

ART OF PRE-COLUMBIAN MESOAMERICA
HONR300-TS-1W (W, H, LO5)
Wittenberg University
Fall 2022

Course Information

Course Identification: HONR300-TS-1W

Number of Credits: 4

Delivery Mode: Face-to-face, Kissell Auditorium, Koch Hall. If necessary, class will move to Moodle and Teams.

Course Schedule: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:30-3:45 p.m.

Faculty

Dr. Alejandra Gimenez-Berger

Office Hours: by appointment

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Course Description

This course investigates the development of visual arts produced in Mesoamerica before the Spanish conquest of the Aztec Empire, and the richly varied effects in the visual arts resultant from the confrontation and amalgamation of the existing art forms with the European tradition.

The class surveys the Pre-Classic cultures of the ancient Valley of Mexico and the Olmec; art of the Classic period, including the Maya and Teotihuacan, the Early-Post Classic Toltec and Mixtec; and Late Post-Classic Aztec civilizations. After the midterm, the class examines the encounter of the native civilizations with the European conquistadors, Japanese trade, and African influences. These encounters spur independent visual expressions in the formulation of personal and communal colonial identities.

Course Goals

Students will develop an understanding of Mesoamerican pre-Columbian art, its forms, functions, and original meanings for the cultures that produced it. Mesoamerican art represents one of the great aesthetic traditions of the world, yet the relative unfamiliarity of this tradition poses a challenge. Students will complete a series of critical reading, writing, and research project to become familiar with the methods of art history that allow us to understand and interpret the artistic record. Students will explore the effects on artistic expression caused by the clash of pre-Columbian and European forces. Through writing assignments and in-class discussions, students will come to an understanding of the forces that shape visual identity: Art does not only *reflect* the beliefs of a culture, it is also an agent of mediation and change.

Program Outcomes Integration

In addition to providing visual literacy, the ability to approach visual art and objects critically, and understanding of the cultural history of humanity, this course fulfills requirements for the Art major, and the Art and Art History minors.

This course supports the General Education goal “H”: Western Historical Perspectives.

It also supports the fulfillment of the General Education goal “W”: Writing Intensive.

This course supports the Connections Curriculum, LO5: Students will analyze the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the study of one or more languages and/or culture(s) outside of the United States and Canada.

Required Textbooks and Materials

This course will use Open Educational Resources (OERs). These materials are available at no cost to you. Readings will be posted on Moodle, handed out in class, or in library reserves. Complete the readings assigned before each lecture. Required texts are available at the campus bookstore.

Reference works and databases available at Thomas Library:

Joel Palka, *Historical Dictionary of Ancient Mesoamerica*, (2000)

David Carrasco, ed. *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Mesoamerican Cultures: The Civilizations of Mexico and Central America*, (2001)

JSTOR database and others, Ohio Link

Art and Humanities research databases at Thomas Library

www.FAMSI.org (Bibliografía Mesoamericana, in English and John Pohl’s *Mesoamerica* in particular)

www.doaks.org (Dumbarton Oaks and links to Harvard University Library)

See more resources in Moodle and in the class page of the library website.

Course Assessments and Grading

Grading Scale

A	100-95	B	86-83	C	77-73	D	67-63
A-	94-90	B-	82-80	C-	72-70	D-	62-60
B+	89-87	C+	79-77	D+	69-68	F	≤ 59

Class participation: 25%

Attendance to class is necessary. You are responsible for all assigned readings and all material presented in class. Complete readings before each lecture and contribute to class discussions. You are responsible for obtaining handouts and notes from Moodle or from a peer if you miss a class. If you don’t feel well, follow the protocols in place here: <https://www.wittenberg.edu/together> .

Important: This is scheduled as a face-to-face class. We know that the University may change this at any time in accordance with CDC guidelines. However, students cannot decide independently that they will attend this class online—per university regulations, that option is not available.

If you are unable to attend class due to illness, or an emergency, or a university-sponsored activity that overlaps with our class (like a field trip or an athletic event, etc.) then please contact me. I may ask you for documentation or confirmation. These will be excused absences, and we will work out a way to make up the work based on the individual circumstance. All other absences are not excused. More than three unexcused absences will impact your grade. If you miss more than six class meetings, you may fail the course.

To earn full participation credit:

- a. *Show knowledge of the readings assigned.* Prepare for class by doing the readings in advance. Be ready to identify the main ideas of the reading, the ways in which the author/s present the ideas, ways in which the thesis is supported, and the possible weaknesses or problems presented.
- b. *Contribute to all class discussions in a respectful and thoughtful manner.* Our discussions will often address the symbolic meanings of art. Evaluation of these values rarely leads to a single solution accepted by all. Listen carefully to other interpretations, and respond by providing supporting evidence, or better yet:
- c. *Go beyond the basics.* Propose alternate interpretations and call attention to related issues.

Two Exams: 40% (20% each)

Two take-home exams, delivered through Moodle. Exams will open a week before their due dates.

Research Project: 20% and Oral Presentation: 15%

Each student will choose, in consultation with the professor, a topic for research and presentation. Students will produce a proposal, a bibliography, and a working outline before finalizing the research project. Students will be responsible for a formal presentation of the results of their research to the class.

CLAC:

This course offers students the opportunity to earn an additional credit through the Cultures and Languages across the Curriculum program. If you have either completed or are currently enrolled for a Language course (Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Russian, Spanish) beyond 112, you are eligible to enroll for a Cultures and Languages Across the Curriculum (CLAC) module associated with this class and earn one credit for that module. Please let me know if you are interested in pursuing this opportunity.

Technology requirements:

I will post assignments and readings on Moodle. I will expect all students to become familiar with Moodle, and to check their Wittenberg e-mail accounts frequently. In some cases, I might e-mail the class with announcements or study images. I will use the official class list, i.e., Wittenberg e-mail accounts. If you do not use your Wittenberg e-mail account and

choose instead to have your e-mails forwarded to another service, it is your responsibility to figure out any problems in communication. I will not resend information due to problems that arise with those accounts. It is your responsibility to ensure that your Wittenberg login ID and password function properly in all campus computers.

Communications

If you have concerns or questions about the course, talk to me right away. Always consult your syllabus before sending a question via email. If doubts persist, feel free to send me an email at agimenezberger@wittenberg.edu. Please follow proper correspondence etiquette and allow 24 to 48 hours for a response.

I will use Moodle announcements and/or email to communicate with you.

Accessibility and ADA Accommodation

Wittenberg University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, learning, chronic health, physical, hearing, vision and neurological, or temporary medical conditions, etc.), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, you must register with the Accessibility Services office by emailing accessibilityservices@wittenberg.edu. You can also find information on the Accessibility Services webpage found at www.wittenberg.edu/success. Please note that services are confidential, may take time to put into place, and are not retroactive. The Accessibility Services Office is in the COMPASS: Sweet Success Center, Thomas Library, on the first floor.

Academic Integrity

All work submitted in this class should follow the Code of Academic Integrity established by Wittenberg University. Read the complete code and definitions of plagiarism at <http://www5.wittenberg.edu/academics/academicintegrity/index.html>

Work submitted to your professor must include your signature and pledge: *"I affirm that my work upholds the highest standards of honesty and academic integrity at Wittenberg, and that I have neither given nor received any unauthorized assistance."* Failure to follow the Code of Academic Integrity will result in a sanction and referral of the incident to the Honor Council. Work submitted through Moodle must include the pledge too. You may sign that work electronically.

Avoiding plagiarism is easy! Do your own work. Always cite your sources.

Etiquette

The college classroom is a professional learning environment in which all participants are expected to respect each other. Focus on the subject of study. Please remove headphones and silence cell phones prior to entering the classroom. No texting, engaging in social media or extraneous activities, or eating during class. Do not record lectures without my

permission and consent from all present. Laptops and tablets should be used with discernment. In general, I will ask you to put your devices away. Bring a notebook and pens/pencils to take notes.

Arrive to class on time. Late arrivals are disruptive. Two late arrivals or early departures will be recorded as one full absence. If for any reason you must leave early, please inform me in advance.

Much of our classroom time will be spent looking at images: the lights will be turned down. This is not a license to take a nap. Stay engaged with the material. Sleepers will be considered absent.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS (subject to revisions)

Complete readings and activities before the class date to which they are assigned.

<p>Week 1 Introduction to the course: Why study Mesoamerican Art?</p> <p>Introduction to the historiography of Mesoamerica</p>	<p>8/30 Complete “Getting to know you” questionnaire and submit via Moodle before Thursday.</p> <p>9/1 Moodle: Read excerpts from Stuart and Stuart, <i>Palenque</i> in preparation for class discussion.</p>
<p>Week 2 The Formative Period: The Olmec</p>	<p>Read before class: 9/6 Mary Ellen Miller, Chapter 2 from <i>The Art of Mesoamerica</i>.</p> <p>9/8 Read for class discussion: Carolyn Tate, “The Colossal Fetuses of La Venta and Mesoamerica’s Earliest Creation Story,” in <i>Imagining the Fetus: The Unborn in Myth, Religion, and Culture</i>, pp. 223–258.</p>
<p>Week 3 The Late Formative</p>	<p>9/13 Excerpts from Miller, chapter 3. Focus: The Divinatory Almanac.</p> <p>9/15 Archaeological practice: Looking and drawing. Bring to class: pencils, erasers.</p>

<p>Week 4 Teotihuacan</p>	<p>Explore and read the digital story, Teotihuacan: City of Water, City of Fire.</p> <p>Make sure to choose a topic for research before next week (see assignment options in Moodle)</p>
<p>Week 5 Research workshop</p>	<p>9/27 Library workshop Class meeting in Library or Teams TBD. Bring the full identification of your topic and information as detailed in the guidelines for the research assignment posted on Moodle.</p> <p>9/29 Tentative fieldtrip to Columbus Museum of Art</p>
<p>Week 6 The Late Formative Maya (San Bartolo) and Early Classic Maya (Tikal)</p>	<p>Readings from Robert Sharer and Loa Traxler's <i>The Ancient Maya</i>.</p>
<p>Week 7</p>	<p>10/11 FIRST EXAM DUE</p> <p>10/13 Research consultation day.</p>
<p>Week 8 The Early Classic Maya, ctd. (Copan)</p>	<p>10/17-18 Fall Break</p> <p>10/20 Selections from Miller, <i>Maya Art and Architecture</i>, focus: Copan.</p>
<p>Week 9 The Late Classic Maya (Palenque)</p>	<p>10/25 Selections from Miller, <i>Art of Mesoamerica</i>. Selections from the Popol Vuh.</p> <p>10/27 Selections from Stuart and Stuart, <i>Palenque</i></p>
<p>Week 10 Postclassic Mesoamerica</p>	<p>11/1 Selections from Miller, <i>Art of Mesoamerica</i></p> <p>11/3 TBD museum visit to Dayton Art Institute</p>

<p>Week 11 Postclassic Mesoamerica, ctd.</p>	<p>11/8 Selections from Miller.</p> <p>11/10 Lindsay Jones, "Maya-Mexican Polarity and Chichén Itzá," <i>American Anthropologist</i> 99, no. 2 (1997): 275–90.</p>
<p>Week 12 The Aztec</p>	<p>11/15 Individual meetings with students to discuss progress of research and planning of presentations. Bibliographies and outlines due.</p> <p>11/17 Miller, <i>Art of Mesoamerica</i>, Ch. 9, "The Aztecs." OR Eduardo Matos Moctezuma, "The Aztec Main Pyramid: Ritual Architecture at Tenochtitlan," in <i>The Ancient Americas: Art from Sacred Landscapes</i>, pp. 187–95. OR Esther Pasztory, "Coyolxauhqui Relief," and "Coatlicue and Yollotlicue," in <i>Aztec Art</i>, pp. 154–55 and 157–60.</p>
<p>Week 13 The early colonial period</p>	<p>11/22 Readings TBD.</p> <p>11/24 Thanksgiving</p>
<p>Week 14</p>	<p>11/29 and 12/1 Student presentations <i>All research projects due.</i></p>
<p>Week 15</p>	<p>12/6 Review 12/8 SECOND EXAM DUE</p>

Seven Core Competencies of Oral Communication

The following criteria represent the major steps and skills required for effective oral communication of any kind and in any context. They are used to evaluate your oral communication assignments in this course according to the following scale:

5 = excellent	Achieves or is close to perfection; could not be much better [A]
4 = good	Above average; goes beyond minimum requirements of the criterion [B]
3 = average	Adequate in meeting the minimum requirements of the criterion [C]
2 = marginal	Needs improvement; only partially meets this criterion [D]
1 = poor	Unacceptable; fails to address the criterion [F]

1. Consideration of Purpose 5 4 3 2 1
There is evidence that the speaker has taken into account and tailored the message to the intended purpose of the speaking assignment and/or the message has a clearly articulated purpose that is appropriate to the context of the speaking.

2. Strategic Audience Adaptation 5 4 3 2 1
There is an attempt to tailor the speaking to the intended audience in some way, such as selecting content that is of particular interest and/or relevance to them and/or adapting the content to the audience's knowledge level.

3. Quality Content Development 5 4 3 2 1
The content of the spoken message is substantive, relevant to the purpose and audience, and is of good quality, meaning that it draws upon appropriate sources (if required) and/or uses well-developed ideas, arguments, etc.

4. Logical Organization 5 4 3 2 1
The content is organized in a logical fashion appropriate to the purpose, audience, and content, with an introduction that prepares the audience for what is to come, a body that showcases clear main points, and a conclusion that provides closure.

5. Clear Language Choice 5 4 3 2 1
The language used by the speaker is clear, understandable to the audience, and accurately conveys the intended meaning in a way that adheres to proper pronunciation and grammar.

6. Effective Delivery 5 4 3 2 1
The speaker is able to deliver the content smoothly, with appropriate attention to vocal qualities (including volume and variety of intonation), enunciation, poise, gestures, eye contact, and appearance.

7. Competent Use of Presentational Materials 5 4 3 2 1
The speaker incorporates appropriate presentational aids (if required/desired; e.g., PowerPoint presentation, objects, charts, photographs, video/audio clips) seamlessly and in a way that coordinates with and enhances the spoken message.

Writing Skills Rubric

	Unacceptable 1	Beginning 2	Competent 3	Skilled 4	Exemplary 5
Main Idea/Thesis	Overall position is not evident. Topic as expressed is superficial or undeveloped.	Overall position is evident, but often too simplistic. Topic is also simplistic and one-dimensional.	Overall position is clear with a sense of developed ideas. Topic is interesting and significant, but not deeply explored in needed areas	Overall position is clear and developed. Topic is interesting, significant, and is engaged from several angles.	Overall position is well articulated and thoroughly developed. Topic is interesting, significant, and intellectually challenging with multiple facets addressed.
Argument	No argumentative structure is evident. Ideas are unconnected.	Argumentative structure is rudimentary. Claims are repeated rather than developed. Few objections are addressed and may be misrepresented.	Argumentative structure is evident but sometimes simplistic. Objections are addressed but formulaically.	Argumentative structure is evident. Objections are taken seriously and typically addressed fairly-mindedly.	Argumentative structure is clearly evident. Objections are taken seriously and addressed fairly-mindedly with great skill.
Evidence	Claims are not supported by reliable evidence from credible sources, making the paper unconvincing	Some claims are supported by valid, reliable evidence, but support is inconsistent, making the paper less than convincing.	Claims are typically supported by valid, reliable evidence from credible sources, making the paper for the most part convincing.	Claims are almost always supported by valid, reliable sources, so that the paper is generally convincing.	Claims are supported by reliable, valid evidence from credible sources and effectively synthesized in a very convincing manner.
Organization	Ideas appear unconnected. Several paragraphs are incoherent, lacking clear topic sentences and developed by restatement; they may contain irrelevant information. Paper shows serious lack of unity and coherence. Introduction and/or conclusion may be weak, trite, or nonexistent.	The paper is organized, though simplistically. Paragraphs are occasionally incoherent, without strong topic sentences and clear development. An introduction and conclusion are attempted but are perfunctory or formulaic. The introduction may be overly general and the conclusion may simply restate the thesis.	The introduction provides some context for the paper and states a thesis, though in a predictable way. Paragraphs are usually clear with serviceable topic sentences, development, and information. Main points are logically structured. Transitions provide coherence, but may be formulaic. The conclusion summarizes the paper but does not explore implications or significance.	The introduction sets the context for the paper and states a clear thesis. Nearly all paragraphs are coherent with strong topic sentences, developing systematically so that meaning is clear. Main points are clear and logically structured. Transitions provide a sense of coherence. The conclusion summarizes the paper and makes some effort to explore implications and significance.	The introduction skillfully captures reader attention while establishing the context for the paper. All paragraphs are coherent with apt topic sentences, developed so the meaning is exceptionally clear and easy to follow. All the main ideas are clear and logically structured. Transitions provide a strong sense of coherence. The conclusion summarizes and explores implications and significance.

Readability	Awkward phrasing, unskillful or inappropriate voice/tone, and unsophisticated and/or imprecise vocabulary hinder understanding.	Awkward phrasing, unskillful or inappropriate voice/tone, and unsophisticated and/or imprecise vocabulary distract from the paper's ideas.	Phrasing is generally effective; voice/tone and vocabulary are generally suitable for the paper's ideas and only occasionally work against its ideas.	Clear phrasing, appropriate management of voice and tone, and vocabulary enhance the paper's ideas.	Skillful phrasing, adept management of voice and tone, and apt word choice create an inviting paper.
Conventions	Numerous errors in grammar, usage, spelling and punctuation seriously impede meaning. Necessary documentation is missing.	Several errors in grammar, usage, spelling, and punctuation distract the reader and impede meaning. Problems with needed documentation exist	Errors in grammar usage, spelling, and punctuation are noticeable, but do not seriously impede the reader. Documentation is usually correct.	There are occasional errors in grammar, usage, spelling, and punctuation that do not impede the reader. Documentation of sources is correct.	There are very few or no mechanical errors in the paper. Documentation of sources is correct.
Overall Impression	The writer struggles in constructing and presenting a significant position. Paragraphing and overall organization hinder effectiveness. Ideas are asserted rather than developed or are largely underdeveloped. Language suffers from distracting errors at the sentence level. Falls short of college-level writing.	The writer presents a significant position that falls shy of being convincing. Overall organization and support need significant development. Frequent though not pervasive problems at the sentence-level. Paragraphing is inconsistent. Marginal college-level writing.	The writer presents a significant position that is generally convincing, but has some weaknesses. Paragraphs are typically organized and add to the development of ideas. Support is good, but sometimes inadequate. Organization is evident but sometimes undeveloped. There are occasional but not overly distracting, sentence-level errors. Acceptable college-level writing.	The writer presents a significant and thoughtful position that is for the most part convincing. Paragraphs are well organized and contribute to the development of ideas. Support is good with infrequent weak areas. Organization is clear. Sentence-level errors are infrequent. Good college-level writing.	The writer presents a significant and interesting position that is convincing and thought provoking. Paragraphs are skillfully organized and add to the development of ideas. Support is sound with rare or no weak areas. Sentence-level errors are rare to non-existent. Exemplary college-level writing.

All analytic and expository essays, as well as research papers, will be evaluated following this rubric. Study it carefully and endeavor to reach exemplary college-level writing.