

**ANTHROPOLOGY 553.04
ANCIENT MAYA CIVILIZATION
AUTUMN QUARTER 2004**

Instructor

Dr. Kevin Johnston

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Office Hours: Wednesday, 1:30-4:30 PM, and by appointment

Place and Time

M W 9:30-11:18 AM, University Hall 86

Text (Available at university-area bookstores)

Sharer, Robert. 1994. *The Ancient Maya* (5th edition). Stanford University Press.

On Reserve, Main Library Reserve Room

- Sharer, Robert. 1994. *The Ancient Maya* (5th edition). Stanford University Press.

Course Description

Anthropology 553.04 focuses on one of the greatest of Mesoamerica's pre-Columbian civilizations: the lowland Maya. In recent years, the pace of Maya archaeological research has quickened, and, thanks to a new generation of archaeological, epigraphic, and paleoecological fieldwork, a new picture of the ancient Maya has emerged. This class examines these new insights into the development of Maya civilization and its demise.

We begin with the Preclassic period, which commenced with the emergence of settled village life and closed with the construction of large, spectacular cities. Topics include the roots of Maya culture in pre-Maya Mesoamerican societies and the influence of urbanized mountain-dwelling groups on their lowland, rainforest-dwelling neighbors.

We then turn our attention to the florescence of Maya society during the Classic Period. Students learn about how Mayanists practice archaeology in the rainforest. Several classes are devoted to discussions of Maya political organization, royal history, palace life, and warfare. We review what is currently known about Maya religious beliefs, including the *Popul Vuh* creation story, and royal rituals, including blood sacrifice, the ballgame, and accession rites. Thereafter, several classes are devoted to the decipherment of Maya hieroglyphic writing, and students are taught how to read glyphic texts.

The next topic is maize agriculture and the economic foundation of Maya society. Students study ancient and modern Maya agricultural practice and review new insights into tropical ecology. We examine how agriculture generated anthropogenic, or human-induced, ecological change and the impact of that change on Maya society.

During the ninth-century AD, southern Maya society collapsed, and vast areas of the rainforest were abandoned. Why did the collapse occur and what were its outcomes? To answer these questions, we examine the demographic and ecological foundations of the collapse, and we discuss the lessons posed by the collapse for modern developing tropical nations. Readings and discussions focus on population-environment interactions

in tropical rainforests and the impact of those interactions on social and ecological development. The instructor illustrates discussions with discoveries made during his own field research in the Petén rainforest in northern Guatemala.

We conclude by turning our attention to the Postclassic Period, when Maya inhabiting the Yucatan Peninsula built large, well-known urban centers (e.g., Chichén Itzá and Tulum), and to the conquest and alteration of Maya society during the colonial Spanish era.

Format

The course meets twice week at a regular time for structured sessions with the entire class. Class meetings will combine lecture, discussions, visual presentations, and exercises. Group discussions will be held, and several classes will be devoted to group exercises.

Reading Assignments

The number of pages of reading assigned each week ranges between 45 and 70 (average is approximately 50). Students will be expected to have done the reading in order to engage in discussion and to answer questions. Each student must complete the readings on the dates indicated in the syllabus, i.e., *before attending class*.

Readings for this course consist of one required text available at the University Bookstore. Supplementary readings will be placed on Electronic Reserve in the Main Library.

Evaluation Criteria

Final grades will reflect each student's performance of written examinations, in-class and take-home assignments, and class participation. Written examinations will be based upon lectures, films, assigned readings, and class discussions and assignments.

The various components of class performance are weighted as follows:

Mid-term examination.....	40%
Final examination.....	45%
Class discussions, assignments, attendance.....	15%

Examinations

There are two examinations—a mid-term scheduled for the twelfth class and a final. The mid-term exam counts as forty percent of the final grade. The final exam counts as forty-five percent of the final grade. The exams are composed of objective (e.g., identification, matching, multiple choice, and sentence completion) and short essay questions.

The mid-term exam emphasizes materials covered during classes 1 through 11. The final exam emphasizes material covered during classes 13 through 21, but it will include questions that require use of knowledge and information acquired during the entire course. Students are expected to master information from the lectures, handouts, films, and textbooks; exam questions are drawn from all four.

Examination dates:

Mid-term exam.....November 1, Monday, in class

Final exam.....Wednesday, December 8, 7:30-9:18 AM

Makeup exams will only be offered for legitimate absences. In all cases, a request for a makeup exam must include, but is not limited to, a dated and signed letter from the student stating his/her reason for absence. Students requesting a makeup exam must speak with the instructor within 48 hours of the scheduled examination time. We encourage you to discuss your exam needs and other learning needs with the instructor *ahead of time*. If you experience a legitimate emergency and miss a lecture, ask another student to go over his/her notes with you, then ask your instructor to clarify any issues or questions that you may have.

My examination and credit policies follow policy and procedures established by The Ohio State University and specified in the Course Offerings Bulletin 04-05 (available to you from the Bulletin Office at (614) 292-3980) and by the University rules at <http://www.trustees.admin.ohio-state.edu/rules> (see "Marks," and "Exams").

Grading

A (95-100); A- (90-94); B+ (86-89); B (83-85); B- (80-82); C+ (76-79); C (73-75); C- (70-72); D+ (65-69); D (60-64); F (Below 60)

Participation in class discussions, assignments, and attendance will count for 15 percent of the final grade, so being prepared for class is highly advised.

Student Responsibility

Attendance is required and chronic absence will be noted. Disruptive behavior will be penalized. Students are held accountable for the content of the instructor's lectures and expected to master relevant material in the text. The student is advised to keep up with the reading assignments. Incompletes will be considered only in extreme cases.

Please turn off cell phones, beepers, and other electronics *before* arriving in class.

Policy On Academic Misconduct

All students should become familiar with the rules governing alleged academic misconduct. All students should be familiar with what constitutes academic misconduct, especially as it pertains to plagiarism and test taking. Ignorance of the rules governing academic misconduct or ignorance of what constitutes academic misconduct is not an acceptable defense. Alleged cases of academic misconduct are referred to the proper university committees. Do your own work!

Note: When the instructor is unexpectedly absent, you will find this information posted on the departmental website. Students should consult the website during inclement weather to check for possible class cancellations or delays. Please do not call the department; instead, check the website.

<http://monkey.sbs.ohio-state.edu/news.htm>

THIS PUBLICATION/MATERIAL IS AVAILABLE IN ALTERNATIVE FORMATS UPON REQUEST. FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT MS. ANITA RIDENOUR, DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY, 292-4149.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR MAKING THEIR NEEDS KNOWN TO THE INSTRUCTOR, AND THEY ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR SEEKING AVAILABLE ASSISTANCE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, AND CERTAINLY PRIOR TO THE FINAL EXAMINATION.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

WEEK 1

Class 1. Sept. 22

Introduction

Reading: Sharer: Introduction, pp. 19-30, 33-43

WEEK 2

Class 2. Sept. 27

Beginnings: The Preclassic Maya

Reading: Sharer: 71-72, 80-91, 107-128, 133-137

Class 3. Sept. 29

The Classic Period and the Maya Florescence

Reading: Sharer: Chapter 4, pp. 138-179

Films: *Tikal*, *Palenque*

WEEK 3

Class 4. Oct. 4

Power and Politics in Prehistory

Reading: Webster, Evans, and Sanders, *Out of the Past*, Chapter 10, pp. 325-355.

Film: *Power, Prestige, and Wealth*

Class 5. Oct. 6

Maya Political Organization

Reading: Sharer: Chapter 10, pp. 464-476, 491-512

WEEK 4

Class 6. Oct. 11

Polity Interactions

Reading: Webster: "Warfare and status rivalry: Lowland Maya and Polynesian comparisons," pp. 311-351 [On Reserve].Film: *Realms*

Class 7. Oct. 13

Maya Warfare

Reading: Martin and Grube, *Chronicle of the Maya Kings and Queens*, pp. 24-53. [On Reserve]

Sharer, Chapter 5, pp. 211-217

WEEK 5

Class 8. Oct. 18

Royal History

Reading: Martin and Grube, *Chronicle of the Maya Kings and Queens*, pp. 54-67, 101-115. [On Reserve]

Sharer, Chapter 5, pp. 220-

Class 9. Oct. 20

Maya Religion and World View

Reading: Sharer: Chapter 5, pp. 275-289; Chapter 11, pp. 513-516Film: *Shamans***WEEK 6**

Class 10. Oct. 25

Ideology: Maya Religion in the Service of the State

Reading: Schele and Freidel, *A Forest of Kings*, pp. 64-77, 84-95. [On Reserve]

Class 11. Oct. 27

Politics, Religion, and the Ballgame

Reading: Miller, "The Maya Ballgame: Rebirth in the Court of Life and Death," pp. 79-87. [On Reserve]Film: *Popul Vuh***WEEK 7**

Class 12. Nov. 1

In-Class Midterm Examination

Class 13. Nov. 3

Royal Maya Rituals

Reading: Sharer: Chapter 11, pp. 520-555

WEEK 8

Class 14. Nov. 8
 Working as a Maya Archaeologist. The Calendar
Reading: Sharer, Chapter 12, pp. 556-580.

Class 15. Nov. 10
 Introduction to Maya Hieroglyphs
Reading: Sharer: Chapter 13, pp. 597-629.

WEEK 9

Class 16. Nov. 15
 Reading Maya Texts
Take-home Assignment

Class 17. Nov. 17
 Translating the Yaxchilan Texts. The Maya Economy.
Reading: Sharer: Chapter 13, pp. 452-463.

WEEK 10

Class 18. Nov. 22
 Tropical Ecology and Maya Agriculture
Reading: Nations and Nigh: "The evolutionary potential of Lacandon Maya sustained-yield tropical forest agriculture," pp. 1-15, 26-27. [On Reserve]

Class 19. Nov. 24
 The Collapse of Classic Maya Society
Reading: Santley, Killion, and Lycett: "On the Maya Collapse." *Journal of Anthropological Research* 42(2): 123-159. [On Reserve]

WEEK 11

Class 20. Nov. 29
 Terminal Classic and Postclassic Remnants: The Maya of Yucatan.
Reading: Sharer, Chapter 6 and 7, pp. 368-409.

Class 21. Dec. 1
 Summary and Final Exam Review

Final exam: Wednesday, December 8, 7:30-9:18 AM