

ANTH 31 Course Outline as of Summer 2025**CATALOG INFORMATION**

Dept and Nbr: ANTH 31 Title: MESOAMERICAN ORIGINS

Full Title: Mesoamerican Origins of Latino Culture

Last Reviewed: 4/25/2022

Units	Course Hours per Week		Nbr of Weeks		Course Hours Total	
Maximum	3.00	Lecture Scheduled	3.00	17.5	Lecture Scheduled	52.50
Minimum	3.00	Lab Scheduled	0	6	Lab Scheduled	0
		Contact DHR	0		Contact DHR	0
		Contact Total	3.00		Contact Total	52.50
		Non-contact DHR	0		Non-contact DHR	0

Total Out of Class Hours: 105.00

Total Student Learning Hours: 157.50

Title 5 Category: AA Degree Applicable

Grading: Grade or P/NP

Repeatability: 00 - Two Repeats if Grade was D, F, NC, or NP

Also Listed As:

Formerly: ANTHRO 31

Catalog Description:

Various societies in Mesoamerica are known for their monumental architecture, ritualized sacrifice, astronomical calculations, complex calendars, writing systems, and vast trade networks. How did all of these cultural phenomenon develop over time? Why and when did the various societies collapse? What traditions remain intact? Which practices have been shared throughout the world? Students in this course will study the cultural evolution of this region beginning with the peopling of the land, to the emergence of village life and domestication of foods. We study the formation of dense urban societies that became centers of religious, economic and military powers, including those that were eventually encountered by Spanish invaders and reshaped to become the contemporary societies known today.

Prerequisites/Corequisites:**Recommended Preparation:**

Eligibility for ENGL 1A or equivalent

Limits on Enrollment:**Schedule of Classes Information:**

Description: Various societies in Mesoamerica are known for their monumental architecture, ritualized sacrifice, astronomical calculations, complex calendars, writing systems, and vast trade networks. How did all of these cultural phenomenon develop over time? Why and when did the various societies collapse? What traditions remain intact? Which practices have been shared throughout the world? Students in this course will study the cultural evolution of this region beginning with the peopling of the land, to the emergence of village life and domestication of foods. We study the formation of dense urban societies that became centers of religious, economic and military powers, including those that were eventually encountered by Spanish invaders and reshaped to become the contemporary societies known today. (Grade or P/NP)

Prerequisites/Corequisites:

Recommended: Eligibility for ENGL 1A or equivalent

Limits on Enrollment:

Transfer Credit: CSU;UC.

Repeatability: Two Repeats if Grade was D, F, NC, or NP

ARTICULATION, MAJOR, and CERTIFICATION INFORMATION:

AS Degree:	Area			Effective:	Inactive:
	E	Humanities		Fall 2025	
	G	American Cultures/Ethnic Studies			
	L3	Arts and Humanities			
CSU GE:	Transfer Area			Effective:	Inactive:
	C2	Humanities		Fall 2009	
	C1	Arts		Fall 2007	Fall 2009
	C2	Humanities			
IGETC:	Transfer Area			Effective:	Inactive:
	3B	Humanities		Fall 1981	
CSU Transfer:	Transferable	Effective:	Fall 1981	Inactive:	
UC Transfer:	Transferable	Effective:	Fall 1981	Inactive:	

CID:

Certificate/Major Applicable:

Major Applicable Course

COURSE CONTENT

Student Learning Outcomes:

At the conclusion of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Utilize the basic anthropological concepts, terms, and theories used in the study of human culture and apply them to the ancient Mesoamerican way of life.
2. Demonstrate basic knowledge of cultural evolution as applied to the origin, development, and collapse of the ancient societies of Mesoamerica.

3. Identify the contribution of ancient Mesoamerican cultural traditions to contemporary societies today.

Objectives:

At the conclusion of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Illustrate and evaluate the foundational artistic, architectural, political, and philosophical achievements of the indigenous societies of Mesoamerica.
2. Discuss the complex relationships between the environment and society formation in Mesoamerica.
3. Construct a general chronology and recognize patterns of urban development throughout Mesoamerica.
4. Describe and analyze the interactions among diverse cultures and societies in ancient Mesoamerica.
5. Identify and assess the extent of cultural transformations and continuities of Mesoamerican societies with the advent of the Spanish invasion.

Topics and Scope:

- I. Anthropological approaches to the study of human culture using multiple lines of evidences
 - A. Material Culture
 - B. Ethnohistoric
 - C. Historic
 - D. Linguistic
 - E. Bioarchaeological
- II. Anthropological concepts of culture areas, fluctuating borders and social geography of Mesoamerica
- III. Archaeological evidences of hunters and gatherers: the first human settlers in Mesoamerica
- IV. Agriculture and food: the impact of changing subsistence practices on the development of village life in Mesoamerica
- V. Pan Mesoamerican Culture: shared cultural traits which may include subsistence practices, technologies such as calendar and writing systems, solar observation, ball court and deities and ritual practices
- VI. Archaeological evidences of "The Preclassic Period": the foundations of urbanization and centralized power, including the Olmec influence
- VII. "The Classic Period": city formation, stratified society, and the rise of the state, utilizing, for example, archaeological sites with monumental architecture and material culture such as:
 - A. Teotihuacan
 - B. Monte Alban
 - C. Tajin
 - D. Mayan City States
- VIII. "The Post-Classic Period": empires and conquest, including the Toltecs, Maya Kingdoms, Mexica and other Aztec groups
- IX. Spanish contact and indigenous entanglements with the resulting syncretism of cultural traditions
- X. Mesoamerican legacies: influences, contributions, and symbols in the contemporary cultures of Mexico, Central America and the United States

Assignment:

1. Students will read and study assignments in textbooks for each class meeting, approximately 30 pages per week.
2. Students will write one or more papers which may include book and article response papers,

summaries and/or critical-thought essays for a total of 1250-1500 words.

3. Students will complete 2-4 exams during the semester, which may include multiple choice questions, true/false, completion, identification, map, short answer and essay questions.

4. Optional assignments may include other types of homework, projects, presentations, attendance, and in-class participation.

Methods of Evaluation/Basis of Grade:

Writing: Assessment tools that demonstrate writing skills and/or require students to select, organize and explain ideas in writing.

Written homework, Reading reports, Term papers

Writing
20 - 40%

Problem Solving: Assessment tools, other than exams, that demonstrate competence in computational or non-computational problem solving skills.

None

Problem solving
0 - 0%

Skill Demonstrations: All skill-based and physical demonstrations used for assessment purposes including skill performance exams.

None

Skill Demonstrations
0 - 0%

Exams: All forms of formal testing, other than skill performance exams.

Quizzes and exams

Exams
50 - 75%

Other: Includes any assessment tools that do not logically fit into the above categories.

Other types of homework, projects, presentations, attendance, and in-class participation

Other Category
5 - 20%

Representative Textbooks and Materials:

The Ancient Maya. Sharer, Robert and Traxler, Loa P. Stanford University Press, Palo Alto. 2006 (classic)

Ancient Mexico and Central America. 3rd Edition. Evans, Susan Toby. Thames and Hudson, New York. 2013 (classic)

In the Maw of the Earth Monster: Mesoamerican Ritual Cave Use. Brady, James E. and Prufer, Keith M, University of Texas Press. 2005 (classic)

Indigenous Dispossession. Housing and Maya Indebtedness in México. Castellanos, Bianet. Stanford University Press. 2020

The Maya. Coe, Michael. Thames and Hudson, New York. 2015 (classic)

Predictable Pleasures. Food and the Pursuit of Balance in Rural Yucatan. Wynne, Lauren A. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. 2020

Water and Ritual: The Rise and Fall of Classic Maya Rulers. The Linda Schele Series in Maya and Pre-Columbian Studies. Lucero, L. J. University of Texas Press. 2006 (classic)