

# Selected Topics in Art and Architecture

## The Ancient Maya: Art, history, historiography

ARTH 421 CRN 8733

Fridays 1:35 - 4:25, Arts W-220

James Terry

Office hours: Monday Arts W-240 1:00 – 2:00

### Course description

This course will focus on the arts and architecture of the ancient Maya, with an emphasis on developments during the "Classic" period in the first millennium CE. We will examine sculpture, painting, ceramics, architecture and the hieroglyphic writing system, and attempt to place these arts in their original social, political, and ideological contexts. Central to our approach will be the interpretive paradigms that have been used to construct recreations of those contexts. As such, we will explore—and critique—the archaeological, art historical, epigraphic, and ethnographic-ethnohistorical approaches that have been used to assign meaning to ancient Maya art.

### Grading

#### Grading weights

Participation: 15%

Reading Responses: 30%

Presentation: 15%

Final Paper: 40%

**Class participation:** Students are expected to read all assigned readings before class and to contribute to class discussions.

**Reading responses:** Each student will be responsible for writing, and submitting to the course web site, brief responses (Three to four paragraphs of response, plus a set of questions/discussion points suggested by the reading) to 10 readings, on 10 different weeks. These will be due on WebCT by midnight the night before class.

**Presentation:** This will be a formal presentation during which the student will present research in progress for the final paper. Though the paper need not be finished by the time of the presentation, the presentation should demonstrate a paper that is developed well beyond the outline stage, with a cogent thesis, suitable supporting material, and a conclusion. Each presentation should be around 8 minutes long, and will be followed by discussion, including question and answer.

**Final paper:** This will be a research paper addressing any issue or theme covered in the course.

## Course Readings

Three required and two recommended books are available at the bookstore. Other readings will be posted to the course website.

### Course readings

#### Required Books

Miller, Mary. *Maya Art and Architecture*, London and New York: Thames and Hudson (1999).

Grube, Nikolai and Simon Martin. *Chronicle of the Maya Kings and Queens: Deciphering the Dynasties of the Ancient Maya*. London: Thames and Hudson (2000).

Proskouriakoff, Tatiana. *An Album of Maya Architecture*. New York: Dover Publications (2003).

#### Recommended books

Schele, Linda, and Mary Miller. *The Blood of Kings: Dynasty and Ritual in Maya Art*. New York: George Braziller (1992).

Schele, Linda, and Peter Mathews. *The Code of Kings: The Language of Seven Sacred Maya Temples and Tombs*. New York: Touchstone (1998)

#### Reading pack

There is no course pack to purchase. Other readings will be posted as PDFs to the course website or will be available through McGill library journal article databases.

## Schedule

### Week 1 September 5

#### Intro; Contexts I

Preview: Art, anthropology, and the Maya

### Week 2 September 12

#### Contexts II

Read: Gordon Willey, "Mesoamerican Art and Iconography and the Integrity of the Mesoamerican Ideological System" [WebCT]

George Kubler, "Science and Humanism among Americanists" [WebCT]

Schele and Miller, "The Modern Invention of the Ancient Maya" [WebCT]

John L. Stephens, from *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatan* [WebCT]

Preview: The Maya and art history

### Week 3 September 19

## **Maya Art**

Read: Kubler, "The Maya Tradition: Painting and Sculpture" [WebCT]  
Miller, "Early Classic Sculpture" from *Maya Art and Architecture*  
Proskouriakoff, *An Album of Maya Architecture*

Preview: Maya architecture

## **Week 4 September 26**

### **Maya art and its physical contexts**

Miller, "Maya Architecture" from *Maya art and Architecture*  
Houston. "Symbolic Sweatbaths of the Maya: Architectural  
Meaning in the  
Cross Group at Palenque." [ONLINE]  
Fash, "Dynastic Architectural Programs: Intention and Design in  
Classic Maya  
Buildings at Copan and Other Sites." [ONLINE]  
Proskouriakoff, *An Album of Maya Architecture*

Preview: Hieroglyphic workshop: Maya writing and calendrics

## **Week 5 October 3**

### **Maya writing and Maya histories**

Read: Kettunen and Helmke, from *Introduction to Maya Hieroglyphs* [ONLINE]  
Proskouriakoff, "Historical implications of a pattern of dates at Piedras Negras"  
[ONLINE]  
Stuart, "Hieroglyphs and history at Copan" [WebCT]  
Martin and Grube, "Piedras Negras"

Preview: Ideology

## **Week 6 October 10**

### **Ideology: Political**

Read: Demarest, "Ideology in ancient maya cultural evolution" [WebCT]  
Marcus, from *Mesoamerican Writing systems*, 3-16. [WebCT]  
Martin and Grube, "Introduction," 14-21  
Houston and Stuart, "Of Gods, Glyphs, and Kings" [ONLINE]  
Freidel and Schele, "Kingship in Late Preclassic lowlands" [ONLINE]

Preview: Mesoamerican religion and shamanism

## **Week 7 October 17**

### **Ideology: Religious**

Read: Miller and Martin, "The Divine Models of Courtly Culture"  
[WebCT]  
Houston and Stuart. "Of Gods, Glyphs, and Kings: Divinity and  
Rulership Among  
the Classic Maya." [ONLINE]  
Freidel, Schele and Parker. "The Hearth and the Tree: Maya

Creation," from  
*Maya Cosmos*. [WebCT; reserve]

### **Week 8 October 24**

#### **Gender**

Read: Hewitt, "What's In a Name?" [ONLINE]  
Joyce, from *Gender and Power in Prehispanic Mesoamerica*.  
[WebCT; reserve]  
Stockett, "On the Importance of Difference: Re-envisioning Sex  
and Gender in  
Ancient Mesoamerica" [ONLINE]  
MacAnany and Plank, "Perspectives on actors, gender roles, and architecture at  
Classic Maya courts and households" [WebCT; reserve]

### **Week 9 October 31**

#### **Maya bodies on display**

Read: Miller and Houston, "The Classic Maya Ballgame and Its Architectural Setting"  
[WebCT]  
Looper, "Dance Performance at Quiriguá" [WebCT]  
Inomata, "Plazas, performers, and spectators: Political theaters of the Classic  
Maya." [ONLINE]  
Bachand, Joyce and Hendon, "Bodies Moving in Space" [ONLINE]

### **Week 10 November 7**

#### **Art history**

Read: Herring, "A Borderland Colloquy" [ONLINE]  
Herring, from *Art and Writing in the Maya Cities* [WebCT; reserve]

### **Week 11 November 14**

#### **Maya art on display**

Read: Schele and Miller, "Kingship and the Maya Cosmos" [WebCT; reserve]  
Klein, "Mayamania: 'The Blood of Kings' in Retrospect [ONLINE]  
Schele and Miller. Letter to the Editor. [ONLINE]  
Miller and Martin, "Life at the Maya court"; Forwards, Introduction [WebCT;  
reserve]  
Fields and Reents-Budet, "Preface," "Introduction" [WebCT; reserve]

### **Week 12 November 21**

#### **Maya art in the market; Presentations**

Read: Coggins, "Illicit traffic in Pre-Columbian Antiquities" [ONLINE]  
Coe, "From Huaquero to Connoisseur" [WebCT]  
Taylor, "Problems in the Study of Narrative Scenes on Classic Maya Vases"  
[WebCT]

## **Presentations I**

**Week 13 November 28**

## **Presentations II**

**Papers Due: Friday December 5**, by 4:00 PM

Late papers will be graded down 1/3 of a letter grade per day that they are late.

## **Readings**

Readings will be available online. Those tagged [ONLINE] will be found in online journal databases such as JSTOR, through the McGill library catalogue journal search function. Readings tagged [WebCT] will be available as PDFs on the course web site. A number of books will be placed on reserve; you should consult them for images, especially for week 11.

### **2: Contexts II**

Willey, Gordon R. "Mesoamerican Art and Iconography and the Integrity of the Mesoamerican Ideological System." In *The Iconography of Middle American*

*Sculpture*, 153-162. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1973. [WebCT]

Kubler, George. "Science and Humanism among Americanists." In *The Iconography of Middle American Sculpture*, 163-167. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1973. [WebCT]

Schele, Linda, and Mary Miller. *The Blood of Kings: Dynasty and Ritual in Maya Art*. New York: George Braziller, 1986, pp. 18-32. [WebCT]

John L. Stephens, from *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatan* [WebCT]

### **3: Maya Art**

Kubler, George. "The Maya Tradition: Painting and Sculpture." *The Art and Architecture of Ancient America: The Mexican, Maya, and Andean Peoples*. New York: Penguin Books, 1984, pp. 247-285. [WebCT]

Miller, Mary. "Early Classic Sculpture." *Maya Art and Architecture*. London; New York: Thames & Hudson, 1999, pp. 88-103.

### **4: Maya art and its physical contexts**

Miller, Mary Ellen. "Maya architecture." In *Maya Art and Architecture*. London; New

York: Thames & Hudson, 1999, pp. 22-71.

Houston, Stephen. "Symbolic Sweatbaths of the Maya: Architectural

Meaning in the  
Cross Group at Palenque." *Latin American Antiquity* 7:132-151  
(1996).

[ONLINE]

Fash, William. "Dynastic Architectural Programs: Intention and Design  
in Classic Maya

Buildings at Copan and Other Sites." In *Function and Meaning in  
Classic Maya*

*Architecture*, ed. Stephen Houston, pp. 223-270. Washington,  
D.C.: Dumbarton

Oaks, 1998. [ONLINE:

[http://www.doaks.org/publications/doaks\\_online\\_publications/HOFUctn.html](http://www.doaks.org/publications/doaks_online_publications/HOFUctn.html)]

Proskouriakoff, Tatiana. *An Album of Maya Architecture*. Norman: University of  
Oklahoma Press, 1963.

### **5: Maya writing and Maya histories**

Kettunen, Hari and Christophe Helmke. *Introduction to Maya Hieroglyphs*. Leiden:  
Leiden University, 2005, pp. 5-21. [ONLINE:

<http://www.mesoweb.com/resources/handbook/index.html>]

Tatiana Proskouriakoff. "Historical Implications of a Pattern of Dates at Piedras  
Negras,

Guatemala." *American Antiquity*, Vol. 25, No. 4. (Apr., 1960), pp.  
454-475.

[ONLINE]

David Stuart. "Hieroglyphs and Archaeology at Copan." *Ancient  
Mesoamerica* 3:169-184

(1992). [WebCT]

Martin, Simon, and Nikolai Grube. "Piedras Negras." In *Chronicle of the Maya  
Kings*

*and Queens*. London: Thames and Hudson, 2000, pp. 154-175.

### **6: Ideology: Political**

Arthur Demarest. "Ideology in Ancient Maya Cultural Evolution: The  
Dynamics of

Galactic Polities." *Ideology and Pre-Columbian Civilizations*, ed.  
A. Demarest

and G. Conrad, pp.135-58. Santa Fe, N.M.: School of American  
Research Press

(1992). [WebCT]

Joyce Marcus. *Mesoamerican Writing Systems: Propaganda, Myth and  
History in Four*

*Ancient Civilizations*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press  
(1992), pp. 3-16.

[WebCT]

Martin, Simon, and Nikolai Grube, "Introduction." In *Chronicle of the Maya Kings*

and

- Queens*. London: Thames and Hudson, 2000, pp. 14-21.
- Houston, Stephen, and David Stuart. "Of Gods, Glyphs and Kings: Divinity and Rulership among the Classic Maya." *Antiquity* 70, no. 268 (1996): 289-312. [ONLINE]
- Freidel, David A., and Linda Schele. "Kingship in the Late Preclassic Maya Lowlands: The Instruments and Places of Ritual Power." *American Anthropologist* 90, no. 3 (1988): 547-567. [ONLINE]

### **7: Ideology: Religious**

- Miller, Mary and Simon Martin. "The Divine Models of Courtly Culture," *Courtly Art of the Ancient Maya* (2004), pp. 50-91. [WebCT; reserve]
- Houston, Stephen and David Stuart. "Of Gods, Glyphs, and Kings: Divinity and Rulership Among the Classic Maya." *Antiquity* 70: 289-312 (1996). [ONLINE]
- Freidel, David, Linda Schele and Joy Parker. "The Hearth and the Tree: Maya Creation," *Maya Cosmos: Three Thousand Years on the Shaman's Path*, New York: W. Morrow (1993), pp. 59-122. [WebCT; reserve]

### **8: Gender**

- E. Hewitt. "What's In a Name?: Gender, Power, and Classic Maya Women Rulers." *Ancient Mesoamerica* 10: 251-62 (1999). [ONLINE]
- Joyce, Rosemary. *Gender and Power in Prehispanic Mesoamerica*. Austin: University of Texas Press (2001), pp.1-18. Recommended: 54-89, 176-200. [WebCT; on reserve]
- Stockett, Miranda. "On the Importance of Difference: Re-envisioning Sex and Gender in Ancient Mesoamerica," *World Archaeology* 37(4):566-578 (2005). [ONLINE]
- MacAnany, Patricia and Shannon Plank. "Perspectives on actors, gender roles, and architecture at Classic Maya courts and households" In *Royal Courts of the Ancient Maya: 1. Theory, Comparison, and Synthesis*. Takeshi Inomata and Stephen D. Houston, eds. Boulder: Westview Press, 2001, pp. 84-129. [WebCT]

### **9: Maya bodies on display**

- Miller, Mary Ellen, and Stephen D. Houston. "The Classic Maya Ballgame and Its Architectural Setting: A Study of Relations Between Text and Image." *Res* 14 (1987): 46-65. [WebCT]
- Looper, Matthew G. "Dance Performance at Quiriguá." In *Landscape and Power in Ancient Mesoamerica*, ed. Rex Koontz, Kathryn Reese-Taylor and Annabeth Headrick, 113-135. Boulder: Westview Press, 2001. [WebCT; reserve]
- Inomata, Takeshi. "Plazas, performers, and spectators: Political theaters of the Classic Maya." *Current Anthropology* 47, no. 5 (October 2006): 805-842. [ONLINE]
- Bachand, Holly, Rosemary A. Joyce, and Julia A. Hendon. "Bodies Moving in Space: Ancient Mesoamerican Human Sculpture and Embodiment." *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 13, no. 2 (2003): 238-47. [ONLINE]

### **10: Art history**

- Herring, Adam. "A Borderland Colloquy: Altar Q, Copán, Honduras." *The Art Bulletin* 87, no. 2 (2005): 194-229 [ONLINE]
- Herring, Adam. *Art and Writing in the Maya Cities*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp. 70-98. [WebCT]

### **11: Maya art on display**

- Schele, Linda, and Mary Miller. *The Blood of Kings: Dynasty and Ritual in Maya Art*. New York: George Braziller, 1986, pp. 301-316. [WebCT; reserve]
- Klein, Cecilia. "Mayamania: 'The Blood of Kings' in Retrospect", *Art Journal*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (Spring 1988), pp. 42-46. [ONLINE]
- Schele, Linda and Mary Ellen Miller. Letter to the Editor. *Art Journal*, Vol. 47, No. 3(Autumn, 1988), pp. 253-253. [ONLINE]
- Miller, Mary, and Simon Martin. *Courtly Art of the Ancient Maya*, San Francisco: Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 2004, pp. 9-49. [WebCT; reserve]
- Fields, Virginia M., and Dorie Reents-Budet. *Lords of Creation: The origins of sacred Maya kingship*. Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2005, pp. 16-27. [WebCT; Reserve]

### **12: Maya Art in the Market**

- Coggins, Clemency, "Illicit traffic in Pre-Columbian Antiquities" *Art Journal* 29:1 (1969: Fall), p. 94-98. [ONLINE]
- Coe, Michael. "From Huaquero to Connoisseur: The early market in Pre-Columbian art." In *Collecting the Pre-Columbian Past*, ed. Elizabeth Hill Boone, 271-290. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1993. [WebCT]
- Taylor, Dicey. "Problems in the Study of Narrative Scenes on Classic Maya Vases." In *Falsifications and Misreconstructions of Pre-Columbian Art; a Conference at Dumbarton Oaks October 14th and 15th, 1978*, ed. Elizabeth P. Benson, 107-124. Washington D. C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1982. [WebCT]