

Duluth Campus

Department of Sociology -Anthropology
College of Liberal Arts

228 Cina Hall
1123 University Drive
Duluth, Minnesota 55812-3306

Office: 218-726-7551
Fax: 218-726-7759

18 August 2014

Welcome to Ancient Cultures of Middle America

Available on-line in your

Moodle

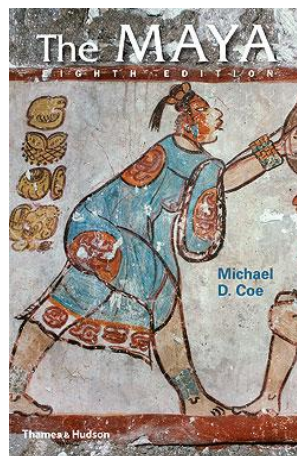
folder at
<moodle.umn.edu>

This will be a great course, and a great experience. You will see. . . .

Some people like to procrastinate. Others are “pre-crastinators”.

I am sending this note out early to make it more convenient for the pre-crastinators to order textbooks on-line (if that is an attractive option for you), and/or to let you get started reading one or other of the interesting books we have for the class (if you are the kind of person who likes to do that sort of thing). If neither of these options apply to you, and you feel like a little end-of-the-summer procrastination, just relax and enjoy the wonderful fall weather, and whatever turns you on this time of year.

But either way, right off the bat you might still be interested in the **textbooks** for the course. Information on the textbooks, including where you can purchase them can be found on the class texts WebPage at <<http://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/troufs/anth3618/matext.html>>.



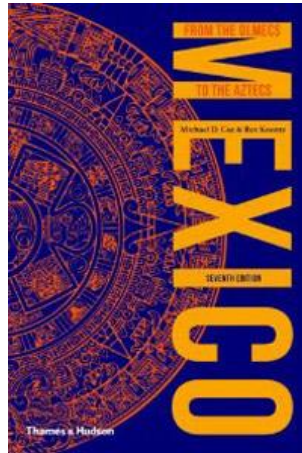
The Maya (8th Ed.)

Michael D. Coe

(NY: Thames and Hudson, 2011)

SBN-10: 0500289026
ISBN-13: 978-0500289020

The Maya (8th Ed.) is currently available online from about \$16.13 new, \$10.71
(+ p/h, at amazon.com & eligible for FREE Super Saver Shipping on orders over \$25).
(17 August 2014)



Mexico (7th Ed.)
Michael D. Coe and Rex Koontz
(NY: Thames and Hudson 2013)
ISBN-10: 0500287554
ISBN-13: 978-0500287552

Mexico (7th Ed.) is currently available online from about \$19.33 new, \$13.08 used
(+ p/h, at amazon.com & eligible for FREE Super Saver Shipping on orders over \$25).
(17 August 2014)

Thousands of other books are available free online, full text versions

<<http://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/troufs/reference/books.html>>, and might occasionally be useful in one or more of your other courses.

And more information on textbooks in general can be found at <<http://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/troufs/tr/textbooks.html>>.

You will likely find the names of some of the places confusing at first—don't let that bother you. After about six weeks they will start sounding familiar to you. Many of the names are in Nahuatl (the language of the Aztecs) or in a Maya or other Mesoamerican languages and dialects so they will sound a bit exotic at first. You will not have to memorize the names, just be able to recognize the major locations and peoples.

Exams will be open-book essays constructed from a list of study questions that you help create, so it would be a good idea for you to have your own copy of each text you plan to use in the exams (see above), and it is a good idea that you take your reading notes right in your copy of the text itself.

One thing that you should keep in mind when approaching the readings, which I will talk more about as the class progresses, is that, as mentioned above, the exams are open-book. And for that you

should normally just need to read the books carefully and be able to discuss them intelligently. That is, you should read these as if you had picked them up at an airport or neighborhood bookshop because you were interested in the subject and wanted to know more about it, just like millions of people have been doing with Michael Coe's many books for decades. And they are still reading them in everyday life today. Your textbooks are two of the most-read books on Ancient Middle America—which is in part why you can purchase them at such a bargain price. In short, this class aims to give you practice in critical thinking, and even creativity.

Critical thinking, involving **evaluation** and **synthesis**, has long been regarded as essential for success in the modern-day world. In recent years, actually for two decades, **creativity** has also become central to success, and "process skills" vital to creativity. Process skills involve "strategies to reframe challenges and extrapolate and transform information, and to accept and deal with ambiguity" (Pappano, "Learning to Think Outside the Box," *The New York Times EducationLife*, 9 February 2014, 8). Laura Pappano, writer in residence at Wellesley Center for Women at Wellesley College, points out that "In 2010 'creativity' was the factor most crucial for success found in an I.B.M. survey of 1,500 chief executives in 33 industries. These days 'creative' is the most used buzzword in LinkedIn profiles two years running" (2014, 8).

With all of these materials you will be expected to share your ideas and comments with others in the **Class Forums and wikis**. I'm looking forward to that.

One of the four main characteristics of American Anthropology is **fieldwork**, "a primary research technique, involving "participant observation," which usually means living among the people one is interested in learning from and about. It would be wonderful if for anthropology classes we could just rent a bus or charter a plane and fly off for a year or more to learn first-hand from the people of Middle America themselves. Money, time, and practicality prohibit that, so the next best things—when it comes to studying anthropology—is **going to places and viewing subjects by film**. More information on Visual Anthropology is available on-line at http://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/troufs/anth1604/visual_anthropology.html. Be sure to have a look at that.

Detailed information on these sorts of activities will be provided as we go along, but you can have a preview look in your **Moodle** home anytime you like.

You will find that there is "an awful lot" of materials on-line—maybe even too many!

You will find **the required materials center stage in your Moodle folder**. **Most of the rest of the materials are optional**, but you may find that material useful in working on your class case study project.

Where to start?

Probably the best place is by having a quick look at the **"First Day Handout"** on-line at http://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/troufs/anth3618/mahandout_first-day.html.

Then have a look at your Moodle Gradebook folder, which gives a nice listing of the actual requirements and due dates for the course. (You'll find the link for that in the upper-left-hand corner of the top of Block 1. **See the figure in the "First Day Handout."**)

Then have a look at the **"Course Overview" in Block 1** (the top of page one) of your **Moodle** folder <https://www.moodle.umn.edu/>. See the figure in the "First Day Handout."

Please heed the earlier word of caution. Moodle recommends that you **use the Firefox browser** (available free at <https://support.mozilla.org/en-US/kb/update-firefox-latest-version>). The Windows Internet Explorer (IE) occasionally will not display items on your screen. **These items will simply not be there on IE** when they are fine on **Moodle** or even on Chrome. Microsoft Word should likewise not be used to cut and paste things to **Moodle**; bad things can happen to your file if you do—randomly. Almost every time you are asked to enter text in **Moodle**, you will see the message, "Please do not copy/paste text directly from Microsoft Word. See explanation [here](http://www1.umn.edu/moodle/issues.html#10) <http://www1.umn.edu/moodle/issues.html#10>." Please pay attention to that request.

So once again, welcome to Anth 3618 Peoples and Cultures of Middle America. This will be a great course, and a great experience. You will see. . . .

Enjoy the State Fair weather. And have a great Labor Day!

My **office hours** and contact information (and other regular schedule information) can be found at <http://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/troufs/anth1602/pcoffice.html>.

Laptops are welcome in the classroom. Many find a laptop quite useful in following the lectures as all lectures are web supported. You can, for example, download all of the slide materials used in class.

Thanks for signing on for Ancient Middle America. I am looking forward to seeing bright and early on the 2nd. . . . In the meantime, you might want to have a look at your **Moodle** folder, which is now on-line at moodle.umn.edu.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to post them on **Moodle** or e-mail troufs@d.umn.edu.

See you on the 2nd.

Best Wishes,

Tim Roufs
Duluth, MN
18 August 2014

P.S. If you are new to the world of "technology" don't worry too much about that. Things may not "work" for you at first, but hang in there and we'll help you along. If you have not used **Moodle** course management system before, you might find it helpful to view **the orientation tutorial**.