

ARKY 327.01: MAYAN ARCHAEOLOGY AND POPULAR CULTURE

Instructor: Alejandra Alonso-Olvera

E-Mail: ale.alonso.olvera@gmail.com / aalonso@ucalgary.ca

Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description

This course evaluates the logical flaws in pseudoscientific explanations of archaeological topics, and examines popular and fantastic interpretations of archaeological remains presented in the press and popular media/culture. A series of topics in this class show how Mayan archaeology is presented as unsubstantiated, occult, and speculative science about the prehistoric past. On the other hand, hidden texts, cave paintings, the aliens, the recording of time, destruction and violence, and “mysterious” hieroglyphic writing are part of the popular legends that fascinate people and motivate them to visit museums, archaeological sites, and also to buy archaeology books, giving archaeology a prominent place in our society and making it accessible to the general public. Inaptly the press and popular media exploit people’s interest to twist discoveries made by scientific archaeology. This course provides perspective on unsubstantiated claims made about the ancient Maya people and how these views are disconnected from the modern Maya people. A critical view of the popular culture and archaeology would hone critical thinking and logical reasoning, which are at the core of natural and social sciences. Students will recognize the importance of understanding the context of controversies concerning the archaeological past, and how real archaeology change misconceptions, idealizations, romantic ideas and fantasies related to historical events through scientific methods. Find out what Maya archaeology really is!

Objectives of the Course

The student of this course will have a good:

1. Understanding of legends, myths, and frauds around the archaeological Maya.
2. Understanding of the role that popular media has in disseminating false ideas of what Maya people and what Maya archaeology is.
3. Discerning what constitutes scientific research in archaeology and pseudoscientific archaeology
4. Practice to improve critical thinking to differentiate substantiated from unsubstantiated archaeological facts.
5. Understanding of why archaeological knowledge is popular and how this is related to cultural politics and economic agendas.

Required Readings

Traci Ardren. 2006. Mending the past: Ix Chel and The Invention of a Modern Pop Goddess. *Antiquity* 80:25-37

Carlson, John. 1999. Pilgrimage and the Equinox "Serpent of Light and Shadow" Phenomenon at the Castillo, Chichén Itzá, Yucatan. *Archaeoastronomy* 14(1).

Díaz Andreu Margarita. 2013. Ethics and Archaeological Tourism in Latin America. *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* (17):225-244.

Freidel, David. 2007. Betraying the Maya Who Does the Violence of Apocalypso Really Hurt? *Archaeology*. Archaeological Institute of America. March April.

Hervik, Peter. 1999. Mysterious Maya of National Geographic. *Journal of Latin American Anthropology* 41(1):166-97.

Hoopes, John. 2011. New Age Sympathies and Scholarly Complicities: The History and Promotion of 2012 Mythology. *Archaeoastronomy* Vol. XXIV: 183-205.

Lacadena, Alfonso. 2007. Apocalypso y la imagen violenta de los mayas. *Revista Española de Antropología Americana*. Vol. 37(2): 235-250

McDaniel, Sean 2007. The Lure of Múo. A Victorian Archaeologist's Obsession With a Fictitious Maya Queen. *Archaeology*. January February. Archaeological Institute of America.

Pi-Sunyer, Oriol, and R. Brooke Thomas. 2015. Tourism and the Transformation of Daily Life Along the Riviera Maya. *Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology*. 20(1): 87–109.

Schele, Linda and David Freidel. 1990. *A Forest of Kings: The Untold Story of the Ancient Maya*. William Morrow and Co.

Tripp Evans, 2004. *Romancing the Maya: Mexican Antiquity in the American Imagination, 1820-1915*. University of Texas Press. Kindle edition.

Assignments and Evaluation

- 2 critical analyses (20%) A maximum of 800 word (Arial font, 12, 1.5 space, margins 2.5 cm top-bottom and 3 cm left-right) critique of a pseudo archaeology stories found in press newspaper article, *magazines*, *films*; to be submitted before June 5th. Include in a separate page the article or text you are using for your critique (include date, name of author and source).

Submit thorough email to the instructor.

- 1 Questionnaire (30%). This contains questions about readings and videos presented in class. The questionnaire is to be completed two weeks after the travel. The questionnaire will be posted at the end of the travel, and students will submit the answers by June 2nd through email to the instructor.
- Class discussions. (15%). Attending to all the sessions and participating in a discussion of readings and films.
- Final essay (35%). To be submitted online on one topic previously discussed with the instructor.

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

Please note: If your class is held in the evening, the Registrar's Office will make every attempt to schedule the final exam during the evening; however, there is NO guarantee that the exam will NOT be scheduled during the day.

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late.

Grading System

	Grading Scale
A+	96-100
A	90-95.99
A -	85-89.99
B+	80-84.99
B	75-79.99
B-	70-74.99
C+	65-69.99
C	60-64.99
C-	55-59.99
D+	53-54.99
D	50-52.99
F	0-49

Schedule of Lectures, Films, and Readings

CLASS DATES	SUBJECT OR EVENT	READINGS
May 2	Romancing the Maya. Early perceptions of the Maya by travelers and explorers in the Maya world.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Romancing the Maya. Mexican Antiquity in the American Imagination. 1820-1915. Chapter 1. The Second Discovery of America and Chapter 5. Bordering on the Magnificent: Augustus and Alice Le Plongeon in the Kingdom of M'oo . • McDaniel, Sean 2007, The Lure of M'oo. A Victorian Archaeologist's Obsession with a Fictitious Maya Queen. Archaeology. January February. Archaeological Institute of America.
May 3	The impact of mass media in the popular constructions of the "ancient Maya" and the modern Maya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hervik, Peter. 1997. Mysterious Maya of National Geographic. Journal of Latin American Anthropology 41(1):166-97. • Traci Ardren.2006. Mending the past: Ix Chel and The Invention of a Modern Pop Goddess. Antiquity 80:25-37
May 4	<p>The impact of contemporary film in the portrayal of ancient Maya</p> <p>Video: Apocalypto (popcorn time!)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freidel, David. 2007. Betraying the Maya Who Does the Violence of Apocalypto Really Hurt? Archaeology. Archaeological Institute of America. March April. • Lacadena, Alfonso. 2007. Apocalypto y la imagen violenta de los mayas. Revista Española de Antropología Americana. Vol. 37(2): 235-250
May 5	Archaeology and Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Díaz Andreu Margarita. 2013. Ethics and Archaeological Tourism in Latin America. International Journal of Historical Archaeology 17:225-244. • Carlson, John. 1999. Pilgrimage and the Equinox "Serpent of Light and Shadow" Phenomenon at the Castillo, Chichén Itzá, Yucatan. Archaeoastronomy 14(1). • Pi-Sunyer, Oriol, and R. Brooke Thomas. 2015. Tourism and the Transformation of Daily Life Along the Riviera Maya. Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology. 20(1): 87-109. • Ehrentraut, Adolf W. 1996. Maya Ruins, Cultural Tourism and the Contested Symbolism of Collective Identities. Culture XVI(1).
May 14 In the field	2012 and the myths about the end of the world predicted by the Maya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hoopes, John. 2011. New Age Sympathies and Scholarly Complicities: The History and Promotion of 2012 Mythology. Archaeoastronomy Vol. XXIV: 183-205 • Lecture by KRT in the field

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

As there are no formal meetings for this course, students are encouraged to communicate with the instructor via email to either set up appointments as needed, or to ask clarifications.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/accommodations/policy>

Students needing an Accommodation because of a Disability or medical condition should communicate this need to Student Accessibility Services in accordance with the Procedure for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Students needing an Accommodation based on a Protected Ground other than Disability, should communicate this need, preferably in writing, to the instructor of this course, Pascale Sicotte.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensuring that a degree from the University of Calgary is a strong signal of each student's individual academic achievements. As a result, the University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. Non-academic integrity also constitutes an important component of this program.

For detailed information on what constitutes academic and non-academic misconduct, please refer to the following link: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k-2-1.html>

All suspected cases of academic and non-academic misconduct will be investigated following procedures outlined in the University Calendar. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behavior or appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from your instructor or from other institutional resources.

Where there is a criminal act involved in plagiarism, cheating or other academic misconduct, e.g., theft (taking another student's paper from their possession, or from the possession of a faculty member without permission), breaking and entering (forcibly entering an office to gain access to papers, grades or records), forgery, personation and conspiracy (impersonating another student by agreement and writing their paper) and other such offences under the Criminal Code of Canada, the University may take legal advice on the appropriate response and, where appropriate, refer the matter to the police, in addition to or in substitution for any action taken under these regulations by the University

TEACHING EVALUATIONS / USRI (Universal Student Ratings of Instruction)

At the University of Calgary, feedback provided by students through the Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI) survey provides valuable information to help with

evaluating instruction, enhancing learning and teaching, and selecting courses. **Your responses make a difference, please participate!** Website: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/usri/>

Writing Across the Curriculum

Writing skills are not exclusive to English courses and, in fact, should cross all disciplines. The University supports the belief that throughout their University careers, students should be taught how to write well so that when they graduate their writing abilities will be far above the minimal standards required at entrance. Consistent with this belief, students are expected to do a substantial amount of writing in their University courses and, where appropriate, members of faculty can and should use writing and the grading thereof as a factor in the evaluation of student work. The services provided by the Writing Support, part of the Student Success Centre, can be utilized by all undergraduate and graduate students who feel they require further assistance

Emergency Evacuation Assembly Points: In the event of an emergency that requires evacuation, please refer to the following link to become familiar with the assembly points for the class: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act: Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

The University of Calgary is committed to protecting the privacy of individuals who work and study at the University or who otherwise interact with the University in accordance with the standards set out in the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. Please refer to the following link for detailed information:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/legalservices/foip>

The Department of Anthropology and Archaeology's FOIP (Freedom of Information and Privacy) policy requires all reports/examinations to be returned to students during class time or the instructor's office hours. Any term work not picked up will be placed in the Anthropology and Archaeology Office (ES620) for distribution. Any student not wishing to have their work placed in the office must make alternative arrangements with the course instructor early in the term.

Safewalk Information: Campus Security, in partnership with the Students' Union, provides the Safewalk service, 24 hours a day to any location on Campus including the LRT, parking lots, bus zones and University residences. Contact Campus Security at (403) 220-5333 or use a help phone, and Safewalkers or a Campus Security Officer will accompany you to your campus destination.

Faculty of Arts Program Advising and Student Information Resources: Have a question, but not sure where to start? Arts Students' Centre

The Faculty of Arts Students' Centre is the overall headquarters for undergraduate programs in the Faculty of Arts. The key objective of this office is to connect students with whatever academic assistance that they require.

In addition to housing the Associate Dean, Undergraduate Programs and Student Affairs and the Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning, the Arts Students' Centre is the specific home to:

- program advising
- the Faculty's Co-operative Education Program
- the Arts and Science Honours Academy
- the Faculty's Interdisciplinary Programs
- a Student Help Desk

Location: Social Sciences Room 102

Phone: 403.220.3580

Email: ascarts@ucalgary.ca

Website: arts.ucalgary.ca/undergraduate/

For registration (add/drop/swap), paying fees and assistance with your Student Centre, contact Enrolment Services at (403) 210-ROCK [7625] or visit them at the MacKimmie Library Block.

Contacts for Students Union Representatives for the Faculty of Arts:

arts1@su.ucalgary.ca

arts2@su.ucalgary.ca

arts3@su.ucalgary.ca

arts4@su.ucalgary.ca

Ombudsman's office: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ombuds/>