

# LAH 3424: Aztecs, Incas and Mayas: The Americas Before 1492

Fall Term, 2006

TR: 1505-1620

Building 51/1101

Professor J. Michael Francis

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1. This course is an introduction to the rich history of Mesoamerica and the Andes prior to 1492. Special attention will be given to the development of Maya, Aztec and Inca civilizations; in particular, we will examine the rise and fall of the Classic Maya, as well as the remarkable and rapid expansion of the Aztec and Inca empires. We will also focus on other peoples and cultures, such as Classic Teotihuacan, the Olmecs and Toltecs in Mesoamerica, and the Chimú, Wari, and Mochica of the Andes. Students will be introduced to some of the methodological problems that face scholars who attempt to reconstruct the pre-columbian history of the Americas. Through a careful examination of archaeological and historical evidence, we will examine political, religious and economic changes that occurred in the New World before the arrival of Europeans.

## **Final grades will be based on the following:**

15% Discussion Sessions and Class Participation

20% Paper One

20% Paper Two

20% Paper Three

25% Final Exam

## **Required Texts**

Arthur Demarest, *Ancient Maya: The Rise and Fall of a Rainforest Civilization*

Miguel Leon-Portilla, *The Broken Spears*

Geoffrey W. Conrad and Arthur A. Demarest, *Religion and Empire: The Dynamics of Aztec and Inca Expansionism*

Terence D'Altroy, *The Incas*

Ross Hassig, *Aztec Warfare*

## **Blackboard Readings**

Simon Martin, "In Line of the Founder: A View of Dynastic Politics at Tikal."

Lucy Lucero, "Water and Ritual: The Political Collapse."

David Webster, "Copan: The Slow Death of a Maya Kingdom."

Richard E. W. Adams. "The Aztec."

Inga Clendinnen. "The Cost of Courage in Aztec Society."

R. Alan Covey. "The Formation of the Inca State."

R. Alan Covey. "The Transformation of the Inca Heartland."

### **Goals:**

Goals: Students who successfully complete this course will (1) improve their verbal, written and analytical skills; (2) develop an understanding and appreciation of the richness, diversity, complexity, and significant historical legacy of pre-columbian cultures in the Americas.

## II. **Course Schedule**

29 August: Introduction

31 August: And the People Came

**Readings:** Demarest, *Ancient Maya*, Chs. 1-2

05 September: Breaking the Maya Code

**Readings:** Demarest, *Ancient Maya*, Ch. 3

07 September: The Rise of Classic Maya Civilization

**Readings:** Demarest, *Ancient Maya*, Ch. 4

12 September: Video: *The Popol Vuh*

14 September: The Classic Maya

**Readings:** Demarest, *Ancient Maya*, Chs. 5-7; and Simon Martin, "In Line of the Founder: A View of Dynastic Politics at Tikal." (On Blackboard)

19 September: The Classic Maya

**Readings:** Demarest, *Ancient Maya*, Chs. 8-9

21 September: Theories concerning the fall of the Classic Maya

**Readings:** Demarest, *Ancient Maya*, Ch. 10; and Lucy Lucero, "Water and Ritual: The Political Collapse;" and David Webster, "Copan: The Slow Death of a Maya Kingdom." (Lucero and Webster readings on Blackboard)

26 September: **Discussion Session One**, "The Fall of the Classic Maya."

Demarest, *Ancient Maya*; and Lucero and Webster readings (On Blackboard)

**Paper One Due**

## **Course Schedule Continued**

28 September: Video

**Readings:** Coe, Ch. 7

03 October: The Maya on the Eve of Spanish Conquest

**Readings:** Demarest, *Ancient Maya*, Chs. 11-12.

05 October: Early Settlement in Central Mexico

10 October: Classic Teotihuacan

12 October: The Aztecs Arrive in the Central Valley

**Readings:** Richard E. W. Adams. "The Aztec." (On Blackboard)

17 October: Aztec Religion and the Theatre State

19 October: Aztec Warfare

**Readings:** Ross Hassig *Aztec Warfare* and Inga Clendinnen. "The Cost of Courage in Aztec Society." (On Blackboard)

24 October: **Discussion Session Two:** Conrad and Demarest, *Religion and Empire*, Ross Hassig, *Aztec Warfare* and Richard E.W. Adams and Inga Clendinnen readings (On Blackboard)

**Paper Two Due**

26 October: Video: Conquistadors

31 October: The Fall of Tenochtitlan

02 November: **Discussion Session Three:** Leon-Portilla-*The Broken Spears* (all)

07 November: Geography and Early Settlement in the Andes

**Readings:** D'Altroy, *The Incas*, Introduction

09 November: Pre-Incaic Groups

14 November: The Formation of the Inca State

**Readings:** D'Altroy, *The Incas*, Chs. 2-3; and R. Alan Covey. "The Formation of the Inca State." (On Blackboard)

16 November: Inca Imperial Expansion Unfolds

**Readings:** D'Altroy, *The Incas*, Chs. 4-6

21 November: A View of Inca Society

**Readings:** D'Altroy, *The Incas*, Chs. 7-9, 11-12.

## **Course Schedule Continued**

23 November: **Thanksgiving Holiday-No Classes**

28 November: Understanding the Nature of Empire.

**Readings:** D'Altroy, *The Incas*, Ch. 10; and R. Alan Covey. "The Transformation of the Inca Heartland." (On Blackboard)

30 November: Pizarro, Atahualpa and the Collapse of the Inca State

**Readings:** D'Altroy, *The Incas*, Ch. 13.

05 December: **Discussion Session Four** Conrad and Demarest, *Religion and Empire*, D'Atroy, *The Incas*, and R. Alan Covey Readings (On Blackboard)

**Paper Three Due**

07 December: Final Review

### **III. Discussion Sessions**

There will be four discussion sessions during the course of the term. The purpose of each session is to offer students a forum in which to discuss specific topics in detail, and to exchange ideas and theories. Each discussion session will focus on a particular reading (listed above in the syllabus). Students will be assessed on their understanding of the readings, as well as their observations, questions and critiques. Class participation is **essential**. Such sessions will make up 15% of final grade.

### **IV. Papers**

Students will be responsible for three short essays (three-four pages in length). All papers must be typed, double-spaced, with proper footnotes. The nature of each assignment will be explained in detail in class. If you have any questions about the assignment, please come and see me in advance.

Essay #1: The Fall of Classic Maya Civilization (Due 26 September)

Essay #2: Aztec Imperial Expansion (Due 24 October)

Essay #3: Inca Imperial Expansion (Due 05 December)

### **V. Class Attendance**

Roll will be taken at the beginning of each class and overall attendance will be considered in determining final grades.

### **VI. Final Exam**

Worth 25% of your grade, the final exam will be based on **all** the assigned readings, films, videos and lectures. Students shall be required to write three or four essays.