

ANAR 154: The Aztecs and their Ancestors

Winter Quarter 2018

Tuesday/Thursday 12:30 to 1:50 PM, TM 102

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Final Exam: Tuesday, 20 March 11:30-2:30 AM

Description: This course is a survey of Mesoamerican archaeology that focuses on the prehistory of Mexico northwest of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. Among the topics to be covered are the first settling of Mesoamerica, the origins of agriculture, the development of social complexity, the rise of cities, and the emergence of large-scale states culminating in the Aztec and Tarascan empires. The course is organized both chronologically and geographically.

Instructor & Office Hours: My office is Social Science Research Building Room 348, in front of Solis. Drop in office hours are Tuesday & Thursday, 11:00 AM -12:15 PM (before class). You also may schedule an appointment if this is inconvenient for you. If you are having troubles with the class, please contact me as soon as possible. *It is easier to find ways to help you if I know early on that there is a problem.*

Evaluation: Students will be graded on the basis of a midterm (35%), a final exam (50%) and a map assignment (15%). The *Midterm* will be comprised of short identification questions, short answer essays, and a long essay. The *Final Exam* will have the same format as the Midterm but also will include a visual identification section (worth 15% of your grade). This will present a series of slides that we have seen over the semester. Your job will be to identify what you see and to describe its importance/relevance. I am including here a section on how to prepare for the exams. The *map assignment* is described on the last page of this syllabus.

Attendance: All students are expected to attend all classes, particularly since I often will present material that is not in your textbook. If you are sick and cannot attend class, please send the t.a. an e-mail ahead of time.

Textbook: One textbook is required for the class. Supplies at the bookstore are limited. It is also available online for less than \$20 (this is one reason I chose the book!). The text is:

Coe, Michael D., and Rex Koontz

2013 *Mexico: From the Olmecs to the Aztecs*. 7th Edition. Thames & Hudson, New York.

Course and Reading Schedule (All Readings Due Before Class):

Jan 9-11	Introduction to Mesoamerica & Paleoindian Period Chapters 1 and 2
Jan 16-18	Archaic Period Chapter 3
Jan 23-25	Formative Period I: Basin of Mexico & Olmecs Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 (begin) *****Map Assignment Due, Tuesday, Jan 23 *****
Jan 30-Feb1	Formative Period II: Zapotecs & Late Formative Basin of Mexico Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 (begin)
Feb 6-8	Classic Period Teotihuacan Chapter 6 (finish)
Feb 13-15	Epiclassic Period I Chapter 7 (begin) *****Midterm, Tuesday Feb. 13***** NOTE: Midterm will cover Chapters 1-6
Feb 20-22	Epiclassic Period II Chapter 7 (conclude)
Feb 27-Mar 1	Early Postclassic Chapter 8
Mar 6-8	Late Postclassic I Chapter 9
Mar 13-15	Late Postclassic II Chapter 10 and Epilogue
Mar 20	*****Final Exam, 11:30 AM - 2:30 PM***** Note: Final will cover Chapters 7-10 and the Epilogue, as well as slide images from throughout the course

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DETAILED STUDY GUIDE, OR HOW TO DO WELL ON EXAMS

The exams in this course—indeed all my undergraduate courses—follow a very basic and old-fashioned pattern. The midterm is structured in three sections: (1) identifications; (2) short answers; and (3) synthetic essay. The final exam has these and another part: (4) slide ids. Let's begin with some general ideas about “how to do well” and then move on to each part.

Caveat

I will not post notes, presentations, or slides on the web. There are many reasons for this. You really need to come to class. Please note that I ask you *not* to take photos of the slides shown in class. Many of the images have copyright or otherwise belong to people.

General Ideas on How to Do Well

(1) Come to class and do your readings. I cannot express how important it is to do both of these things. The authors of your book concentrate on some things, and I will stress other ideas and interpretations. The most important things to learn are ideas/sites/time periods that are given emphasis by both of us. If we differ in opinions, try to concentrate on what I say in class.

(2) Read over your notes each day and start lists. In my presentations, I try to use a contrasting color to give emphasis to items (sites, buildings, particular artifacts, cultures, or time periods) that are particularly important. When you take notes in class or from your book, you might want to underline these. Start a list of these items (maybe even on note cards) and write very brief definitions that stress the important facts. This list will be critical for the id sections of your exams and also for the details in your short answers and essays. There are perhaps 40 site names to learn, and unless you understand Nahuatl and Spanish, they can be a little confusing at first!

(3) Identify the main ideas discussed in each lecture and chapter. This might sound obvious, but a lot of people lose the forest for the trees. There are probably no more than a dozen “themes” or “big questions” that are emphasized in the course. It is very easy to figure out—in a general way—what the essays and short answers will be about. Write outline essays for these themes!

(4) Budget your time. Each section of the exam is worth a certain number of percentage points. Make sure that you do not get bogged down in a section. If the essay is worth 50%, dedicate half of the exam time to writing the essay.

Term Identifications

The idea behind this section is to show that you know what is important about each word or phrase. Do not worry about writing complete sentences. Use your list of terms to study for this section. While making your list, order what you think is most important for each item.

Short Answers

These are usually designed to fill about one bluebook page. Try not to write a long essay, although each of these themes could certainly be expanded to that length. In your short answer, be sure to: (1) actually address the question; (2) write in complete sentences; (3) cite examples that support your argument. The last is important. Do not be vague or try to glide through the question without hanging any meat on a skeletal answer. Mention sites, cultures, artifacts, etc.

Essay Questions

Many of you may be more used to bubble tests than synthetic essay writing. It is important, therefore, to work on this part ahead of time when you study. The essay, of course, must be written in complete sentences and structured in a logical order. My questions will guide you in that structure. Keep these points particularly in mind:

- Many student essays do not address the question! Even if you write true things, you can't get points if your essay is about something else.
- Begin by carefully reading the question. Don't start writing until you understand it.
- Next, break down the question into its various parts.
- Make sure that, as you write, you specifically answer each part of the question, and try to do so in separate paragraphs or sections.
- Be sure to illustrate your answer with examples. Don't be vague.
- End with a concluding paragraph that summarizes your argument. In many ways, this will resemble an abbreviated version of a "short answer."

As indicated above, there are not too many big questions/themes in this course. If you study and try to identify them ahead of time, you will do well on the essays. Again, write outlines for questions or topics to which I give particular import in my lectures. Organize these outlines for each theme with examples or data that can be used to make an argument one way or another.

Slide Identifications

The purpose of the slide ids is very much the same as that of the word identifications. The difference is that this stimulates visual rather than verbal memory. Nonetheless, this section of the final often creates consternation and worry, especially for students who skip a lot of classes. Here are some easy tips on how to study for the slide identifications in the final exam:

- Come to every class! There are 20 classes and 20 slides to identify.
- Look at the pictures in your book and compare them with your notes.
- Concentrate on images that appear in both the book and your class notes.
- Make a list of photos in the book that show the same subject as what you have seen in class.
- Take notes on the pictures in your book that you think I have shown. There are just 154 figures in the book, so you only have about 15 pictures to learn each week. A very small number!
- Use your list of terms to identify potential photos that are not in the book.
- Go online and search for more images of things in your lists of terms and figures in the book.

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MAP ASSIGNMENT

Due Tuesday, 23 January at the beginning of class

Draw a map of the Mexico, focusing on those regions most important to the course. Your map should be made to scale, and the scale should be indicated. You will find it necessary to add a “blow-up” section of central Mexico (more or less a 150-mile radius around Mexico City). Do *not* hand in printouts of maps available on line; such maps are *not* your own work. Make sure that the following physiographic, geographic, and political features are clearly identified on the map:

- (1) The international borders of Mexico
- (2) The state borders for the 31 Mexican states and of the Distrito Federal, along with their capitals.
- (3) The rivers: Papaloapan (with Santo Domingo and San Juan), Río Verde (with Sordo and Atoyac), Balsas, Pánuco (with Santa María and Moctezuma), Lerma (including Santiago, Juchipila, Verde, and Bolaños), and Coatzacoalcos
- (4) The lakes: Cuitzeo, Texcoco, Chapala, and Pátzcuaro
- (5) The bodies of water: Pacific Ocean and Gulf of Mexico
- (6) The Isthmus of Tehuantepec
- (7) The mountain chains: the Sierra Madre Occidental, Sierra Madre Oriental, Sierra Madre del Sur, Sierra Madre de Oaxaca, and Mesa Central
- (8) The volcanoes: Popocatepetl, Ixtaccihuatl, and Pico de Orizaba (Citlaltepetl)
- (9) The desert: the “Gran Chichimeca,” or arid region of northern Mexico
- (10) The Valley of Oaxaca and the Basin of Mexico

This map will be useful to you throughout the course. In specific, you will be able to locate various sites we study on it. Make sure that the map is large enough for you to fit all this information on it. And don’t forget the blow-up around Mexico City!