

Syllabus: Painted Books of Ancient Mexico

Spring 2011 ANG6224 section 3337: 3 credit hours, Tuesday 8-10th periods

Instructor: Dr. **Susan Milbrath**, Affiliate Professor of Anthropology and Curator of Latin American Art and Archaeology at the Florida Museum of Natural History

Main Text: Elizabeth Boone, *Cycles of Time and Meaning in the Mexican Divinatory Codices*.
University of Texas Press, 2007. ISBN-10:0-292-71263-4

Facsimile Text: *The Codex Borgia*, introduction and commentary by Bruce Byland, Dover, 1993.

Facsimile Text: *The Codex Nuttall*, introduction by Arthur Miller, Dover 1975.

Students will research a selected topic in an individual codex or group of codices. Beginning in the second week of class, students will be assigned articles to read on themes related to their research topic and make informal presentations based on their assigned readings. Grades are based 30% on these class presentations, 30% on a formal lecture at the end of the term, and 40% on a written paper of 10-20 pages with a complete bibliography. This paper will be submitted in draft form two weeks before the end of the term and will be revised under the guidance of Dr. Milbrath, with the final draft due on April 19, the last class.

Class 1 **January 11** -- Overview of Mexican and Mayan Codices and cultural context

Class 2 **January 15** -- Time, Ritual Calendars, and Divination (Boone text pp. 1-32, Byland text xi-xvi)

Class 3 **January 25** -- Symbolic Vocabularies of Almanacs and Structures of Prophetic Knowledge (text book pp. 33-81, Byland text for plates 1-26)

Class 4 **February 1** -- Divination Almanacs and Almanacs with year dates (Boone text pp. 82-133; Byland text on plates 27-28, 47-52, 71)

Class 5 **February 8** -- Marriage, Travel, Venus Almanacs in the Borgia Group (Boone text pages 134-169, Byland text for plates 53-60)

Class 6 **February 15** -- Annual cycle of Festivals in the Codices: Borbonicus, Vaticanus A, and a link with Codex Nuttall (Miller 1975 introduction)

Class 7 **February 22** -- Codex Borgia 29-46 and the Annual Festival cycle (Byland text on plates 29-46)

Class 8 **March 1** -- Foundation and Creation Events: Vienna and Selden Roll compared with Borgia (text book pp.171-210)

Spring Break March 5-12

Class 9 **March 15** -- Plants and Animals in the Codices: Borbonicus, Borgia, Madrid, Paris

Class 10 **March 22** – Links between Central Mexican and Mayan Codices (text book pp. 230-252)

Class 11 **March 29** -- World Ages, World Renewal Ceremonies: Vaticanus A, Borbonicus, Dresden

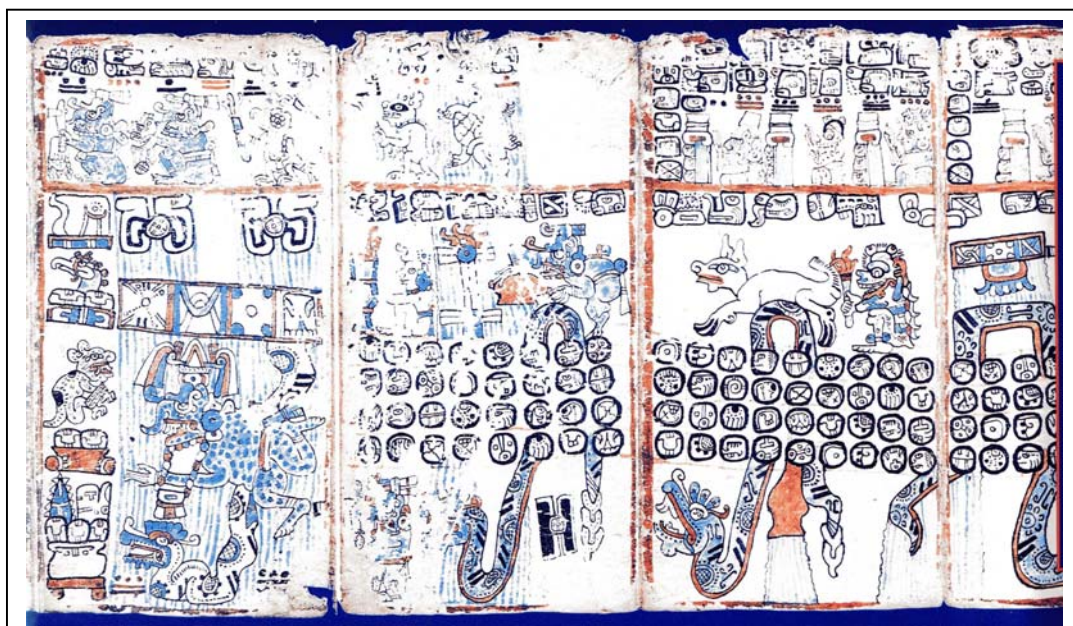
Class 12 **April 5** -- Dynastic Accounts in Mixtec Codices: Vienna, Nuttall, **draft papers due**

Class 13 **April 12** -- Historical Annals in Aztec Codices, **draft papers returned**

Class 14 **April 19** -- Last Class: Student presentations **final papers due**

Painted Books of Ancient Mexico

Course objectives: This course explores Precolumbian and early Colonial period codices from Mexico, including painted books created by the Maya in Yucatan, the Mixtecs in Oaxaca, and the Aztecs and Tlaxcalans in Central Mexico. The course focuses on imagery and calendar periods in the codices related to the natural world. We will explore rituals involving the unique Mesoamerican 260-day calendar, especially rituals performed to ensure a bountiful food supply involving hunting and planting. Other natural history themes in the course include calendar ceremonies designed to ensure that the natural cycles will repeat in sequence, such as the New Year festivals, the New Fire Ceremony, and the annual festival calendar. Also of interest in this course are cataclysmic natural events represented in the codices include floods, droughts, and earthquakes.



Madrid Codex 12-14 (Maya)