The Early Maya: Studies in Mesoamerican Archaeology

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Welcome to San Bartolo! This course invites you to experience first-hand what Maya civilization was like by teaching you how archaeologists use traces of the past to reconstruct ancient societies. You will be reading about the Maya and learning about their environment, their daily activities and their extraordinary craft, their small villages and their large cities. At the same time you will observe around you and practice the archaeologists’ theories and methods highlighted in the required readings for this course. You will experience the jungle environment through camp life, survey and mapping, excavate humble ceramic pots and utilitarian tools, masonry architecture, and unique painted stucco walls, and you will travel to visit sites that together represent some of the highest achievements of Maya culture.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Your final grade in this course will be determined by your performance on your weekly attendance at and active participation in discussions (25%), 3 short papers (10% each) and a final exam (45%). We will meet on Saturdays from 8:00am-12:00pm to discuss the week’s theme and their impacts of, and potential problems with, the assigned readings.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

There is one textbook required for this course and several readings that will be made available for you. All assigned readings should be completed before coming to the seminar, as they will form the basis for both discussions and exam.
Martin, Simon, and Nikolai Grube. *Chronicle of Maya Kings and Queens*. [CMKQ]

**LECTURE TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS:**

**Introduction to Copan, Quirigua, Tikal, and Calakmul**

Week 1  
Read: **CMKQ** the Copan, Quirigua, Chapter, Tikal, and Calakmul Chapters

**The Middle to Late Preclassic in the Maya Lowlands**

Week 2  
**Assignment 1: 2 page response to 1 of these 3 articles**

**The Late Preclassic**

Week 3  
**Dunning et al. 2002.** Arising from the Bajos: The Evolution of a Neotropical Landscape and the Rise of Maya Civilization  
**Wahl, David, Thomas Schreiner and Roger Byrne.** The Paleoenvironmental Sequence of the Mirador Basin in Peten.
The Early Classic and Teotihuacan

Week 4


Assignment 2: 2 page discussion on Teotihuacan and Maya

Political Structure of the Classic Period Maya

Week 5
Read: Martin and Grube, 1995. Maya Superstates,

Inomata, 2006. Plazas, Performers, and Spectators


Piedras Negras/Yaxchilan/Palenque/Tonina

Week 6
Read: CMKQ PN, Yaxchilan, Palenque and Tonina Chapters


Calakmul/Caracol/Naranjo

Week 7
Read: CMKQ Caracol and Naranjo Chapters

Houston. Literacy among the Maya.

Assignment 3: 2 page discussion on the readings.

**Petexbatun**

Week 8

Read: **Demarest, 1997**, Classic Maya Defensive Systems and Warfare in the Petexbatun Region.

*CMKQ* Dos Pilas Chapter

**Classic Maya civilization collapses**

Week 9


**Gill et al. 2007.** Drought and the Maya Collapse. *Ancient Mesoamerica* 18: 283-302
