

**Course Syllabus Anth. 422 Prehistory of Mesoamerica****Fall Term 2009 2:30-3:45 TR, 230 Arts Bldg.****Instructor: Prof. David Webster****Office: 323 Carpenter Bldg.****Office Hours: 10:00-12:00 W and by appointment.**

Anthropology 422 is a general survey of Mesoamerican prehistory and ethnohistory. It has several major purposes. First, students are exposed to basic information concerning the origins, growth, and organizational and cultural features of the great New World civilizations of the region. Information presented includes human origins, the beginnings of agriculture, the emergence of early complex societies, and the great mature native civilizations such as the Aztecs and Mayas. Second, I take an overtly ecological, materialist, and evolutionary perspective. Finally, we will investigate some of the major issues controversies, and interpretations current among Mesoamerican archaeologists, and some of the methods that they use to design and carry out research. Because the faculty members of our department have a long history of Mesoamerican research, the discussion will sometimes focus on our own work and interpretations. Weekly readings from *Ancient Mexico and Central America* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), by Susan Toby Evans (Thames and Hudson: London, 2008) are assigned (see below). Supplementary study materials will be distributed in class or sent directly via ANGEL. You should keep these materials with your class notes, and they form an important core of information for the several exams. All students are expected to produce a term paper as described below.

Because it is impossible to do justice to the existing archaeological record in a single semester, of necessity many interesting areas and issues will be only superficially discussed in lecture (although many are covered in readings). Instead, we will investigate major topics and evolutionary processes that are of general relevance for Mesoamerica as a whole, emphasizing places, times, and cultures that are particularly well-known, relevant, significant, and familiar. Students who have previously taken Anth. 008 will notice a high degree of overlap between that course and this one, and should consider taking an alternate course with more new material. Formal prerequisites for Anth. 422 include one of the following: Anth. 008, 009, 0011, or 0012, but any regionally-specific archaeology course is also sufficient preparation.

<b>Week 1</b> (Aug. 25, 27)	General introduction to Mesoamerican Archaeology, Environment, and Culture Area. pp. 16-61.
<b>Week 2</b> (Sept. 1, 3)	Late Postclassic Mesoamerica: What the Spanish Saw: The Maya. pp. 515-519.
<b>Week 3</b> (Sept. 8, 10)	Late Postclassic Mesoamerica: The Aztecs. pp. 424-468.
<b>Week 4</b> (Sept. 15, 17)	The Aztecs (cont). pp. 469-514; 525-549
<b>Week 5</b> (Sept. 22, 24*)	Early Mesoamerican Populations, Origins of Agricultural Societies. pp. 61-98.

<b>Week 6</b> (Sept. 29, Oct. 1)	The Emergence of Social Complexity: The Olmec and their Contemporaries. pp. 99-260.
<b>Week 7</b> (Oct. 6, 8)	Classic Society and Urbanism.
<b>Week 8</b> (Oct. 13,15)	Classic Civilizations of Central Mexico: The Rise of Teotihuacan. pp. 260-290.
<b>Week 9</b> (Oct. 20, 22)	Teotihuacan, Epiclassic in the Highlands. pp. 350-376.
<b>Week 10</b> (Oct. 27, 29**)	Monte Alban and the Valley of Oaxaca. pp. 187-193, 374-376.
<b>Week 11</b> (Nov. 3, 5)	The Classic Maya. pp. 291-348.
<b>Week 12</b> (Nov. 10, 12)	The Classic Maya (cont.).
<b>Week 13</b> (Nov. 17, 19**)	Copan: the Rise and Fall of a Maya Kingdom.
<b>Week 14</b> (Nov. 24, 26)	<b>Thanksgiving Break</b>
<b>Week 15</b> (Dec. 1, 3***)	The Early Postclassic in the Maya Lowlands. Pp. 429-431.
<b>Week 16</b> (Dec. 8, 10)	Tula and the Toltecs. pp. 399-414.

\* **First mid-term**; \*\* **Second mid-term**; \*\*\***Course papers due**.

### Conduct of Course

**Exams:** There will be three exams: mid-terms on Sept. 24 and Oct. 29, and a final exam during the regularly scheduled final exam period at the end of the term. Each exam will be worth 25% of your final point total, and will consist of two parts. The first section will be 2-3 essay questions. About a week before the exams I will give you a list of 4-6 essay questions that you can study at home. At the exam I will choose several of these questions for you to actually answer, without the help of notes, etc. The second part of each exam will consist of short identification responses. Lectures, handouts and ANGEL postings, and assigned readings provide the information necessary for exams, in that order (i.e. attending class is very important). If information presented in class is different from that in readings, you should regard the lecture (or handout/posting) material as the more correct for exam purposes.

**Class Paper:** The final 25% of the course grade derives from a class paper, written on a subject of your choice in consultation with me (detailed instructions are given below). This paper is due on Dec. 3. You should choose a topic by no later than the 4th-5th week, and bring early drafts or outlines for me for discussion. Instructions for the paper are given in a separate section below.

**Performance Evaluation:** Your grade is based mainly upon the total points possible from all the exams and the paper. Because of the size and nature of this class, as well as the testing procedure (necessarily somewhat subjective), I do not grade on a strict curve, so it is possible for all students to receive high grades (or low ones). Typically, a very high percentage of students in this course get As and Bs. When I correct exams and papers I am swayed to some degree by my perception of whether students have attended class regularly, participated in class discussions, and involved me in the production of

their papers. I do not give plus or minus grades, but only As, Bs, Cs etc. If you are uncomfortable with this policy you should not take this course.

**Attendance:** I will periodically take attendance. If you have more than 5 unexcused absences during the semester I will subtract 30 points from your final point total based on the three exams and the paper.

**Directions for term papers:**

Your writing assignment is a research paper or topical essay (i.e. it should identify and explore one or more issues), not a book report. It should be analytical and thoughtful as well as descriptive, and your generalizations should be backed up by citations. You must have at least 10 articles or books in your bibliography (no web pages allowed), at least half of which must have been published within the last 5 years. Your presentation should indicate, through citations or quotes, that you have actively used these sources.

Papers must be no less than 20 double-spaced typed pages in length, not including title page, bibliography, and illustrations. All papers must be typed using normal double spacing, normal type size (10-12 pt.), and one inch margins on sides, top, and bottom. Use standard formats for quotations and bibliographies. These page lengths refer to complete pages. Five points are deducted for each page you fall short of the minimal limits given above (e.g., 19 1/2 pages = minus 5 points, 18 1/2 pages = minus 10 points, etc.). Do not try to pad papers by including over-long quotes.

I do not edit the finished papers line by line, nor correct your misspellings or grammatical mistakes. I do, however, form impressions about poor writing and organization and deduct points accordingly. For each page on which I find more than 5 spelling or grammatical errors I deduct 5 points from the total score otherwise determined by content. What I basically look for is evidence that you took the project seriously and put a reasonable amount of time and thought into it. Do not try to recirculate papers written for other classes, or quote from others without attribution (I can find this out fairly easily).

**Academic Integrity:** Penn State defines academic integrity as the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest, and responsible manner. All students should act with personal integrity, respect other students' dignity, rights, and property, and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed. Not tolerated are cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating information or citations, unauthorized possession of exams, or submitting another person's work as your own. Anyone caught engaging in these or other forms of academic dishonesty will be given an F grade for the course and will possibly face other academic sanctions.

The Pennsylvania State University encourages qualified persons with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, please tell the instructor as soon as possible. Penn State also makes an effort to accommodate observation of religious holidays.