



Pre-Columbian Art & Architecture (ARTH-3353-001 CRN:11075)

Sacred Mountains and Living Time

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Monday/Wednesday

1:30pm – 2:50pm

Fox Fine Arts A458



The University of Texas at El Paso
Department of Art – Art History Division

Pre-Columbian Art and Architecture: Sacred Mountains and Living Time

COURSE INFORMATION:

ARTH 3353: Pre-Columbian Art and Architecture
CRN: 11075
Term: Fall 2025
Delivery Method: In-person
Meeting Day and Time: Mondays and Wednesdays, 3:00pm – 4:20pm
Location: Fox A458

PROFESSOR INFORMATION:

Stephanie M. Strauss, Ph.D.
Written Communication: Email (smstrauss@utep.edu)
Office Location: Fox Fine Arts A354
Office Hours:

- In-person: Fridays, 9am – 1pm, open for drop-in visits
- Virtual: Fridays, 9am – 1pm via Zoom, by specific request

UTEP COURSE DESCRIPTION:

An historical survey of the art and architecture of several Mesoamerican and South American cultures of the Pre-Classic through Postclassic periods. Large scale monuments, painting, sculpture and ceramics of the Aztecs, Maya, Inca and their predecessors will be examined in terms of their original socio-political and sacred contexts.

COURSE GOALS and LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- Students will develop the visual literacy and critical reading strategies required to explore the messages embedded in the visual culture production of the ancient Americas.
- Students will work to gain fluency in the terms used in Pre-Columbian art historical analysis.
- Students will become proficient with sources and techniques required for assessing and incorporating academic material into their own research.
- By the end of each course meeting, students should feel a marked improvement in their “visual fluency” with the art of ancient Mesoamerica and the Andes.





- Over the course of the semester, students will develop a visual appreciation for and analytical understanding of Mesoamerican and Andean art and architecture.
- Ultimately, students should be able to a) identify the culture and general time period of art produced in the great visual traditions of Mesoamerica and the Andes and b) discuss, in depth, the style and subject of significant works of art from across the Pre-Columbian landscape.

EDGE EXPERIENCE:

The Museum Exhibition Project – the final project for this course – guides students in creating an immersive Capstone experience that integrates and applies what they have learned in the classroom to a public setting. Students will form small groups and develop a Museum Exhibition Proposal for the Centennial Museum, producing work ranging from Social Media Press Releases, to Graphic Design Boards, to Object Labels and Exhibition Text. Throughout the semester, students will present their proposals to their classmates for Peer Review and, in their final form, for evaluation by the “Museum Board” (the full class) to vote on a winning Exhibition proposal.

EDGE ADVANTAGES:

This course is designed to equip students with essential Edge Advantages that extend through and beyond the discipline of Art History, contributing to their personal growth and professional development. Through the completion of course requirements and assignments, such as Immersive Learning Opportunities and the Capstone Project, students will develop the following Edge Advantages:

	Communication	Students will demonstrate effective interpretation, development, and application of oral communication strategies appropriate to purpose, genre, context, and audience.
	Confidence	Students will articulate gains in self-confidence by identifying, evaluating, and building on their talents, abilities, strengths, and skills.
	Critical Thinking	Students will analyze information from multiple relevant sources that reflect contrasting viewpoints and will articulate a well-reasoned conclusion or position.
	Global Awareness	Students will analyze and evaluate global, interconnected systems to determine how those systems affect personal and/or community outcomes.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- The Art of Mesoamerica: From Olmec to Aztec (World of Art) [2019, 6th Edition]
 - Author: Mary E. Miller
 - ISBN: 978-0500204504
- Art of the Andes: From Chavín to Inca (World of Art) [2012, 3rd Edition]
 - Author: Andrea Stone
 - ISBN: 978-0500204153
- A set of colored pencils for sketching - must be brought to each course meeting.

GRADING OPPORTUNITIES:

Assignment expectations in this course will be outlined in detailed Assignment Guides and graded with clear and detailed rubrics, all available on Blackboard. Assignments are weighted as outlined:

ASSIGNMENT	WEIGHT
Museum Exhibition Project <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Exhibition Plan and Design: 50%▪ Museum Object Labels: 25%▪ Final Pitch Presentation: 25%	30%
Close Reading Assignments <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Read 3 academic articles (Hurst and O'Grady 2015; Stuart 2000; and Dean 2007) and complete corresponding Close Reading Worksheets▪ Each weighted equally▪ Lowest grade may be replaced by completing an optional 4th reading and its corresponding worksheet at the end of the semester	20%
Formal Assessments <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Midterm 1 [Wed 10/1]▪ Midterm 2 [Mon 11/3]▪ Final Exam [Mon 12/8]▪ Each weighted equally, lowest grade will be dropped	35%
Immersive Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Includes enthusiastic completion of the Immersive Learning Activities (ILA) during class; regular and positive verbal contributions to weekly course meetings, and engagement in course enrichment experiences (i.e. the Class Toolkit Assignment; Self-guided Field Trip; Extra Help Sessions; and the ARTH 3353 Extended Learning Opportunity).	15%
Total Weight	100%

GRADING STANDARDS	GRADE
100 – 90 [Excellent]	A
89 – 80 [Good]	B
79 – 70 [Passable]	C
69 – 60 [Unsatisfactory]	D
59 – 0 [Failing]	F

EXTRA CREDIT:

Students will have the option of completing three Extra Credit opportunities over the course of the Semester. The firsts relate to a self-guided Field Trip event and will earn bonus points on the Midterm and/or Final Assessments. The second is tied to the ARTH 3353 Extending Learning Opportunity – a film screening of *Cracking the Maya Code* – and will earn bonus points on the Immersive Learning grade. The third will be held in the final two classes and impacts overall course totals. Further instructions will be provided on Blackboard.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS:

Blackboard is your headquarters for this course – through our Blackboard course page you will be able to access Announcements, Assignment Guides, Rubrics, Lecture Slides, Handouts from Class Meetings, Extra Learning Opportunities, the Gradebook, and other materials. Ensure your UTEP e-mail account is working and that you have internet access and a stable browser (Google Chrome and Mozilla Firefox are the most compatible with Blackboard). When having technical difficulties, update your browser, clear your cache, or try switching to another browser.

You will need to have access to a computer/laptop. While many students use Google Drive for their word-processing and slide-design needs, I strongly suggest you take advantage of UTEP's free Microsoft Office Portal to download Word, PowerPoint, Excel, and other Microsoft Office programs to your personal devices.

IMPORTANT: If you encounter technical difficulties beyond your scope of troubleshooting, please contact the UTEP Technology Support as they are trained specifically in assisting with technological needs of students. They can also provide you with a case/ticket number and assessment to share with me, if documentation is needed.

COURSE COMMUNICATION:

We will keep clear and professional communication channels open throughout the semester:

- Email:
 - Create a habit of checking your UTEP email account once per day.
 - Email me using your official UTEP email address.
 - Subject Line: Art History Survey II: Lastname Question (or Absence, or Letter of Recommendation Request, etc)
 - Professional Salutation: Dear Prof. Strauss or Hello Dr. Strauss, etc.
 - Body: Clearly state your question/concern/Office Hours request/etc
 - Professional Sign-off: Best, Firstname or Sincerely, Firstname, etc.
 - All emails that follow the above format will be replied to within 24 hours. If emails arrive before 5:30pm, they may receive a reply the same day. Emails that arrive after 5:30 pm will receive a reply the following day. Emails that do not follow the above format may receive a bounce-back reply with instructions to review Course Communication guidelines, edit, and resend.
- Office Hours:
 - These are set day(s) and times where you can come meet with me for (typically) 20 – 30 minutes to discuss academic and professional topics. My in-person Office Hours are Fridays from 9am – 1pm in Fox Fines Arts A354. You are free to drop-by during this time frame, or you may email me in advance to arrange a specific time within that window, or to share what you wish to discuss (especially if this helps set you at ease).
 - If you have made a request via email that requires more in-depth discussion, or if there are concerns about your progress in the course, I may email you to suggest we meet during my Office Hours to discuss and strategize further.
 - Virtual Appointment: if you cannot make it to campus during my Office Hours, you may set up a Zoom “Office Hours” appointment during that same time frame. Please email me in advance to request a Virtual appointment.

- Blackboard Announcements:
 - Check Blackboard frequently (at least every other day) for important Announcements regarding course updates, reminders, deadlines, and other key information.
 - All Blackboard Announcements will be pushed to your UTEP email accounts, as well. Remember to create a habit of checking your UTEP email once per day.

EXTRA HELP SESSIONS:

These focused work sessions are designed to facilitate your success in the course, by providing protected time to build your skills or brainstorm issues in the presence of the professor.

- Extra Help Session #1: Note-Taking 101, Friday 9/12 10am – 12pm in ARTH A458 [bring your recent lecture notes!]
- Extra Help Session #2: Trouble-shooting the Museum Exhibition Project, Friday 11/21, 9am – 11am in ARTH A458

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION:

Our class meetings are in-person, Mondays and Wednesdays, 3:00pm–4:20pm in Fox Fine Arts A458 from August 25 to December 3 (plus the Final Exam on Monday, December 8, 1:00pm – 3:45pm). Strive to be in our classroom several minutes prior to the start time, to get settled and enjoy the pre-class viewing. Unfortunate timing issues arise for everyone, every once in a while: if you are running a little late, I would rather you come to class slightly tardy than not at all. Do not make it a habit, but if you arrive after the start of lecture, please be discrete: quickly find a seat and quietly set up your note-taking devices to join in as smoothly as possible.

Commit to active learning in our class. All Post-Class Readings must be completed before we gather for the next class. Hold yourself accountable to speaking out at least once every week. If you are a little more reserved, prepare a comment or a question in advance to read aloud until you feel more comfortable sharing your thoughts extemporaneously. I aim for us to build a creative, welcoming, and dynamic community within our course, and hope that all students will feel comfortable sharing thoughts, questions, and observations every class meeting after only a few course gatherings.

The MOST IMPORTANT thing you can do to succeed in this course is to attend all of the classes. We cover so much ground in one class that it can be hard to keep up if you have to miss a lecture. If you are absent (see absence policies, below), follow this five-step procedure:

1. Read the Post-class Reading assigned for that day extra carefully.
2. Watch the In-class Viewing (posted on Blackboard the evening after we watch it in class).
3. Ask a classmate (or two) to borrow their notes from lecture.
4. Copy the notes and compare them to the posted Class Visuals on Blackboard.
5. After steps 1 through 4, if you still have further questions, come see me in Office Hours to discuss your specific questions about the missed class content.

Per the UTEP College of Liberal Arts and UTEP Catalog:

"At the discretion of the instructor, a student can be dropped from a course because of **excessive absences or lack of effort.**" (emphasis added)

"The student is expected to attend all classes and laboratory sessions. It is the responsibility of the student to inform each instructor of extended absences. When in the judgment of the instructor, a student has been absent to such a degree as to impair his or her status relative to credit for the course, the instructor may drop the student from the class with a grade of "W" before the course drop deadline and with a grade of "F" after the course drop deadline." For our course:

- If you accumulate **8 absences** on or before Friday, October 31 [the course drop deadline], or otherwise demonstrate what the UTEP catalog describes as a **lack of effort**, you will be dropped from the course with a grade of W.
- If you accumulate **12 absences** on or before Wednesday, December 3 [the last day of class], or otherwise demonstrate what the UTEP catalog describes as a **lack of effort**, you will be dropped from the course with a grade of F.
- I will provide 24 hours advance notice via email in either of the above cases.
- **SELF-ASSESSMENT:** if the drop deadline has past but you feel as though you are unable to complete the course successfully (or to your level of grade satisfaction), please let me know immediately and then contact the Registration and Records Office to initiate the drop process. In this case, I may assign a grade of W at my discretion.
- **INCOMPLETE POLICY:** Incomplete grades may be requested only in exceptional circumstances after you have completed at least half of the course requirements (exceptional circumstances include severe extended illness, such as a flaring of a chronic condition; an emergency extended-care situation with a dependent; or an accident resulting in inability to attend classes). Talk to me immediately if you believe an incomplete is warranted. If granted, we will establish a contract of work to be completed with deadlines.

ILLNESS PRECAUTIONS:

Please stay home if you have active symptoms of any communicable disease. If you are feeling unwell, please let me know as soon as possible so that we may work on the appropriate accommodations. A doctor's note and/or specific details are not necessary. If you have been sick recently, your symptoms are over or minimal, and you feel able to attend class, please wear a mask until you are clear of all symptoms for several days.

OVERALL ABSENCE POLICY:

You may have up to **4 "no-further-questions-asked" absences** on or before Wednesday, December 3 without consequence. This is the equivalent of two weeks of classes. Any further absences must meet the requirements for a **PROPERLY DOCUMENTED** excused absence as outlined in the UTEP Catalog (see below); otherwise, each additional absence **will result in a 2 point deduction to your**

Immersive Learning grade, up until you meet and/or exceed the excessive absence and drop policies outlined above. Examples of excused absences:

- **University-sponsored Activity:** students who will be absent while representing the University in officially recognized University activities (sports, band, professional conferences, etc.) must notify the Dean of Students not less than ten days prior to the absence. The Dean of Students will provide the student with a letter of excuse for the professors. It is the student's responsibility to give the letter to the professors prior to the official recognized activity. Students following these procedures will be permitted to make up both assignments and examinations in consultation with faculty.
- **Religious Holy Days:** "Religious holy day" means a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20, Tax Code. Section 51.925 of the Texas Education Code related to absences by students for observance of religious holy days states that the institution shall excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence. The student must provide written notice to the instructor of each course that he/she will be absent for a religious holy day not less than 10 days prior to the absence
- **Military Leave:** Section 51.9111, Texas Education Code, provides that students be excused from scheduled classes or other required activities if the student is called to and participates in active military service for a reasonably brief period and that the student shall be allowed to complete an assignment or exam within a reasonable time after the absence. Students called to active military service must provide a copy of their military orders to the instructor of each course.
- **COVID-19 Illness:** if you have exceeded your 4 "no-questions-asked" absences but then test positive for COVID-19, you may be excused from any of our class meetings that fall in the following 5 days. You must have a positive test result from the UTEP Student Health and Wellness Center (SHWC) "On-Campus Testing Center" located in Union Building East, first floor, and/or communicate your positive test results to covidaction@utep.edu so that the Office of the Dean of Students may support you in communicating with all of your professors. Look here for more details: <https://www.utep.edu/ehs/covid/>

DEADLINES and LATE WORK:

Assignments are to be turned in at the start of class on the day they are due. If you are absent on the day an assignment is due, you must email me a copy of your work by the start of class.

- If a student is late to class or absent, but still submits their assignment during class time, a 10-point deduction will be applied to whatever score is assessed.
- After the end of that class period, if the assignment is turned in sometime during the next 24 hour block, a 20-point deduction will be applied to whatever score is assessed.

- If the 24-hour window is missed, but the assignment is still turned in sometime between 24 and 48 hours after the end of the class in which it was due, the assignment will receive half credit from whatever score is assessed.
- After 48 hours, the submission will not be accepted. The assignment will receive a zero (0).

No make-up Midterms or Final Assessments will be given. If you have a UTEP-defined Excused Absence conflict (see above) with the dates of the Midterms or Final, this must be reported by the end of Friday, September 12, and an option to take the assessment EARLY (not late) will be considered, but not necessarily granted. Any requests submitted after 09/12/2025 will be denied.

ACCOMMODATIONS POLICY:

The University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. Students who become pregnant may also request reasonable accommodations, in accordance with state and federal laws and regulations and University policy. Accommodations that constitute undue hardship are not reasonable. To make a request, please register with the UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS). Contact CASS at 915-747-5148, email them at cass@utep.edu, or apply for accommodations online via the CASS portal.

SCHOLASTIC INTEGRITY:

Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. It includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and collusion. Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student, possessing unauthorized materials during a test, or falsifying research data on laboratory reports. Plagiarism occurs when someone intentionally or knowingly represents the words or ideas of another as one's own. Collusion involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act. In this course, use of AI is Strictly Prohibited (see below), and thus falls under UTEP's broad official policy that use of AI (Artificial Intelligence) is a form of plagiarism. Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. All suspected violations of academic integrity at The University of Texas at El Paso must be reported to the [Office of Community Standards](#) for possible disciplinary action. To learn more, please visit [HOOP: Student Conduct and Discipline](#).

GUIDANCE ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE:

AI Prohibited:

Use of AI technologies or automated tools, particularly generative AI such as ChatGPT or DALL-E, is **not allowed** for assignments in this class. Each student is expected to use critical and creative thinking skills to complete tasks and not rely on computer-generated ideas. Any direct use of AI-generated materials submitted as your own work will be treated as plagiarism and reported to the [Office of Community Standards](#). This includes using AI for brainstorming, as in the context of our course, it inhibits your ability to think critically and creatively about your assignments.

PLAGIARISM DETECTING SOFTWARE:

Some of your course work and assessments may be submitted to SafeAssign, a plagiarism detecting software. SafeAssign is used to review assignment submissions for originality and will help you learn how to properly attribute sources rather than paraphrase.

SUPPORT RESOURCES:

UTEP provides a variety of student services and support. Please refer to the QR code below for a listing of campus resources or visit https://www.utep.edu/advising/student_resources/student-success-resource-hub.html.



CLASS MEETING SCHEDULE:

MONTH	DATE	CONTENT AND RESPONSIBILITIES
August	Mon 8/25	The Art of the Americas <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Welcome, Syllabus Review▪ Class Toolkit Assignment Posted
	Wed 8/27	Building Our Toolkit – New Frameworks & Specialty Terms <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ DUE: Class Toolkit Assignment▪ Post-class Reading: Miller pp. 10 – 23, Stone pp. 9 – 16
September	Mon 9/1	Labor Day (No Class)
	Wed 9/3	Designing the First Cities <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Lecture 1: Olmec I – San Lorenzo and La Venta I▪ Post-class Reading: Miller pp. 24 – 39
	Mon 9/8	Masterworks of Stone Sculpture <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Lecture 2: Olmec II – La Venta II and Tres Zapotes▪ Post-class Reading: Miller pp. 40 – 47
	Wed 9/10	The Cloud People <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Lecture 3: Oaxaca I – Monte Alban▪ Post-class Reading: Miller pp. 58 – 64, pp. 106 – 116

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extra Help Session #1: Note-Taking 101, Friday 9/12 10am – 12pm in ARTH A458
	Mon 9/15	Caves and Blood <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture 4: Preclassic Maya I – The San Bartolo Murals Post-class Reading: Article 1 (Hurst and O’Grady 2015) and work on Close Reading Worksheet 1
	Wed 9/17**	The Architecture of Astronomy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture 5: Preclassic Maya II – Temple Groups Post-class Reading: Miller pp. 128 – 151 Self-Guided Field Trip: Centennial Museum
	Mon 9/22	Ritual across Stone and Fabric <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DUE: Close Reading Worksheet 1 Lecture 6: Early Horizon I – Paracas and Chavín Post-class Reading: Stone pp. 28 – 64
	Wed 9/24	Lines in the Earth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture 7: Early Intermediate Period I: Nasca and Tiwanaku Post-class Reading: Stone pp. 64 – 81, 118 – 137
	Mon 9/29	Review Session
October	Wed 10/1	Midterm 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Covers Lectures 1 – 7 Covers Article 1
	Mon 10/6	Sculpture in Clay <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture 8: Early Intermediate Period II: Moche Post-class Reading: Stone pp. 82 – 117
	Wed 10/8**	The City of the Gods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture 9: Teotihuacan I Post-class Reading: Miller pp. 78 – 95 Self-guided Field Trip: The Centennial Museum
	Mon 10/13	Ritual Caching: Minerals and Bones <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture 10: Teotihuacan II Post-class Reading: Miller pp. 96 – 105; Article 2 (Stuart 2000) and work on Close Reading Worksheet 2
	Wed 10/15	City-States and Art for an Audience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture 11: Classic Maya I Post-class Reading: Miller pp. 152 – 187 Extended Learning Opportunity [<i>Cracking the Maya Code</i> Film Screening, 5pm, Location TBD]
	Mon 10/20	The Mural Tradition Continues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DUE: Close Reading Worksheet 2 Lecture 12: Classic Maya II Post-class Reading: Miller pp. 187 – 199
	Wed 10/22	Meaning in the Fabric <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture 13: Middle Horizon I - Wari

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post-class Reading: Stone pp. 137 – 152
	Mon 10/27	All that Glitters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture 14: Late Intermediate Period I – Chimú, Sicán, and Chancay Post-class Reading: Stone pp. 153 – 179
	Wed 10/29	Review Session
November	Mon 11/3	Midterm 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Covers Lectures 8 – 14 Covers Article 2
	Wed 11/5	Collapse or Power Shift? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture 15: Postclassic Maya Post-class Reading: Miller pp. 200 – 237
	Mon 11/10	Tawantinsuyu <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture 16: Inka I Post-class Reading: Stone pp. 180 – 199
	Wed 11/12**	Weaving an Empire <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture 17: Inka II Post-class Reading: Stone pp. 199 – 216; Article 3 (Dean 2007) and work on Close Reading Worksheet 3
	Mon 11/17	The Mexica <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DUE: Close Reading Worksheet 3 Lecture 18: Aztec I Post-class Reading: Miller pp. 238 – 246
	Wed 11/19	Monumentality Across Scale <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture 19: Aztec 2 Post-class Reading: Miller pp. 247 – 272 Extra Help Session #2: Trouble-shooting the MEP, Friday 11/21, 9am – 11am in ARTH A458
	Mon 11/24	Contact, 1519 - 1532 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture 20: Conquest and Continuity in Mexico and Peru Post-class Reading: Miller pp. 272 – 277; Stone pp. 217 – 218
	Wed 11/26	No Class
December	Mon 12/1	Museum Exhibition Project Presentations Day 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DUE: MEP Projects (Day 1 Groups) In-class Extra Credit Opportunity Post-class Reading: none
	Wed 12/3	Museum Exhibition Project Presentations Day 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DUE: MEP Projects (Day 2 Groups) In-class Extra Credit Opportunity Post-class Reading: Optional Article 4 (Boone 2009) [may complete Close Reading Worksheet 4 to replace lowest Close Reading grade – due 12/10]
	Mon 12/8	Final Exam

	1:00pm- 3:45pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Covers Lectures 15 – 20 ▪ Covers Article 3 (Dean 2007)
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*Due to the natural ebb and flow of a semester, all course content, due dates, and assigned readings are subject to adjustment at the professor's discretion. Any changes will be announced in class, posted to Blackboard, and confirmed via email at least 72 hours in advance, when applicable.

**Denotes remote lesson plan