

ANT 4168/LAS 6938/ANG 6930
Maya Civilization
Spring 2026



Instructor

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Description

This course provides an overview of the archaeology of Maya civilization, the ancestors of contemporary Maya people who have historically inhabited the Yucatán peninsula of Mexico and Central America. The Maya are famous for their ancient cities, pyramids, sculpted and painted art, and their ecological setting in the dense tropical rainforests of southern Mesoamerica. This course will contextualize this popular perception of the Maya with archaeological understandings of the origins of Maya civilization by the 2nd millennium BCE through the Classic period (250–900 CE). Of note, the Maya developed a detailed writing system recording their own histories, which can be interpreted alongside the archaeological record. In addition to tracing the history of Maya civilization, this course will cover topics including political organization, economy, religion, agriculture, ecology, daily life, gender, as well as the use of new technologies, including laser scanning, to document and map Maya landscapes.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students will:

- 1) have an understanding of the history of Maya civilization.
- 2) be able to describe the geography of the Yucatán peninsula and identify the locations of major archaeological sites.
- 3) understand Maya social structures and worldviews.
- 4) be able to interpret Maya art and iconography, as well as to read the basic structure of Maya hieroglyphic texts.
- 5) have the tools and critical thinking skills to identify reliable public narratives about the Maya in popular media.

Class Meetings

Tuesday, Period 4, 10:40–11:30 am

Pugh 120

Thursday, Periods 4–5, 10:40 am–12:35 pm

Pugh 120

Office Hours

Tuesdays 11:30 am–1:30 pm

Thursdays 12:30–1:30 pm

Turlington B129

Required Book

Coe, Michael D. and Stephen Houston

2022 *The Maya*, Tenth Edition. Thames and Hudson, London.

Archaeological understandings of the Maya have changed substantially in recent years; therefore, earlier editions of this book are not recommended. Please purchase only the most recent version of this book.

Additional Required Readings

The required book provides a comprehensive overview of Maya civilization, but we will also be reading case studies that elaborate on important issues. Graduate students will be expected to read additional materials.

Grading

A 93-100%	B+ 87-89.9	C+ 77-79.9	D+ 67-69.9	E <60
A- 90-92.9	B 83-86.9	C 73-76.9	D 63-66.9	
	B- 80-82.9	C- 70-72.9	D- 60-62.9	

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies>

	Undergraduate	Graduate
Attendance and Participation	15%	10%
Assignment 1	10%	10%
Assignment 2	10%	10%

Midterm Exam	20%	20%
Assignment 3	10%	10%
Assignment 4	10%	10%
Assignment 5		5%
Final Exam	25%	25%

Attendance and Participation

Attendance is crucial to get the most out of this course. If you must miss a class meeting, please let me know by email or in person as soon as possible. I encourage you to discuss what you missed with another student or attend my office hours. Depending on the activity you missed, you may have an alternate reading or assignment to make up the credit. Participation includes engagement during lectures and contributions to discussions. The course will be largely lecture based, but we will have time to discuss readings on Thursdays. Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies>).

Exams

This course will involve a midterm and a final exam based on lectures, readings, and class discussions and presentations. The format will be a mix of short identification and short essay questions. The final exam will be the same format as the midterm exam and will not be cumulative, although it will build on concepts introduced earlier in the course.

Assignments

Throughout the course, students will complete 4 assignments. Instructions will be posted online, but each assignment will involve a short essay and brief in-class presentation. All assignments will be due before the class meeting on the due date. Late work will not be accepted without prior approval.

Graduate Students

Graduate students enrolled in 6000-level sections will have additional readings, and they will complete an additional Assignment 5 (short essay). This assignment will replace a portion of the Attendance and Participation grade.

Academic Honesty and Integrity

Please be familiar with the University of Florida's Student Honor Code:

<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code>

Special Accommodations

The process for requesting special accommodations is described at <https://disability.ufl.edu/get-started>, including registering with the Disability Resource Center in Reid Hall and requesting an accommodation letter to be presented to the instructor.

Online Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at

<https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results>.

Anthropology 4168

Maya Civilization

Spring 2026

Course Schedule (Subject to Change)

Week 1	Course Introduction
January 13	
January 15	<p>Introduction to the Maya Geography</p> <p>Required reading: Coe and Houston, Ch. 1</p> <p>Additional reading: Martin 2020, Ch. 1 Roys 1943, pp. 3–12, “The Country”</p>
Week 2	<p>Language</p> <p>History of Maya Studies</p>
January 20	<p>Additional reading: Martin 2020, Ch. 2</p>
January 22	<p>Maya Origins</p> <p>Archaic period</p> <p>Required reading: Webster 2012, “Maya Mystique”</p> <p>Additional readings: Rosenswig 2015 Popol Vuh, pp. 48–75, pp. 178–186</p>
Week 3	<p>Early Preclassic period</p> <p>The Olmecs and the Maya</p> <p>Middle Preclassic period</p>
January 27	<p>Required reading: Coe and Houston, Ch. 2</p>
January 29	<p>Assignment 1: The Maya Mystique</p> <p>Pacific and Gulf Coasts</p> <p>Middle Preclassic period</p> <p>Required reading:</p>

	<p>Inomata et al. 2020</p> <p>Additional readings: Flannery and Marcus 2000 Inomata et al. 2021 Pool 2009</p>
Week 4 February 3	<p>Origins of the Maya calendar Late Preclassic Maya Lowlands</p> <p>Required reading: Coe and Houston, Ch. 3</p>
February 5	<p>Preclassic period collapse Early Classic period Teotihuacan Kaminaljuyu</p> <p>Required reading: Schele and Freidel 1992, “Cerros: The Coming of Kings”</p> <p>Additional readings: Inomata et al. 2019</p>
Week 5 February 10	<p>Entrada of 378 CE Tikal and Teotihuacan</p> <p>Required reading: Coe and Houston, Ch. 4</p>
February 12	<p>Tikal hiatus Rise of Calakmul</p> <p>Required reading: Stuart 2000 Wade 2020</p> <p>Additional readings: Fash and Fash 2000 Román Ramírez et al. 2025 Sugiyama et al. 2020</p>
Week 6 February 17	<p>Early Classic period</p> <p>Required reading: Coe and Houston, Ch. 5, pp. 132 – 140</p>
February 19	<p>Demography Mapping Maya Sites and Landscapes</p> <p>Required reading:</p>

	<p>Canuto et al. 2018 Haviland 1972 Hutson 2012</p> <p>Additional readings: Estrada-Belli et al. 2025 Kurnick and Rogoff 2020 Webster 2018</p>
Week 7 February 24	Early Classic period, continued
February 26	<p>Piedras Negras</p> <p>Assignment 2: Demography</p> <p>Required reading: TBA</p> <p>Additional reading: TBA</p>
Week 8 March 3	<p>Late Classic period</p> <p>Required readings: Coe and Houston, Ch. 5, pp. 118–127</p> <p>Additional readings: Houston and Inomata 2009, pp. 105–130</p>
March 5	<p>Late Classic period, continued</p> <p>Required readings: Martin and Grube 1995</p> <p>Additional readings: Martin 2020, Ch. 13</p>
Week 9 March 10	Midterm
March 12	<p>Writing and Iconography, continued</p> <p>Required reading: Coe and Houston, Ch. 6, pp. 203–219</p> <p>Additional reading: De Landa 1937[1566], “Cycle of the Mayas. Their Writings”</p>

	Roys 1943, pp. 84–97, “Science and Learning”
Week 10	Spring Break
March 17	
March 19	Spring Break
Week 11	<p>Religion</p> <p>Required reading: Coe and Houston, Ch. 6, pp. 176–203 Coe and Van Stone 2000, “Supernatural World” Popol Vuh, pp. 76–178</p> <p>Additional reading: Houston and Inomata 2009, pp. 193–217</p>
March 24	
March 26	<p>Social Organization Usumacinta, Palenque</p> <p>Required reading: Coe and Houston, Ch. 9, pp. 274–277 Gillespie 2000</p> <p>Additional reading: Houston and McAnany 2003 Houston and Inomata 2009, pp. 131–192</p>
Week 12	<p>Economy</p> <p>Required readings: Coe and Houston, Ch. 9, pp. 272–274 Shaw 2012</p> <p>Additional reading: Baron 2018 Roys 1943, pp. 46–56, “Industry and Commerce”</p>
March 31	
April 2	<p>Daily Life</p> <p>Required readings: Coe and Houston, Ch. 9, pp. 269–272 Robin 2004</p> <p>Additional readings: Houston and Inomata 2009, pp. 218–287 Brown and Sheets 2000 Roys 1943, pp. 23–45</p>

Week 12		Gender
April 7		<p>Required reading: Joyce 2001</p> <p>Additional reading: Houston 2018</p>
April 9		<p>Assignment 3: Epigraphy, art, and iconography Copan Southeastern periphery</p> <p>Required readings: Coe and Houston, Ch. 5, pp. 126-132 Fash and Agurcia 2005</p> <p>Additional reading: Sharer et al. 1999</p>
Week 13		<p>Conflict Usumacinta</p> <p>Required readings: Scherer and Golden 2014 Coe and Houston, Ch. 5, pp. 141-158</p> <p>Additional reading: Roys 1943, pp. 65–70</p>
April 16		<p>Petexbatún Collapse</p> <p>Required reading: Coe and Houston, Ch. 7 Aimers 2007</p> <p>Additional readings: Chase and Chase 2004 Demarest et al. 2016</p>
Week 14		<p>Assignment 4: Epigraphy Part 2</p> <p>Required reading: Coe and Houston, “Visiting the Maya Area”</p> <p>Additional reading: Coe and Houston, Ch. 10</p>
TBD		Final Exam

Course Bibliography

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