Peoples of Mexico and Central America
ANT 4930/LAS 4935 (Sec. 079E)
Tuesdays 9:35-11:30  NRN 342 & Thursdays 9:35-10:25  RNK 225

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DESCRIPTION

The indigenous peoples of Mexico and Central America are known for cultural and linguistic diversity, resilience, and creativity. This course will introduce these diverse cultures from northern Mexico to Panama, with special attention given to Maya and Zapotec peoples. While emphasizing current experiences, we will examine historical processes that have shaped the present. We will explore key issues including land rights, environmental justice, intellectual property rights, political autonomy, human rights and economic development, which have motivated major indigenous movements including the Zapatista National Liberation Front. Evaluation will be based upon class activities, a midterm exam, and a research project.

Required Texts


Required Readings are available on Canvas.

Readings are assigned for the day on which they will be discussed. Finish reading them before class on the day that they are listed. In class discussions and activities require knowledge of the readings.

Note: Readings may be added or adjusted depending on the development of the course.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Students who engage fully in the course will:
• Gain appreciation for the cultural diversity, historical experiences, and current realities of the indigenous peoples of Mexico and Central America.
• Develop an in-depth understanding of two indigenous groups: the Maya and Zapotec
• Increase knowledge of the challenges facing indigenous peoples in Mesoamerican contexts, including maintenance of land rights and human rights, environmental degradation, cultural survival, economic and political pressures, and global change processes.
• Understand the historical and current circumstances that have inspired indigenous social movements and innovative adaptations to societal and global changes
• Conduct a focused research project to explore a specific aspect of Mesoamerican indigenous experience in detail.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND POLICIES

Evaluation will be based on six components (200 possible points):

1. Reading Responses: (3 written responses, 20 points each, total = 60 points). Each reading response will be 2-3 pages in length and address the readings for the week that the response is due. Guidelines will be handed out and discussed in class.

2. In-class Activities: (20 points) Written responses, activities and discussions.

3. Midterm Exam: (50 points)

4. Research Paper Abstract and Outline (10 pts): Instructions and expectations will be discussed in class.

5. Presentation of Research Projects: (10 pts)

6. Research Paper: (50 points). Research papers will be 8-12 pages in length. The final paper is due on Wednesday, December 6 by 5 p.m., and must be submitted in hard copy to Dr. Tucker and in digital form to Canvas.

Grading:

- A = 93-100%
- A- = 90–92.9%
- B+ = 87-89.9%
- B = 83-86.9%
- B- = 80-82.9%
- C+ = 77-79.9%
- C = 73-76.9%
- C- = 70-72.9%
- D+ = 67-69.9%
- D = 63-66.6%
- D- = 60-62%
- F = below 60%

Late submissions of assignments will be discounted 10% of the total possible points per day. This is only fair to those in the class who made every effort to meet deadlines, otherwise they would be disadvantaged relative to those who took more time.

Guidelines for written assignments:

- All assignments are to be typed with 1" margins on all sides, and double-spaced using Times New Roman 12 point font, or an equivalent (Arial 11 point font, Verdana 10 pt font).
- Cite all sources following citation guidelines (to be distributed in class).
- Use an established reference style, such as the American Anthropologist or Professional Geographer for formatting, citation and references. Consult the Chicago Manual of Style to resolve other questions of writing and usage.
- Avoid footnotes or endnotes; include relevant information in the text
- Keep a copy of each paper/assignment for your own records
- Reading responses should be submitted digitally to Canvas.
- The final paper must be submitted in hard copy and digitally to Canvas.

Policy on Plagiarism / Cheating: Plagiarism in written assignments (i.e. the copying of material without citation of the source) and cheating on examinations are unacceptable. They will lead to a zero on the assignment or examination if they are of a minor nature, and to a Fail grade in the course in cases of extensive cheating (i.e. more than two lines copied or two questions cheated on). If you are in doubt about what is the proper manner of citation please see the instructor. It is recommended that you purchase a guideline on these matters.

Emergency Situations:
If you have a medical or family emergency that prevents you from attending class or completing an assignment on time, bring it to the attention of professor immediately. Reasonable adjustments will be made with proper documentation of the emergency. Medical conditions must be documented by a
doctor’s note. Family emergencies must be documented by an appropriate authority (doctor, minister, rabbi, counselor) along with a phone number for contact. Deaths in the family should be documented by an obituary.

Communication Courtesy and Netiquette: All class members are expected to follow rules of common courtesy in class communications whether in or outside of class, including emails, texts, and other forms of digital communications.

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**COURSE OUTLINE**

**Class Organization:** The class involves a lot of group discussion on controversial issues and complex topics, so reading and preparation are important. Class participation is an important part of the total grade. We will view and discuss important documentaries of the indigenous experience in Mesoamerica, and several leading scholars will give guest lectures, including the author of our text, Becoming an Ancestor, who will give a presentation and answer questions with a video conference.

**Themes to be covered:**

- Overview of Indigenous Peoples in Mexico and Central America
- Pre-Historical Cultures, Geographies and Environment
- Indigenous Identity and Legacies of Conquest
- The Maya and the Nation-state in Guatemala: Historical Trauma, Enduring Challenges and Transcendant Resilience
- Zapotec Culture, Belief Systems and Creative Adaptation
- Indigenous Knowledge, Intellectual Property Rights, and Human Rights
- Resistance and Social Movements: The Zapatistas and Current Collective Action
- Risks for Cultural Survival and Proactive Responses
  - Global Climate Change and Mitigation Efforts
  - International Markets and Alternative Trade
  - Migration and Formation of New Communities
  - Land Expropriation and Community Governance
  - Imposition of Economic Development Programs and Community-Based Alternatives
  - Changing Livelihoods and Environmental Conservation

**Important Dates:**

Midterm Exam: October 19  
Research Paper Outline Due: October 24  
Student Presentations: November 28 and 30  
Research Paper Due: Wednesday, December 6 at 11:59 pm on Canvas.