

MESOAMERICAN WRITING SYSTEMS

ARKY 411 - Winter 2013
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Office hours: Mon 1-3

Archaeologists derive information about past cultures using a variety of evidential materials, including artifacts, architecture, and texts. This class will explore the range of information available using textual materials from pre-Columbian and early Colonial Mesoamerica. Mesoamerica comprises the cultural regions of central, southern, and eastern Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador and Honduras (and Nicaragua for a few of us); it includes such culture groups as the Olmec, Maya, Zapotec, Mixtec, Cholulteca, and Aztec. Over a period of at least 2000 years these groups devised a number of writing systems—some related and some unique.

ARKY 411 will introduce students to linguistic elements of the Mesoamerican culture area and some fundamentals behind the role of "writing" in cultural complexity. Following this introduction, students will study the writing systems of the Maya, Teotihuacan, Zapotec, Mixtec, and Aztec (and probably some others sprinkled in). The goal of this survey is to instruct on the value of epigraphic analysis, the range of information available through textual sources, and the steps followed in formulating epigraphic interpretations.

The course will include readings by prominent scholars involved in text-aided archaeology in Mesoamerica, and experiential learning of the methodologies involved in decipherment and interpretation. The University of Calgary has a distinguished history in the study of Mesoamerican writing systems through decades of research by scholars such as David Kelley and Peter Mathews. The class will include guest lectures by Karen Bassie, a prominent scholar in Maya studies.

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:

As this course blends academic study of the literature on writing systems as well as experiential learning, grades will be based on examinations, practical quizzes, and a research paper, as follows: midterm exam (20 pts), final exam (20 pts), Maya quiz (10 pts), Mixtec quiz (10 pts), research paper (40 pts). Exams will be take-home essays based on the readings.

Individual grades will be based on total points received:

97-100 = A+	87-89 = B+	77-79 = C+	67-69 = D+
93-96 = A	83-86 = B	73-76 = C	60-66 = D
90-92 = A-	80-82 = B-	70-72 = C-	Less than 60 points = F

RESEARCH PAPERS

A research paper (10-12 pages) is required for the class. Paper topics may include more detailed investigations of particular writing systems, original interpretations of texts, or critical evaluations of specific themes; topics should be cleared with the professor in advance. Referencing format **must** follow that of the journal *Ancient Mesoamerica*.

IMPORTANT: Plagiarism, defined as copying more than 5 words in succession or using information without adequate citation (i.e., reference and page number) of the original source, is a violation of academic integrity. Research papers that plagiarize will receive a 0 score, and the student will be turned in to the Dean of Arts (see page 48 of the U of Calgary Calendar).

READINGS AND TEXTS

Mesolore, by Liza Bakewell and Byron Hamann (available on line)

There will also be a selection of articles that will be available on-line. Note that many of these are available on-line in the *Mesolore* library:

COURSE OUTLINE:

Week 1 (1/8-11) - Introduction to Mesoamerican writing systems

Classwork: Slide presentation on Mesoamerican culture history with emphasis on writing systems

Week 2 (1/14-18) - Linguistics and Epigraphic Theory

Week 3 (1/21-1/25) - Epi-Olmec and Zapotec writing

Week 4 (1/28-2/1) - Introduction to Maya writing

Week 5 (2/4-8) - How to read Maya writing

Week 6 (2/11-15) - Describing the Natural World

Week 7 (2/18-22) - Reading Week, no classes

Week 8 (2/25-3/1) - Describing the Supernatural

Classwork: Maya QUIZ and distribute MIDTERM EXAM

Week 9 (3/4-8) - Teotihuacan

Week 10 (3/11-15) - Introduction to Mixtec Codices

Week 11 (3/18-22) - How to Read Mixtec Codices

Week 12 (3/25-29) - Interpreting Mixtec Codices
Classwork: Mixtec Quiz

Week 13 (4/1-5) - Colonial Codices

Week 14 (4/8-12) - Mesoamerican Writing and Historical Agency

Week 15 (4/15-16) - Class presentations

ADDITIONAL CONTENT

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, instructors can and may use writing and the grading thereof as a factor in the evaluation of student work. The services provided by the Writing Centre in the Effective Writing Office can be utilized by all undergraduate and graduate students who feel they require further assistance.

Academic Accommodation Policy

The purpose of academic accommodation is to provide students with documented disabilities equal opportunity to master the essentials of a post-secondary education. Students with disabilities at the University of Calgary have met all admission requirements but may have done so with the use of accommodations. Similarly, they are expected to meet all academic and non-academic requirements. Adaptive technology and other academic accommodations do not relieve students of their responsibility to develop the essential skills and abilities expected of all students.

Please refer to the following web link for detailed information:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/drc/node/71>

Disability Resource Centre Accommodations

It is the responsibility of the student to request academic accommodations. If you are a student with a documented disability who may require academic accommodation and have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre, please contact their office at (403) 220-8237.

Students who have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre are not eligible for formal academic accommodation. Students are also required to discuss their needs with the instructor no later than fourteen (14) days after the start of the course.

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>

Academic Misconduct

Academic dishonesty is an unacceptable activity at the University of Calgary and students are **strongly advised** to read the Student Misconduct section of the University Calendar. Quite often, students are unaware of what constitutes academic dishonesty or plagiarism.

The most common are:

- 1) Presenting another student's work as your own
- 2) Presenting an author's work or ideas as you own without proper referencing
- 3) Using work completed for another course

This activity will not be tolerated and students conducting themselves in this manner will be dealt with according to the procedures outlined in the University Calendar.

For detailed information on what constitutes academic misconduct, please refer to the following link:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k-2-1.html>

Plagiarism

Plagiarism involves submitting or presenting work as if it were the student's own work when it is not. Any ideas or materials taken from another source written, electronic, or oral must be fully and formally acknowledged. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

- (a) The work submitted or presented was done, in whole or in part, by an individual other than the one submitting or presenting the work (this includes having another impersonate the student or otherwise substituting the work of another for one's own in an examination or test),
- (b) Parts of the work are taken from another source without reference to the original author,
- (c) The whole work (e.g., an essay) is copied from another source, and/or,
- (d) A student submits or presents work in one course which has also been submitted in another course (although it may be completely original with that student) without the knowledge of or prior agreement of the instructor involved.

While it is recognized that scholarly work often involves reference to the ideas, data and conclusions of other scholars, intellectual honesty requires that such references be explicitly and clearly noted. Plagiarism is an extremely serious academic offence. It is recognized that clause (d) does not prevent a graduate student incorporating work previously done by him or her in a thesis or dissertation.

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>

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? The new Faculty of Arts Program Information Centre (PIC) is your information resource for everything in Arts! Drop in at SS102, call us at 403-220-3580 or email us at artsads@ucalgary.ca. You can also visit the Faculty of Arts website at <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/undergraduate> which has detailed information on common academic concerns.
- For program planning and advice, contact the Student Success Centre (403) 220-5881 or visit them in their new space on the 3rd Floor of the Taylor Family Digital Library.
- 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.

Contact Information for Student and Faculty Representation

Student Union Vice President - Academic

Phone: (403) 220-3911

Email: suvpaca@ucalgary.ca

Student Union Faculty Representatives

Sarah Damberger

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Student Ombudsman's Office

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/>

Students Union Representatives for the Faculty of Arts

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