

ANTH 4320 Ancient Civilizations of the Americas

Spring 2026

Asynchronous, online

Instructor: Thomas H. Guderjan

Office: CAS 136

Phone: 903-566-7418

Email: tguderjan@uttyler.edu

Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday from 12-2PM and 3:20-4:00PM. I am also available in my office anytime I am not in class or a meeting.

Course Overview: This course will describe the historical development of Precolumbian civilizations in the Americas. In addition, this course will provide understanding of how we know what we know of the past (epistemology). There is no prerequisite for the course. However, the course is preparatory for the summer 2026 Archaeological Field School.

Student Learning Outcomes

- 1) Analyze the complex societies that preceded our own in the Americas.
- 2) Synthesize how scholarly efforts have created a growing awareness of these ancient civilizations.
- 3) Evaluate knowledge of an ancient civilization and compare it to our own.

Class: The normal week will consist of asynchronous class meetings. These will generally be 2 times a week but a third meeting may be arranged if needed. Beginning the second week, weekly paper topics will be assigned on Fridays and the papers are due on the following Friday.

The readings provided via CANVAS will be supplemented by lectures, films and discussion. The lectures will complement but not duplicate the readings. In general, I will explain methods in class that are also covered in the text then use case studies to illustrate the utility of the particular methods. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of all deadlines and material discussed in class.

Grading: The course grade will be based on 12 weekly papers and one research paper. The weekly papers will be assigned on Fridays and due on the following Wednesday. Each will consist of a 2-3 page discussion of a topic to be assigned in class and the highest 10 grades will be counted towards the final grade. Students are expected to be able to synthesize major concepts and be responsible for specific details presented in class and the textbook. Additionally, each student will write a 15-page research paper on a subject agreed upon in advance. Each student will give a short presentation of their research paper during the last week of class.

DATE	TASK	DETAILS	SLO	POINTS
Feb 2	Choose Topic for Research Paper	1 page discussion of student's planned topic	Become able to conceptualize a theme associated with information from the class	10
Mar 2	List of references for research paper	Students compile lists of 10 peer-reviewed references applicable to the research paper topic	(1) Students learn what peer-reviewed sources mean and (2) learn to compile literature applicable for research topic	10
Apr 13	Research Paper	10 pages (double space, 12 pt.) paper with at least 10 references	Students learn to demonstrate their ability to understand what scholarly information is, (1) demonstrate their abilities to command and synthesize information and (3) demonstrate their abilities to conduct scholarly research	30
	5 bi- weekly papers	10 pts each		50

GRADE SCALE

90-100 = A

80-89 = B

70-79 = C

60-69 = D

0-59 = F

The Purposes of research papers include:

Demonstrate your ability to understand what scholarly information is... and ... what is not.

Demonstrate your ability to command and synthesize scholarly information.

Demonstrate your ability to conduct scholarly research.

Attendance & Deadlines: You chose to spend your time and money to take this class. So, I assume you desire to spend them well. Consequently, I will not normally take attendance. Deadlines for all tests and assignments are absolute unless you have conferred with me in advance or have an excuse from the Dean or University. Otherwise, there will be no make-up exams. Written assignments must be turned in by the due date. Unexcused absences for assignment due dates will result in a grade of zero for the assignment.

Classroom distractions: Cell phones, text messages and any other contact with people outside of the classroom are considered to be distractions and will not be tolerated. Likewise, inappropriate activity inside the classroom will also not be tolerated.

PLAGARISM & CHEATING

- It is your responsibility to know and understand the university policy on cheating and plagiarism.
- If you plagiarize or cheat, you WILL receive an F for this course.
- If you plagiarize, your case WILL be referred to the Dean for further action. Penalties may include expulsion.

Make-Up Exams: You may take a make-up exam only if you have made arrangements prior to the exam to do so. Do not ask for a make-up exam if you missed the exam without prior arrangements or have reason for an official absence.

Academic Problems: Feel free to talk with me about any problems you may have with the course. It's usually best to make an appointment to me in my office rather than trying to get an answer to a question or to take care of a problem between classes. Faculty members are expected to provide information at the start of each semester on how the final grade will be determined. I am extremely conscientious about determining student grades, but if you feel that an error has been made, talk with me. If you feel that your concerns have not been addressed, talk with the department chair or the dean of the school in that order.

University Policies & Student Resources:

Here are links to the applicable university policies.

- [University Policy](#)
- [Student Resources](#)

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Week of:	Topic:
----------	--------

Jan 12	Middle American Geography and indigenous people
Jan 19	(MLK DAY) Olmecs and Aguada Fenix
Jan 26	Maya Political Geography and Kingship
Feb 2	Maya Production, Distribution and Consumption: Lessons from LiDAR Student Activity: Topic for Research Paper Due
Feb 9	The Great Maya Cities 1
Feb 16	The Great Maya Cities 2
Feb 23	Ancient Maya Trade
Mar 2	Maya Writing and Calendrics. Student Activity: Paper References Due
Mar 9-13	Spring Break
Mar 16	The Maya Collapse
Mar 23	Central Mexico: Teotihuacan and Tula. North Mexico and US Connections.
Mar 30	Oaxaca: Monte Alban and regional integration
Apr 6	Conquest
Apr 13	Maya People Today. Student Activity: Research Paper Due
Apr 20	wrap up.
April 27	Finals Exam Week-Exam Administered upon request