hours are Fridays from 11:15am to 12:30pm

Phone: (319) 895-4814

**Email:** [klandrymontes@cornellcollege.edu](mailto:klandrymontes@cornellcollege.edu)

## **Meeting Locations:**

Mornings: Thomas Commons/ATK

Afternoons: McWethy Hall/222A

## **Meeting Times:**

Monday: Afternoons from 1-3pm (meet in McWethy Hall/222A)

Tuesday: Mornings from 9:45am-11am and Afternoons from 1-3pm

Wednesday: Mornings from 9:45am-11am and Afternoons from 1-3pm

Thursday: Mornings from 9:45am-11am and Afternoons from 1-3pm

Friday: Mornings from 9:45am-11am and Afternoons from 1-3pm

We will generally stick to these times for these days; however, when we have speakers, exams, or longer projects to finish in class, please expect that class time may be adjusted to 9-11am and then from 1-3pm. Mornings will generally be lecture-based with more focus on historical context (similar to more traditional surveys) while afternoons will be focused on theme-based readings, discussion, and activities. Please see the calendar.

**Additional Faculty:**

Gregory Cotton, Librarian, [gcotton@cornellcollege.edu](mailto:gcotton@cornellcollege.edu) (319) 895-4454

Laura Farmer, Writing Studio Director, [lfarmer@cornellcollege.edu](mailto:lfarmer@cornellcollege.edu) (319) 895 4509

**Required Books and Readings.** Mary Ellen Miller, *The Art of Mesoamerica from Olmec to Aztec*. 6<sup>th</sup> Edition. \*Please make sure you get the 6<sup>th</sup> edition. There are also other required readings for this course that come from various articles and book chapters. These are listed under the course calendar and can be found on Moodle. I have already scanned and uploaded these so you do not need to buy additional books beyond the Mary Ellen Miller text.



Reconstruction of the Aztec capital  
Tenochtitlán, c. 1512.  
Image by Thomás Filsinger

~A letter from the conquistador Hernán Cortez's to the king of Spain on his first accounts of the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlán...

*In order, most potent Sire, to convey to your Majesty a just conception of the great extent of this noble city of Tenochtitlan, and of the many rare and wonderful objects it contains, of the government and dominions of Moctezuma, the sovereign; of the religious rites and customs that prevail, and the order that exists in this as well as other cities appertaining to his realm: it would require the labor of many accomplished writers, and much time for the completion of the task. I shall not be able to relate an hundredth part of what could be told respecting these matters but I will endeavor to describe, in the best manner in my power, what I have myself seen; and imperfectly as I may succeed in the attempt, I am fully aware that the account will appear so wonderful as to be deemed scarcely worthy of credit; since even when we who have seen these things with our own eyes, are yet so amazed as to be unable to comprehend their reality. But your Majesty may be assured that if there is any fault in my relation, either in regard to the present subject, or to any other matters of which I shall give your Majesty an account, it will arise from too great brevity rather than extravagance or prolixity in the details; and it seems to me but just to my Prince and Sovereign to declare the truth in the clearest manner, without saying anything that would detract from it, or add to it.*

## What is this course about?

When I was young, I fell in love with the ancient past because of stories like the one above. I was fascinated by ancient world history and I wanted to know more about the things that were produced in these fantastic ancient cities. For that reason, I went on to become a scholar of *Precolumbian art*—which is the term often used to refer to the art of the Americas produced by Indigenous Americans before the arrival of Columbus and other Europeans. Most of my research has focused on Precolumbian art and ancient ruins in what is today Mexico. Working in this region, I have been struck by the continuity in traditions between contemporary Indigenous American societies living there and the art and culture of their ancient Precolumbian ancestors. However, I was also struck by the fact that there seemed to be more of a “glorification” of the *ancient* Precolumbian past and less support for contemporary Indigenous Americans in both Mexico and the U.S.

I have kept these issues in mind when developing this course. I wanted to teach the history of ancient Mexico and Precolumbian art from the point-of-view that these objects and ancient cities are part of living traditions. They are active links between contemporary Indigenous American groups and the past...and both the past and the present should be valued. The works of art and architecture that we will be discussing in this class were made by ancient people, yes—but with unbroken links to many indigenous groups who still undertake many of the same cultural practices or even speak the same languages as before (albeit in a manner that also considers the religious, economic and social realities of contemporary life).

Therefore, we will begin this course by talking about how contemporary Indigenous American groups understand their Precolumbian past. In doing so, the course is not only a survey of Precolumbian art and history, but also a platform through which we can understand some of the issues that Indigenous American groups face (especially in relationship to their cultural heritage—the art, architecture, and literary works created by their Precolumbian ancestors).

Sadly, much of this story has to do with what happens to Indigenous culture when Indigenous lands are colonized. For example, in the excerpt above, Hernán Cortez, the Spanish conquistador responsible for the orchestration of the demise of the Aztec Empire, marveled at the exquisite city and culture of Tenochtitlán—the Aztec capital. However, in only decades to follow, this city and its people (along with indigenous groups throughout the Americas) would be nearly entirely destroyed by the Spanish (through conquest and disease). Furthermore, the incredible works of art and architecture (and even writing) we will be studying in this course were in large part thought to be “works of the devil” by Spanish conquistadors and missionaries. Most were destroyed. We even have written accounts of this from the Spanish themselves. The outlook was not necessarily much better in the centuries to come.

When museums began to collect Precolumbian art, they were thought of as “exotic” examples of more primitive cultures (along with the arts of the African continent and those from Pacific Islanders...places that were also colonized by Western nations). Of course, museums no longer say things like this when exhibiting Precolumbian objects (although we find “primitive” used to describe these objects even until the mid- 1980s). However, legacies of colonialism still remain in the presentation of these objects in museums and in the use of Indigenous culture by nation

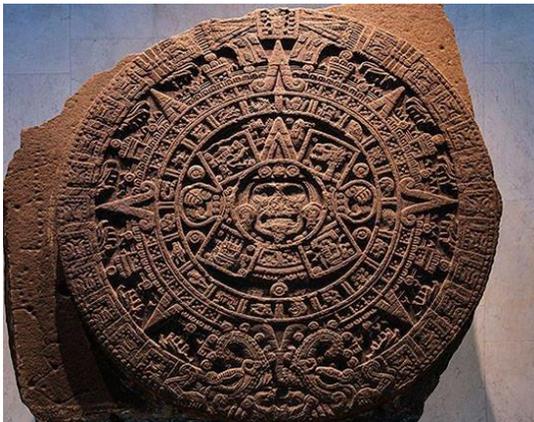
states and global economies. These are things we also will encounter and challenge in this course. In order to do this, not only will we be reading key articles by scholars in the field, but we will also hear directly from Indigenous Americans regarding these challenges.

Ultimately, I hope you will enjoy the course for the challenges it presents and the information it offers. As we consider the issues above, we will be surveying the major Precolumbian cultures of Mexico including the Olmec, the major city of Teotihuacan, the Maya, and the Aztec. We will encounter sculpture depicting gods that are half human- half animal, mountains that breathe, the beginning of calendrical and writing systems, as well as landscapes of sacrifice and rebirth. We will also be working with technologies that allow you to tell your own story about one of these places and perhaps recreate something of the marvel that Cortez, himself, found it hard to articulate.

Thanks for joining! ~Khristin

### **What Will You Be Able To Do After Taking This Course?**

Cornell College Educational Priorities and Outcomes, and Art History Learning Outcomes



The Aztec Sun Stone (sometimes incorrectly referred to as a “Calendar Stone”) Tenochtitlán, Mexico. Late 15<sup>th</sup> century to mid- 16<sup>th</sup> Century CE

Well, for starters, you will be able to tell your friends why the image above is *not* an actual Aztec or Maya calendar. More importantly, however, this course will not be a stand-alone experience. You will hone and obtain new skills in research, writing, critical thinking, and image and text analysis that will be useful to you in all areas of your academic life. This course is also intended to guide you in investigating many relevant and current issues we face in our global world and it will help you in recognizing how the past is linked to these. Additionally, throughout the course, you will come into contact with new or different cultures and diverse ideas that are probably different from your own. These new ways of knowing, inquiring critically, and increasing your intercultural literacy will be valuable to you in other courses, in your future career path, and in life in general!

This course is simultaneously designed to follow the College's approved Educational Priorities and Outcomes. You can review them all via this link and I have provided four that are especially relevant to this course below. In addition to these priorities and outcomes, I have also provided us with some additional learning outcomes that specifically focus on relationships between the educational priorities and art history learning outcomes.

Cornell College's Educational Priorities: <https://www.cornellcollege.edu/about-cornell/mission/index.shtml>

**Knowledge:** *You will integrate and apply knowledge from a focused area of study as well as a broad general education which includes disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives in the arts, humanities, sciences, and social sciences.*

**Communication:** *You will speak and write clearly, listen and read actively, and engage with others in productive dialogue.*

**Inquiry:** *You will respond to the complexities of contemporary and enduring problems using information literacy tools, research skills, creative thinking, and analysis.*

**Intercultural Literacy:** *You will connect with diverse ideas and with people whose experiences differ from their own and that may be separated from them by time, space, or culture.*

#### Art History Focused Learning Outcomes.

After finishing this course, you will be able to:

- Recognize, identify, proficiently analyze, and discuss visual imagery from a range of Precolumbian societies in Mexico. Additionally, students will be able to critically discuss how Indigenous American objects have been perceived and used not only in the past, but in our contemporary, global world. Such visual literacy will be obtained through proficiency in reading and critically analyzing academic texts related to the subject of Precolumbian and Indigenous art, and through historical, formal, iconographic, and material analyses of art and architecture via images and through 3-dimensional objects that represent art from Precolumbian Mexico (Knowledge, Communication, Intercultural Literacy).
- Art history courses integrate the recognition of particular human-made or human-modified things (such as art, architecture, or landscape) as a reflection of individual cultures and time periods. This course will therefore expect that students will be able to recognize how such things have been discussed by scholars. This entails recognizing and understanding scholars' academic methodologies and their use of evidence. Students who successfully complete this course will be able to employ information literacy tools in order to assist in this process (Knowledge, Inquiry, and Intercultural Literacy).

## **College Policies**

Academic Honesty expectations.

Cornell College expects all members of the Cornell community to act with academic integrity. An important aspect of academic integrity is respecting the work of others. A student is expected to explicitly acknowledge ideas, claims, observations, or data of others, unless generally known. When a piece of work is submitted for credit, a student is asserting that the submission is their work unless there is a citation of a specific source. If there is no appropriate acknowledgement of sources, whether intended or not, this may constitute a violation of the College's requirement for honesty in academic work and may be treated as a case of academic dishonesty. The procedures regarding how the College deals with cases of academic dishonesty appear in The Catalogue, under the heading "Academic Honesty."

Cornell College Academic Honesty Statement: <https://www.cornellcollege.edu/index.shtml>

## **Accommodations:**

Cornell College makes reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities. Students should notify the Coordinator of Academic Support and Advising and their course instructor of any disability related accommodations within the first three days of the term for which the accommodations are required, due to the fast pace of the block format. For more information on the documentation required to establish the need for accommodations and the process of requesting the accommodations, see <http://www.cornellcollege.edu/academic-support-and-advising/disabilities/index.shtml>.

If you have additional questions, contact Brooke Paulson at 895-4382 or [bpaulson@cornellcollege.edu](mailto:bpaulson@cornellcollege.edu), Coordinator for Academic Support, for help. For more detailed information [cornellcollege.edu/disabilities/documentation/index.shtml](http://www.cornellcollege.edu/disabilities/documentation/index.shtml) . At the beginning of each course, the student must notify the instructor within the first three days of the term of any accommodations needed for the duration of the course.

## Assignments and Experiences



Mural showing “the Great Goddess.”  
Tetitla Apartment Complex, Teotihuacan,  
Mexico. C. 4<sup>th</sup> Century CE

We will look at a variety of different types of art and architecture in this course including (but not limited to) painting, ceramics, stone, featherwork, books, sculpture, architecture and the landscapes it is part of. I believe that art is best understood through experiencing it. Therefore, I’ve tried to develop assignments and activities that get us in contact with art, artistic experiences, and experts in the field as much as possible. Using these tactics, the following assignments and the organization of our days are meant to help students develop a solid understanding of Precolumbian art and culture while also gaining an understanding of the issues contemporary Indigenous American populations face in relationship to the art of their ancestors.

### Class Organization

I believe that a mixture of lecture, discussion (both live and virtual), and hands-on activities work best for a block plan. While I believe I am *not* a boring lecturer (I try to tell jokes you may or may not think are funny...but I will at least laugh at myself...), I really don’t want you to have to hear me talk for two straight hours or more! Therefore, we will all do some talking and we will have other activities in class to help us work through the readings. Some of this work will be done individually, but other work will be done in groups. Most of the activities we do in class will not be graded directly, but I do take participation grades. Related to that, students will be required to participate verbally and also via writing assignments in class. Each count toward your participation grade. At times, I may ask you to answer certain questions about the readings via both written and verbal responses, for example. It is therefore VERY important to read everything assigned. The readings also inform the exams so please make sure you read daily.

### Readings and Other Media

#### Readings

In order to provide students with a thorough background of Precolumbian art, we will daily (or nearly daily) be reading chapters from Mary Ellen Miller’s text, *The Art of Mesoamerica*. Mesoamerica refers to the regions in Mexico and Central America that we will be looking at. Mary Ellen Miller is a preeminent scholar in the field and she writes very well! That said, her

book chapters should be quick and easy reads. They are meant to give a survey of the area. At the same time, I have selected more thematic readings written by other scholars. So, please expect to read one of Miller's chapters in addition to the thematic reading(s) (usually a book chapter or article/perhaps two condensed versions). Students should purchase Miller's book at the bookstore. The other readings will be available on Moodle as the course opens. Students should read all materials assigned for a class the day *before* that class begins.

\*A quick note on the readings. It may look like there is a significant amount of reading for some of the days. However, you will notice that I may have marked "excerpts from" on several of them. This means that I have significantly condensed these readings from their original length. Generally speaking, it will be typical to read about 30 pages per day (sometimes a bit less or more, but not drastically so). I don't assign "busy work" because we read a lot in art history... so you will see that beyond the readings and their associated discussion boards, we only have a midterm, final and a final project (although I've split up the final paper into different parts so that it is easier to handle and so that you get my feedback throughout the course). The point is, the readings are very important and they will be important to your success on the graded assignments we do have so please spend time on them.

### Other Media

Other media including podcasts, films, TedTalks, and other web resources may also be assigned throughout the course. As with the readings, these should be completed before class begins on the day they are assigned.

### **Field Trips and Guest Lectures**



Dr. Gabrielle Vail and a student working together on codices as part of the *Maya from the Margins* Project.



Archaeologist Miguel Covarrubias Reyna, excavating in the Maya Riviera/Quintana Roo, Mexico.

During our time together, I think it is important for us to hear from other experts in the field. Therefore, I am planning to incorporate three guest lecturers this block. Our first invitee is a member of the Studio Arts faculty here at Cornell. We will work with this faculty member to understand how materials and the very process of *making* are important to the meaning of an artwork. Our next lecturer will be joining us via a virtual meeting from Yucatán, Mexico. His name is Miguel Covarrubias Reyna and he is an archaeologist from the area. Mr. Covarrubias will be talking with us about the dangers currently facing Precolumbian Maya temples because of the construction of “mega-resorts” in the Maya Riviera.

Lastly, I am also planning an on-campus lecture and workshop for students with Precolumbian manuscript expert Dr. Gabrielle Vail. Dr. Vail is a preeminent scholar in ancient Mexican writing systems and the Maya codices. She will be leading a workshop for our class as well as a campus talk.

As part of our experiences together, we will be traveling to art museums in the region including the Stanley Museum’s temporary space at the University of Iowa. My goal for these visits is to provide students with an opportunity to see art produced from a range of Precolumbian cultures up close while also experiencing different modes of exhibition design and museum contexts.

## Exams



A Maya scribe busy taking notes or other documentation. Lowland Maya region, Mexico or Guatemala. Classic Maya, circa 650-800CE,

There will be two exams for this course—a midterm and a final. The midterm is cumulative from the beginning of the block and the final will be cumulative from the day after the midterm (so the second half of the block). While it will be important for you to be able to recognize and name artworks and examples of architecture, in addition to their culture, and a span of date ranges, we do not know who the specific artists were for most of the examples of Precolumbian art we will be looking at. Therefore, you don’t need to worry about memorizing specific artists’ names in the majority of cases. It will, however, be important for you to understand the main themes we have discussed in relationship to the images on the exam (the themes come from the readings and our discussions) You should also be able to successfully use evidence from the readings in support of your answers.

### Format:

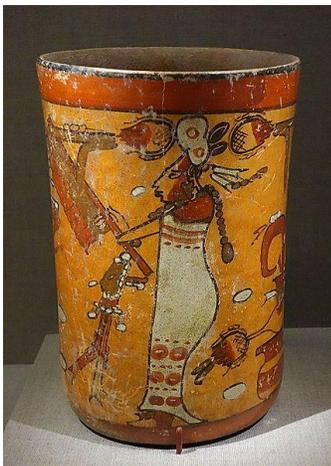
Identification and short answer: for these questions, you will be provided with an image and you will be asked to identify the title, culture, medium, date range, and answer a short question prompt (think about the discussion board lengths for your answers here).

Comparing images: for this part of the exam students will also identify two images together by providing the title, culture, medium, and date range. Students should then answer a short question prompt that asks you to compare the two images together as they relate to a certain theme (you will also use arguments from the readings). Since there are two images that you are addressing here, consider writing more for your answer.

In-person object analysis (final only). For part of the final we will be traveling to the Stanley Museum where you will analyze two objects as part of the final exam. This analysis will include a formal and iconographic analysis in addition to a material analysis.

Lists of images will be provided before the exam. Questions will appear the day of the exam and will be related to critical readings we have reviewed in the course.

### **Final Project: Research Paper and Digital Story Map**



Cylinder vase with God N and woman,  
Mexico or Guatemala, Maya, 600-900  
CE, earthenware and pigment –  
De Young Museum

The final project consists of a 7- page research paper focused on one art object and the culture it is associated with. The paper will be accompanied by a digital story map of the object. The purpose of this project is for students to research the history of one Precolumbian object in Mexico and create a research paper organized around a thesis argument in relationship to the object and the story it is telling. Arguments should be supported not only through historical research of the piece, but through analyzing its form and materiality. The paper should also conclude with a discussion about how this ancient object also relates to living populations of Indigenous Americans who can claim it as part of their cultural heritage. Overall, this project seeks to have students: 1) work toward a more truly postcolonial method for understanding and researching Precolumbian art/architecture and the cultures it represents by linking the piece to a

living culture 2) learn to read objects visually and perform art historical research related to them. 3) Utilize the same digital technology used by many art historians and archaeologists in their own field studies. See information on each of the components below:

### The Final Paper

The final paper and project are split into 4 different components to make the process more informative and easier to handle over the course of the semester (it's still one paper, but you just turn in different parts throughout the block). 1) The first component that is due is a two-page formal and material analysis of your object. 2) Second is a rough draft at least four pages long along with an accompanying bibliography formatted to Chicago Manual of Style rules (please see Moodle for help with this). 3) The final paper of 7 double spaced pages will be due last 4) along with a digital story map that visually and textually presents the object's significance.

The research paper itself should be focused on a theme of your choosing from the course, but as that theme relates to one Precolumbian object in Mexico. Consider formatting the paper as follows:

- **Introduction and beginning paragraphs:** Provide an introduction to the object and the culture it is associated with. Early in the paper, develop and convey an original thesis related to the object. This means that you are making an argument for the story the object is telling and arguing for how and why it is telling that story.
- **Body of the Paper:** Create body paragraphs structured to include a synthesis of the student's formal and material analyses of the work in addition to historical and other research obtained by scholars in the field. Students may select up to two readings from the course and the rest of the sources should be obtained from the library's resources.
- When structuring paragraphs, be sure to include topic sentences that reflect and/or support the thesis.
- **Conclusion:** In concluding the paper, students should revisit the thesis and the major points of the overall discussion. Additionally, students should conclude with a discussion of how the object relates to contemporary Indigenous American populations who can claim it as part of their heritage.

### The Story Map

The visual component to the written paper is a digital story map that will be shared virtually with others. A story map is a way of "curating" an experience of an object. With a story map, you can tell the story of an object from a variety of perspectives including where that object was from, how it was used and even who it may be related or significant to today and why. Story mapping technology, such as the archGIS software we will be using, also allows you to include multiple media including images, text, and video in order to tell the story of your object. We will have a training on this software and on story mapping in general well before the project is due. It is mandatory that students attend this training in order to be successful (held during class time).

StoryMaps Examples: <https://storymaps-classic.arcgis.com/en/gallery/#s=30&md=storymaps-apps:cascade>

StoryMaps team examples: [https://storymaps-classic.arcgis.com/en/gallery/#s=0&md=storymaps-author:esri-story-maps-team\\_storymaps-apps:cascade](https://storymaps-classic.arcgis.com/en/gallery/#s=0&md=storymaps-author:esri-story-maps-team_storymaps-apps:cascade)

### **Assignment Break-down and Grades.**

Passing grades are A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, D- Failure is denoted by F in this course.

A = 4.0000	B = 3.0000	C = 2.0000	D = 1.0000
A- = 3.7000	B- = 2.7000	C- = 1.7000	D- = 0.7000
B+ = 3.3000	C+ = 2.3000	D+ = 1.3000	F = 0.0000

If a student does not attend or ceases to attend a course for which he or she is registered and does not add another course in its place before the end of the third day of the Block, the student will be given the grade of WR. Students who receive a grade of WR are charged tuition for the course, but they are not eligible for institutional financial aid or VA benefits for that Block. Any federal or state financial aid eligibility will be reviewed on a case by case basis per federal and state regulations. This information was referenced from Cornell College's grading policies.

Please see this link for more information:

<http://catalog.cornellcollege.edu/content.php?catoid=3&navoid=74&hl=incomplete&return-to=search#adding-and-dropping-courses>

**Attendance:** Attendance is mandatory to student success. Especially in the block plan, students cannot miss more than one class without falling significantly behind. All exams, projects, and participation are based on your ability to attend each day. Please contact me as soon as possible if extenuating circumstances prevent you from attending.

**Participation in class and in arts-based events:** Participation is based on the demonstrated completion of assigned readings (via verbal and written responses), working with the professor in class, as well as actively working with other students in class (including discussion and activities). As part of the participation grade, students must also attend two arts-based functions on campus, in the community, or in the surrounding cities. The scheduled field trips to the Stanley Art Museum can count together as one mandatory function. The other may be of the student's choosing. After attending the event, please schedule a time with me to discuss your experience of the event. We could do this over a cup of coffee and it will give me a chance to get to know you better! 50 Points Total.

**Midterm Exam:** A discussion of exam formats is described earlier in the syllabus (the midterm and final will be formatted the same). Please consult this description as well as the exam study images on Moodle. 75 Points Total.

**Final Exam:** A discussion of exam formats is described in the syllabus (the midterm and final will be formatted the same). Please consult this description as well as the exam study images on Moodle. 125 Points Total.

**Final Project:** 250 points total; see the breakdown below:

- Formal and Material Analysis: 25 points
- Research Paper Draft with Working Bibliography: 75
- Final Research Paper with Final Bibliography: 100
- Digital Story Map: 50

**500 Total Points in the Course.**

**Best Ways to Study and Learn in this Course.**

Reading academic articles

Sometimes reading academic articles written by scholars in the field can be very daunting. Very likely, this is because Precolumbian art and even art history will be new areas of focus for most students in the class. I recognize this. It is natural to feel a bit unsure until you become familiar with the style and background of the course. Second, academic writers tend to include a lot of information in their articles and they will be using discipline-specific terms. Don't let the extra information or new words get you down. We will work through these together. Just do your best. Here are my suggestions for students reading academic articles and texts about Precolumbian art—think about simplifying the readings down to these questions:

- |                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1) <i>Where</i> in the world are we? | 4) <i>Why</i> is the author writing about these things?  |
| 2) <i>When</i> in the world are we?  | 5) <i>What</i> is the author arguing about these things? |
| 3) <i>Who</i> are we talking about?  | 6) <i>How</i> is the author writing about these things?  |

The first and second questions tell us about geography and give us a timeline—they give us a historical context. The third question helps us understand the people and cultures involved. The fourth and fifth questions are related to the theme and the thesis. Scholars don't usually get rich from the research papers they write (well, not most of them...you can ask my cats). They write research papers because they recognize a gap or something missing in the current literature or discussion on a topic or theme—and they get excited about this! So, they identify the gap (that is the *why*) and then they offer their own position (their argument) on the subject (that is the *what* and that is also the thesis). However, it is not enough to just say new things in academic writing without supporting what you are arguing with proven evidence. I guess that happens on TV shows like Ancient Aliens, but it should never, ever happen in this class or in academia 😊 Therefore, question six above answers the “how” question. *How* does the author support their argument (what kinds of methods and evidence do they use and how do they use these)?

When reading, please take a lot of notes. They will come in very handy for the exam. You could also make an outline. For the life of me, I cannot remember what I have read if I don't print it out. I find this to be the case for most students so I would suggest printing out the readings each day. That said, if you have found a software program to help you read and take notes online, please let me know! I hate wasting paper, and would love another way...

Studying for exams (these are some study tips...please see the exam formatting earlier in the syllabus as well)

A major part of being prepared for exams is making sure you have read each of the readings and have taken notes on them. Please also visit the list of exam images under the Moodle "Resources, Research and Writing Help" folder (posted weekly). Work on memorizing the images as we go along, rather than trying to cram everything into the nights before the exam. You might consider taking notes about these images in relationship to *why* we have seen them. You could print these out and make flash cards. Start thinking about similarities and differences between images in order to help you prepare for the comparison portion of the exams. \*I have also read that studying together is a statistically proven way to score better on an exam. Consider finding someone in class to study with.

Take notes during lecture, of course, and listen for ideas or themes that we reinforce throughout the day (these, along with discussion board prompts, will form the basis of the exam questions). Practice using evidence from the readings in your discussion board posts and cite that evidence as a way to also prepare you for the kinds of referenced support (from the readings) that you will need to include in your exams.

Writing the Research Paper and Undertaking the Final Project.

I can tell you from experience that the best way to be successful in a research project is to pick something that won't bore you! Pick an object/or theme that you find interesting. You could also pick a problem that you want to address. Start from there even if you are unsure of how exactly to execute the project. I can help with that part. If you are still unsure, come to me with other interests you have (for example, what is your major and why?). Usually, students can build a theme or thesis based on interests associated with their own majors...even if that major is not art history---although I'd be delighted for you to become an art history major!

# Course Calendar



Teotihuacan, Mexico. 250-700 CE

## **Unit One: Introduction to Precolumbian Art History**

### **Monday, September 23<sup>th</sup> : Introduction to the Course and Learning to Read Art**

#### **Topic of the Day**

We will begin today by reviewing the course syllabus and assignments. We will follow this with a discussion of what “Precolumbian Art” is and we will even challenge what is meant by using a term like “art.” On a related note, we will also talk about some of the issues surrounding research, Precolumbian objects, and Indigenous American groups today.

#### **What is Due**

Reading: Mary Ellen Miller, Chapter 1, *The Art of Mesoamerica*,

Reading: Excerpts from Esther Pasztory, Chapter 1, “Things” and Chapter 2, “Thinking with Things” in *Thinking with Things, Toward a New Vision of Art*

### **Tuesday, September 24<sup>th</sup>: Learning to Read Precolumbian Art**

#### **Topic of the Day**

Today we will continue our introduction to Precolumbian art and the culture area known as “Mesoamerica”. Mesoamerica refers to a large area wherein different Precolumbian societies shared certain cultural traits including those related to religion, economy, and politics. We will become familiar with the four main cultures from Mesoamerica that will make up the concentration for this course. These include: the Olmec, the people of Teotihuacan, the Maya, and the Aztec. As part of this process, we will examine the aesthetics of Precolumbian art and talk about how those aesthetics relate to traditions of art making from other parts of the world.

### **What is Due**

Reading: Esther Pasztory, Chapter 15, “Aesthetics and Precolumbian Art” in *Thinking with Things, Toward a New Vision of Art*.

Reading: Excerpts from Emily Umberger, “Conflicting Economic and Sacred Values in Aztec Art,” In *Rethinking the Aztec Economy*” edited by Deborah Nichols, Frances F. Berdan, and Michael E. Smith.

## **Wednesday, September 25<sup>th</sup>: Issues in Precolumbian Art, Museums and Nation Building**

### **Topic of the Day**

Today we discuss how the curation of art spaces, in this case the art museum and its exhibits/exhibitions, predispose us to think in certain ways about the objects (and by extension, the cultures) we are seeing and learning about. The fact that exhibits and exhibitions are structured this way is not inherently wrong (such organization is a way of using objects and art to tell a story), but it *is* important to be aware of and sensitive to the stories that are being told, how the objects are being used, and how the respective cultures who made those objects (or whose ancestors made those objects) are being involved (or not involved) in the telling of those stories.

### **What is Due**

Reading: Carol Duncan, Chapter 1 “Art Museum as Ritual” in *Civilizing Rituals, Inside Public Art Museums*

Reading: Svetlana Alpers, Chapter 1, “The Museum as a Way of Seeing” in *Exhibiting Culture, the Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, edited by Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine.

Listen (in class): Hypoallergic Podcast: Ken Monkman’s Mission to Decenter the Colonial Museum <https://hyperallergic.com/508676/kent-monkmans-mission-to-decenter-the-colonial-museum/>

**Thursday, September 26<sup>th</sup>: Precolumbian Art from an Indigenous and Postcolonial Perspective.**

**Topic of the Day**

On the tail of our last discussion, we will be reading about some Indigenous American ways of understanding being in the world and we will think about how this relates to museums and the exhibition of Indigenous American objects. What kinds of issues or challenges does exhibiting non-Western and Indigenous American objects pose? From 2-3pm, we will also have the chance to talk with Tony Plaut, studio artist in the Department of Art and Art History here at Cornell. Among other techniques and mediums, Mr. Plaut's works include assemblages made from wood and found materials. He will be joining us to talk about objects, process, and meaning.

In- class Reading: Excerpt from A. Irving Hallowell, "Ojibwa Ontology, Behavior, and World View."

**What is Due**

Reading: Excerpts from Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Chapter 1 "Imperialism, History, Writing and Theory" in *Decolonizing Methodologies, Research and Indigenous Peoples*

**Unit Two: The Olmec: Landscapes of Power & Teotihuacan: The New World's first Metropolis**



Olmec "Colossal Head"/La Venta Monument 1,  
La Venta, Tabasco, Mexico. Circa 900BCE

**Friday, September 27<sup>th</sup>: The Olmec, Sacred Centers and Divine Rulers**

### **Topic of the Day**

Today begins our first day of chronological focus on the historiography and art history of the Precolumbian past. We will keep what we learned in mind from Unit One and use these things to think through our readings and projects for the remainder of the course. Our concentration for today is on the Olmec, the earliest complex society to create monumental architecture and art in ancient Mexico—in what is now the modern states of Tabasco and Veracruz along the Gulf Coast.

### **What is Due**

Reading: Mary Ellen Miller, Chapter 2 “The Olmecs” in *The Art of Mesoamerica*.

Reading: Esther Pasztory, Chapter 14, “The Portrait and the Mask” in *Thinking with Things, Toward a New Vision of Art*.

Visit with Amy Gullen and Matt Zhorne for Story Maps in our classroom at 2:30pm.

## **Monday, September 30<sup>th</sup>: Teotihuacan’s Art and Architecture: Introduction to the City.**

### **Topic of the Day**

Teotihuacan was one of the largest Precolumbian cities ever built in the New World. Today, we will discuss the background of this city as well as the major architecture of its central plaza. These buildings include the Temple of the Sun, the Temple of the Moon, and the Temple of the Feathered Serpent. We will also discuss how many of these buildings were used in rituals of human sacrifice undertaken to preserve world order and agricultural fertility. During the last hour of class, library director Greg Cotton will be visiting our class to talk about helpful research strategies for the final paper.

### **What is Due**

Reading: Mary Ellen Miller, Chapter 4 “Teotihuacan” in *The Art of Mesoamerica*.

Reading: Esther Pasztory, Chapter 6 (VI) “The Pyramid of the Sun and the Goddess” in *Teotihuacan, an Experiment in Living*.

## **Tuesday, October 1<sup>st</sup>: Teotihuacan’s Art and Architecture: Ancient and Modern Meanings.**

### **Topic of the Day**

We continue our journey through Teotihuacan by discussing more of its architecture, artistry and culture including the Temple of the Moon and the Temple of the Feathered

Serpent. We will also discuss human and animal sacrifice in these structures. Lastly, we will talk about the ways the Precolumbian past is reused in the present in the nation-state of Mexico and beyond.

In-class Reading: Kathleen Berrin “National Icons and Political Interests: Mexico’s Nationalist Cultural Narrative and U.S. Mexico Relations” in *Visual Culture of the Ancient Americas, Contemporary Perspectives* edited by Andrew Finegold and Ellen Hoobler.

### Part One: Formal and Material Analysis

#### What is Due

\* Read this first. Reading: Esther Pasztory, Chapter 7 (VII) “The Pyramid of the Moon and the Storm God”

Reading: Leonardo López Luján “Life after Death in Teotihuacan, the Moon Plaza’s Monoliths in Colonial and Modern Mexico” in *Visual Culture of the Ancient Americas, Contemporary Perspectives* edited by Andrew Finegold and Ellen Hoobler.

## Unit Three: The Maya and Aztec



Stone sculpture depicting a Maya captive from the Classic Period site of Toniná, Mexico. About 650-800CE

**Wednesday, October 2<sup>nd</sup>: Introduction to the Classic Maya: Art and Writing/Maya Vessel and Hieroglyphic Interpretation**

#### Topic of the Day

Today we will begin our introduction to the ancient Maya. While Maya culture has a very long chronology, we are going to start with the Late Classic Period (beginning at roughly 650CE). The Late Classic Maya developed a highly sophisticated artistic style and a complex hieroglyphic writing system. Today we begin our introduction to the Maya and then focus specifically on Late Classic Maya mural painting as well as their glyph system.

In-class film: Cracking the Maya code: <https://topdocumentaryfilms.com/cracking-maya-code/>

### **What is Due**

Readings: Mary Ellen Miller, Chapter 7, “The Late Classic Maya” in *The Art of Mesoamerica*.

Readings: Excerpts from Mary Ellen Miller and Claudia Brittenham, *The Spectacle of the Late Maya Court, Reflections on the Murals of Bonampak*.

## **Thursday, October 3<sup>rd</sup>: The Maya Ballgame**

### **Topic of the Day**

Today we will discuss the Classic Maya ballgame, a game played in ancient times for entertainment as well as for political and religious reasons. This game sometimes involved the spectacle of human sacrifice. We will look at the relationship between imagery and text in our ballgame readings in addition to learning more about how the game was related to the underworld.

In-class film: Popol Vuh film: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vOEQNo5m4rg>

### **What is Due**

Reading: Excerpts from Mary Ellen Miller, Chapter 6, “The Maya Ballgame: Rebirth in the Court of Life and Death” in *The Sport of Life and Death, the Mesoamerican Ballgame* edited by E. Michael Whittington.

## **Friday, October 4<sup>th</sup>: The Classic Maya Body, Kings, Queens, and Captives**

Mid-term (morning) from 9-11 and lecture to follow from 1-2pm (adjusted hours to accommodate any extra time you will need).

### **Topic of the Day**

Please plan on meeting today for two hours during the morning (from 9-11) in order to have plenty of time for the midterm. We will take the midterm in the morning and meet from 1-2 in the afternoon. Our afternoon time will be focused on the following...

Today is everybody's business (pun intended!) We will continue our discussion of the Classic Maya by discussing how bodies (both royal and prisoner bodies) were depicted in Classic Maya art and in relationship to Maya writing. What kinds of things did a body communicate in ancient Maya culture? How were these things materialized in art and its associated writing from the time period? These are just some questions we will work through today.

### **What is Due**

Readings: Catherine Burdick: Held Captive by Script: Interpreting "Tagged" Prisoners in Late Classic Maya Sculpture. In *Ancient Mesoamerica*.

## **Monday, October 7<sup>th</sup>: The Maya: Sacred Landscapes and Sacrifice, the Art and Architecture of Chichén Itzá and the Postclassic Maya**

### **Topic of the Day**

Today we will begin to move east, toward the large Maya cities that rose in the Yucatán Peninsula after many of the major Classic Maya cities fell. We will begin by discussing the art of sacrifice and the death goddess and gods depicted in the art of the Terminal Classic site of Chichén Itzá. We will also talk about the famous feathered serpent cult that became powerful at Chichén Itzá. This cult also had links to many central Mexican sites including the highland site of Tula, Hidalgo (very far away from Chichén Itzá). The cult was so important that it remained popular until the Spanish arrived in the following centuries. Serpent heads can still be found at several Maya sites in the region today.

### **What is Due**

Reading: Mary Ellen Miller, Chapter 8, "Mesoamerica after the Fall of Classic Cities" in *The Art of Mesoamerica*

Reading: Excerpts from Virginia E. Miller, Chapter 7, "Skeletons, Skulls, and Bones in the Art of Chichén Itzá" in *New Perspectives on Human Sacrifice and Ritual Body Treatments in Ancient Maya Society* edited by Vera Tiesler and Andrea Cucina

**Part Two: Rough Draft and Bibliography**

**Visit with Amy Gullen and Matt Zhorne for StoryMaps in Cole Library Rm. 212.**

## **Tuesday, October 8<sup>th</sup>: The Maya: Sacred Landscapes and Sacrifice, the Art and Architecture of Chichén Itzá and the Postclassic Maya**

### **Topic of the Day.**

Today we will be talking about the Maya sites and sacred landscapes of the Postclassic Period in the Yucatán Peninsula. These were some of the very last Maya cities to be occupied before the Spanish arrived to the shores of Mexico in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century. In our discussion of these places, we will focus on Mayapán, the last great Maya capital. We will talk about what made that, and other Maya places in the area, “sacred landscapes.” Much of our day will also be spent examining the threats Indigenous American sacred landscapes face today. We will begin by examining cases of Maya sites and sacred landscapes in the area of the Maya Riviera in Yucatán. For example, what happens when encroaching mega-resorts are built for the tourist industry there? We will be joined (virtually) by archaeologist Miguel Covarrubias Reyna who has spent the past few years dealing with such issues. We will then compare threats in the Maya Riviera with similar problems in the United States as we listen (via podcast) to Indigenous American water protectors and artists speak about the recent events at Standing Rock in North Dakota.

### **What is Due**

Reading: Excerpts from Timothy Pugh, “Flood reptiles, Serpent temples, and the Quadripartite Universe: The *Imago Mundi* of Late Postclassic Mayapán” in *Cambridge University Press*: 11 January 2002.

Skype session with archaeologist Miguel Covarrubias Reyna, Mexican archaeologist in Yucatán.

Listen in Class: The Roles of Art and Artists at the Pipeline Protests in North Dakota: <https://hyperallergic.com/342677/the-roles-of-art-and-artists-at-the-pipeline-protests-in-north-dakota/>

### **Wednesday, October 9<sup>th</sup>: The Aztecs—Culture and Aesthetics**

#### **Topic of the Day**

We will begin our discussion by focusing on the culture that developed the first and last true empire in Mesoamerica—the Aztecs. This discussion starts with an introduction to Aztec art and culture and follows with a review of their capital city, the city of Tenochtitlán. Themes we will discuss are ways that art and architecture were used in the building of an empire as well as how human sacrifice was also related to Aztec religious belief systems.

### **What is Due**

Reading: Mary Ellen Miller, Chapter 9, “The Aztecs,” In *The Art of Mesoamerica*.

Reading: Esther Pasztory, Chapter 2, “A Definition of Aztec Art,” In *Aztec Art* by Esther Pasztory.

**Thursday, October 10<sup>th</sup>: Special Topic— Mesoamerican Painted Books. \*Meet from 9-11 and then 1-3pm in order to accommodate our guest speaker and workshop.**

### **Topic of the Day**

Today is the Thursday before “Columbus Day,” a day still celebrated as a holiday in some states. However, celebration of this day has become controversial (particularly with Indigenous American groups) because of the historical and contemporary pain caused by European colonization of the Americas. Therefore, today, we will celebrate Indigenous Americans instead by discussing and honoring some of their incredible accomplishments in art and architecture, science and religion.

As a special topic, we will focus our energies especially on the books that Mesoamericans produced. We will discuss the painted books known as codices created by both the Aztecs and the Maya. We are especially lucky to be joined by Dr. Gabrielle Vail, a preeminent scholar of Mesoamerican codices. For the first 45 minutes of lecture this morning I will revisit topics from yesterday and introduce Mesoamerican writing and books. Following this, Dr. Vail will provide a 1.15minutes lecture beginning with a more intensive look at Maya codices and an introduction to caves and cenotes in the codices. Our afternoon time will consist of a workshop on caves and cenotes in the codices led by Dr. Vail.

### **What is Due**

Reading: Christine Hernandez and Gabrielle Vail. 2013. “Introduction to the Maya Codices.” In *Re-Creating Primordial Time. Foundation Rituals and Mythology in the Postclassic Maya Codices*.

Reading: Hernandez, Christine and Gabrielle Vail. 2010. The Role of Caves and Cenotes in Late Postclassic Maya Ritual and Worldview. *Acta Americana* 18:13-45. \*Workshop on caves, cenotes, glyphs in the codices, and elements of the calendar.

## **Unit Four: On the Eve of the Spanish Conquest**



Stone sculpture of the Aztec goddess, Coatlicue or “Serpent Skirt.” Tenochtitlán, Mexico. Mid to late 15<sup>th</sup> century CE.

**Friday, October 11<sup>th</sup>: Comparing Maya and Aztec Writing. Extended morning class only in order to accommodate Dr. Vail’s afternoon talk at the library. 9-11am. No afternoon class today.**

**Topic of the Day:** Today we will spend some time comparing writing systems and books from both the Maya regions as well as from central Mexico—including from both Mixtec and later Aztec culture. Dr. Vail may be joining us this morning as well.

### **What is Due**

Reading: Gabrielle Vail, “Scribal Interaction and the Transmission of Traditional Knowledge: A Postclassic Maya Perspective.” *Ethnohistory*.

Reading: Excerpts from Elizabeth Boone, *Stories in Red and Black- Writing in Images*

Gabrielle Vail will be speaking about Astronomy in the Mesoamerican Codices at 3:30pm on the second floor of Cole Library. The talk will be about an hour with a reception to follow. Supplemental Reading: Excerpts from Gabrielle Vail, “Astronomy in the Dresden Codex”

**Part Three and Four Due: Final Paper and Story Maps Due**

**Monday, October 14<sup>th</sup>: The Aztecs— Monuments of Empire**

**Topic of the Day:** Today we will spend morning lecture discussing the monuments that were commissioned by Aztec rulers in and around Tenochtitlan. We will concentrate especially on how such monuments carried and conveyed religious and sociopolitical

meaning. We will also discuss how some were related to ideas of sacrifice and cyclical time. I will also be showing you some very artistic maps that were produced after the fall of the Aztec Empire and into the subsequent Colonial Period in what was then to be called “New Spain.” I will answer any final questions about the final exam to be held the next day.

**What is Due:** Pasztory, “The Major Monuments of Tenochtitlan.” In *Aztec Art* by Esther Pasztory.

**Tuesday, October 15<sup>th</sup>: Final Exam and Project Wrap-up** Meet from 9-11 am and then from 1-2pm in order to accommodate the final.

**Topic of the Day:** Today we will hold the final exam in the morning followed by a discussion of our field trip the following day.

**What is Due:** Nothing due besides the final.

**Wednesday, October 16<sup>th</sup>: Field Trip to the Stanley Art Museum in Iowa City.** Please meet in front of the Commons at 8:30am.

**Topic of the Day**

The visual object analysis portion of your exam will take place as we arrive to the Stanley Art Museum classroom. This should take about 20 minutes. After, we will view other Precolumbian objects from the collection.

**What is Due:** visual object analysis portion of the final (in-class)