Orientation to Ancient Middle America
Orientation to Ancient Middle America
one item you will see often
(and often repeated)
is that American Anthropology
traditionally has a four-fold
approach to the study of humans
and closely related species
these four fields include . . .
American Anthropology

- cultural / social
- physical
- archaeology
- linguistics
so why study

Ancient Middle America?
for most,
it’s mainly to find out about many fascinating prehistoric topics relating to people like the ancient Mayans and the Aztecs . . .
and you already know about a lot of those sorts of things . . .
just have a look at the little pictures on the web class materials, for e.g., . . .
Welcome to Ancient Middle America
and lots of people find these topics interesting . . .

There have been close to 2 million page views of the UMD Ancient Middle America WebPages . . .
and lots of people find these topics interesting . . .

there have been over 2 million page views of the UMD Ancient Middle America WebPages . . .
2,153,824
but Middle America is also a wonderful place to explore all four of the disciplines of American Anthropology . . .
American Anthropology

- cultural / social
- physical
- archaeology
- linguistics
so . . .

we’re going to have a look at . . .
so . . . we’re going to have a look at . . .

Ancient Middle America
and its . . .

• cultural / social
• physical
• archaeology
• linguistics
  aspects
and you’ll visit these same fields as you go through your texts . . .
and you’ll visit these same fields and you go through your and other class materials . . .
Ancient Middle America — Anth 3618

Fall 2013, 3 Credit Hours
14062-001 LEC, 04:00 PM - 05:15 P.M., Tu Th (09/03/2013 - 12/13/2013), Citta 214
Tim Rofis

Please get acquainted with the course site; review the course information materials and other links.

If you have not used Moodle course management system before, please view the Orientation tutorial.

Cabeza Colosal nº7 del Museo Xelaju
San Lorenzo
Guatemala
and to study Middle America in this tradition there are a few basic characteristics of anthropology to keep in mind . . .
Main Characteristics

1. the four fields of general anthropology

2. culture as a primary concept

3. comparative method as major approach to the study of human behavior

4. holism or the study of "humankind" as a whole, as a primary theoretical goal

5. fieldwork as a primary research technique, involving “participant observation”
Main Characteristics

1. the *four fields* of general anthropology

2. *culture* as a primary *concept*

3. *comparative method* as major

4. *holism* of the study of “humankind” as a whole, as a *primary theoretical goal*

5. *fieldwork* as a primary research technique, involving “*participant observation*”
finally, to round off our theoretical perspectives, we’ll have a brief look at . . .
a few

“Other Important Terms”
a few

“Other Important Terms”
including . . .

1. ethnocentrism

2. cultural relativism
   • absolute cultural relativism
   • critical cultural relativism

3. “multiple cultural worlds”
“Other Important Terms”
including . . .

1. ethnocentrism

more on this later . . .

- absolute cultural relativism
- critical cultural relativism

3. “multiple cultural worlds”
and

“Units of Analysis”
“units of analysis” may include:

- one person
- the family
- the community
- a region
- a “culture area”
- a culture / “subculture”
- a nation
- an item or action itself
- a “cultural metaphor”
“units of analysis” may include:

- one person
- the family
- the community
- a region

more on this later . . .

- a culture / “subculture”
- a nation
- an item or action itself
- a “cultural metaphor”
and we’ll have a brief look at

Three Major Perennial Debates
three major contemporary debates

1. Biological Determinism vs. Cultural Constructionism

2. Ideationism vs. Cultural Materialism

3. Individual Agency vs. Structuralism
   (“free will” vs. “power structures”)
three major contemporary debates

1. Biological Determinism
   vs. Cultural Constructionism

2. Ideationism vs. Cultural Materialism
   
   more on this later . . .

3. Individual Agency vs. Structuralism
   
   (“free will” vs. “power structures”)
and so, to study Middle America in the American Anthropological tradition we’ll further consider the items you see listed in the Week 1 “Topics” . . .
Week 1 — Introduction to Anthropology / Orientation to Middle America

Reminder: All initial introductions should be done by the end of week one. You may reply to each others introductions throughout the course.

Please read the course overview and go through the general course information in the first block.

And if you have not used Moodle before please view the orientation tutorial.

(Please note: the orientation tutorial is a UM Technology Training Center tutorial. The content of the tutorial has nothing to do with this course. — Tim Routs)

Week 1 Topics

Topics for Week 1

Week 1 Reading Assignments

1. Introduce Yourself (Due by Friday, 7 September 2012)
2. Complete or Update Your Moodle Profile as Part of Your Introduction
3. Information on Points for Forum Posts
4. Pre-Assessing Yourself (Due by Friday, 7 September 2012)
5. Forum: Archaeological Ethics (Due by Friday, 7 September 2012)
Week 1 — Introduction to Anthropology / Orientation to Middle America

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Week 1 Welcome Memo

Viewing .PDFs and PowerPoints

Topics for Week 1

Week 1 Reading Assignments

Topics...

Introduce Yourself (Due by Friday, 7 September 2012)

Complete or Update Your Moodle Profile as Part of Your Introduction

Information or Points for Forum Posts

Pre Assessing Yourself (Due by Friday, 7 September 2012)

Forum: Archaeological Ethics (Due by Friday, 7 September 2012)
Main Characteristics of Anthropology

slides: (pdf) (pptx)
(Download PowerPoint Viewer Free) (Download Adobe pdf Reader Free)
[see note on slide formats]

(NOTE: This is a long slide set as it covers some very important background information that will be referred to often as we go through the semester. Please bear with it to the end. It will take a little longer to load, so please bear with that also. There is no video presentation scheduled for this and next week as the base slide sets tend to be a little longer than "normal.")

- the four fields of general anthropology
- culture as a primary concept
- comparative method as major approach
- holism as a primary theoretical goal
- fieldwork as a primary research technique

WebPage Summary
*Anthropology and... It's Parts* chart
and all along the way
we’ll look at a lot of maps . . .

. . . starting with
two map handouts . . .
and all along the way
we’ll look at a lot of maps . . .

. . . starting with
two map handouts . . .
FIGURE 1.1 Major political divisions of Mexico and Central America.

Major Archaeological Sites of Mesoamerica
and we’ll start right off with a look at a wonderful little (more-or-less homemade) movie . . .
Day 01 Tuesday, 4 September 2012 nlt 11:56

video:

**Woman of Chamula**
(14 min., 1069, VC 128)

*streaming video*

course viewing guide
when I say it’s a “wonderful” little film I mean the content is wonderful . . .
the technical quality of the film is horrible
(and that’s a Spanish word)
so bear with the quality and focus on the content. It’s an important little film . . .

. . . almost everything you see in it, and some things you “view” but don’t “see” will re-appear quite often this semester . . .
so bear with the quality and focus on the content. It’s an important little film . . .

. . . almost everything you see in it, and some things you “view” but don’t “see” will re-appear quite often this semester . . .
next . . .

that wonderful little
(more-or-less homemade)

movie . . .
Day 01 Tuesday, 4 September 2012 11:56

video:
Woman of Chamula
(14 min., 1069, VC 128)

streaming video

course viewing guide
our first “field trip” . . .
(Day 01 . . . to see . . .)

Woman of Chamula
our second “field trip” . . .
(Day 02 . . . to visit . . .)

Tikál
and seven other Ancient Mesoamerican sites
our third “field trip” . . .
(Day 04 . . . to visit . . .)

video:
"The Fifth World of the Aztecs"
(60 min., 1997, UM Duluth Library Multimedia (F1430 .S65 2006 DVD), VC 3403-4)

film HomePage
course viewing guide
oriented

University of Minnesota Duluth
Tim Roufs
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http://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/troufs/anth3618/