

Ancient Cultures of Middle America



Welcome to Anthropology 3618 Ancient Cultures of Middle America

Available on-line in your



folder at [<http://canvas.umn.edu/>](http://canvas.umn.edu/)

I hope you are having a great holiday season.

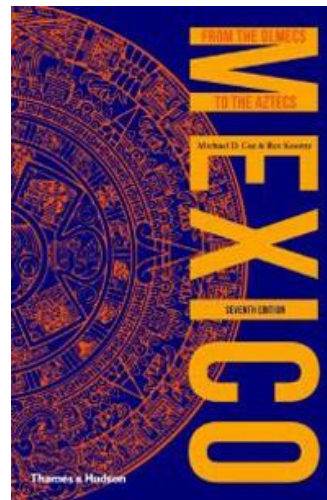
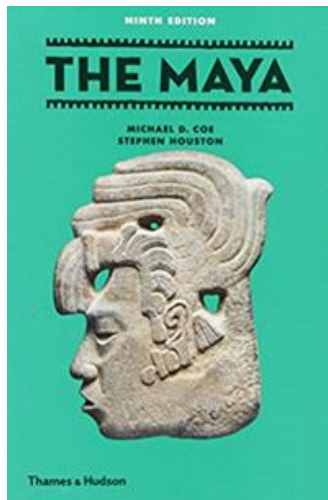
I am sending this note out early to make it more convenient for the pre-crastinators to order the textbook on-line (if that is an attractive option for you), and / or to let you get started reading one or other of the interesting articles we have for the class (if you are the kind of person who likes to read ahead). If neither of these options applies to you, and you feel like a little end-of-the-holiday season procrastination, just relax and enjoy the wonderful winter weather, and, the rest of your break

Ancient Cultures of Middle America will be a great course, and a great experience. You will see. . . .

Interest in ancient world cultures in general—and the ancient cultures of Middle America in particular—has never been higher. **One of the best sources for up-to-date news is [BBC News](#).** I also like [The Telegraph](#) and, to balance things out, [The Guardian](#), and [The New York Times](#).

Right off the bat you might be interested in the textbooks for the course. One text is required, and as you should have your own copy of it as the exams are open-book exams. . .

[The Textbooks](#)



The Maya (9th Ed.)
Michael D. Coe and Stephen D. Houston
(NY: Thames and Hudson, 2015)
ISBN-10: 0500291888
ISBN-13: 978-0500291887

The Maya 9th Ed. is currently available online from about \$18.32 new, \$12.68 used, \$12.99 Kindle
(+ p/h, at amazon.com & eligible for FREE Super Saver Shipping on orders over \$25).
(28 December 2018)

Mexico (7th Ed.)
Michael D. Coe and Rex Koontz
(NY: Thames and Hudson 2013)
ISBN-10: 0500290768
ISBN-13: 9780500290767

Mexico (7th Ed.) is currently available online from about \$20.22 new, \$12.40 used
(+ p/h, at amazon.com & eligible for FREE Super Saver Shipping on orders over \$25).
(27 November 2017)

Full information on the texts for Ancient Middle America can be found at

<<http://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/troufs/anth3618/matext.html#title>>.

Textbooks are available from the following vendors . . .

[UMD Bookstore](#) | [Amazon.com](#) | [Barnes and Noble](#)
[CampusBooks.com](#) | [Chegg](#) [rental] | [ecampus.com](#) | [half.com](#)
[booksprice.com](#) | [CheapestTextbooks.com](#) | [CourseSmart.com](#) | [TextbookMedia.com](#)
| [Direct Textbook](#) | |

More information on textbooks in general can be found at

<<http://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/troufs/trtextbooks.html>>.

And thousands of 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.

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 the text, and it is a good idea that you take your reading notes right in your copy of the text itself.

Midterm exam information is at <http://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/troufs/anth3618/maexams.html#midsemester>, and the **final exam** information is at <http://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/troufs/anth3618/maexams.html#final>.

One thing that you should keep in mind when approaching these 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.

PLEASE NOTE: *Some students are used to principally memorizing facts in classes. This class is not one where that is the focus.* It is about

investigating new topics, reading, listening, synthesizing ideas, thinking, exploring, and becoming familiar enough with the various subjects, peoples and places to carry on an intelligent conversation in modern-day society.

In short, this class aims to give you practice in critical thinking, and even creativity, avoiding rote memorization if possible. Please keep that in mind when thinking about, and getting ready for, the exams.

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).

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 Mexico and Guatemala 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 video, and we will do a lot of that this semester. More information on **Visual Anthropology** is available on-line at http://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/troufs/anth1604/visual_anthropology.html.

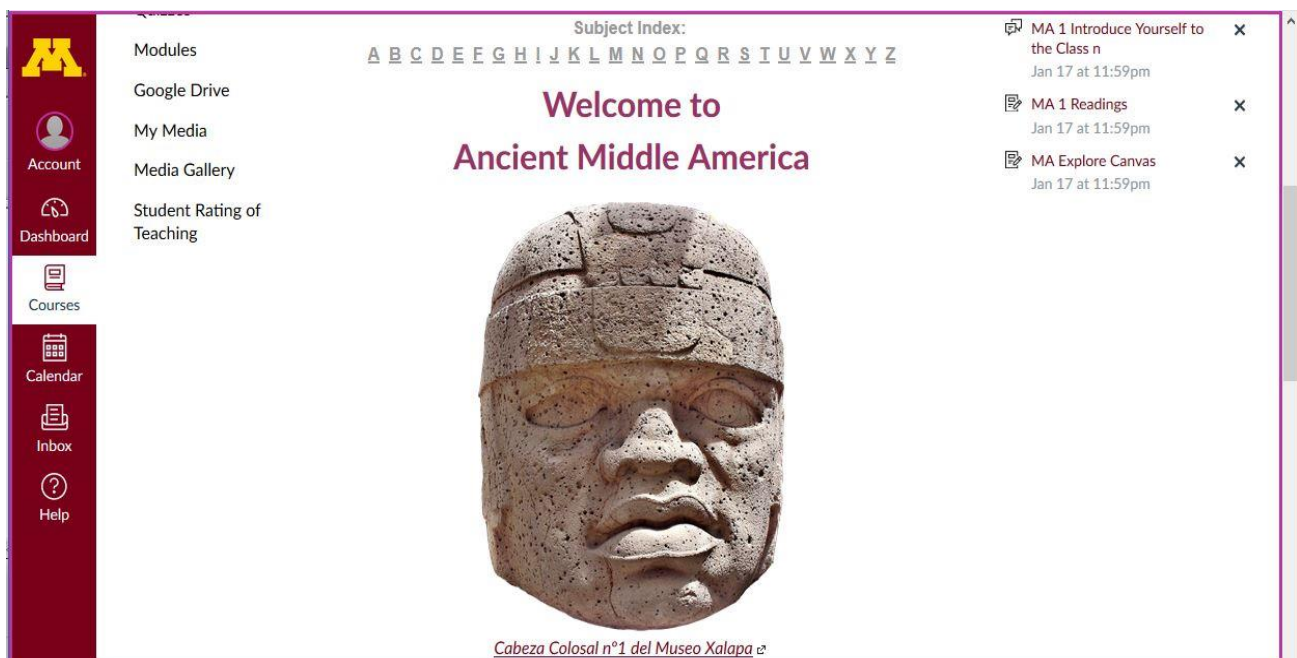
With all of these materials **you will be expected to share your ideas and comments with others** in the Class Discussions and wikis. I'm looking forward to that.

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

Where to start?

Probably the best place to start is with the "**First Day Handout**",
online at http://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/troufs/anth3618/mahandout_first-day.html.

Also have a look at the course **"Home"** page of your  canvas
folder <http://canvas.umn.edu/>. It will look something like this . . .

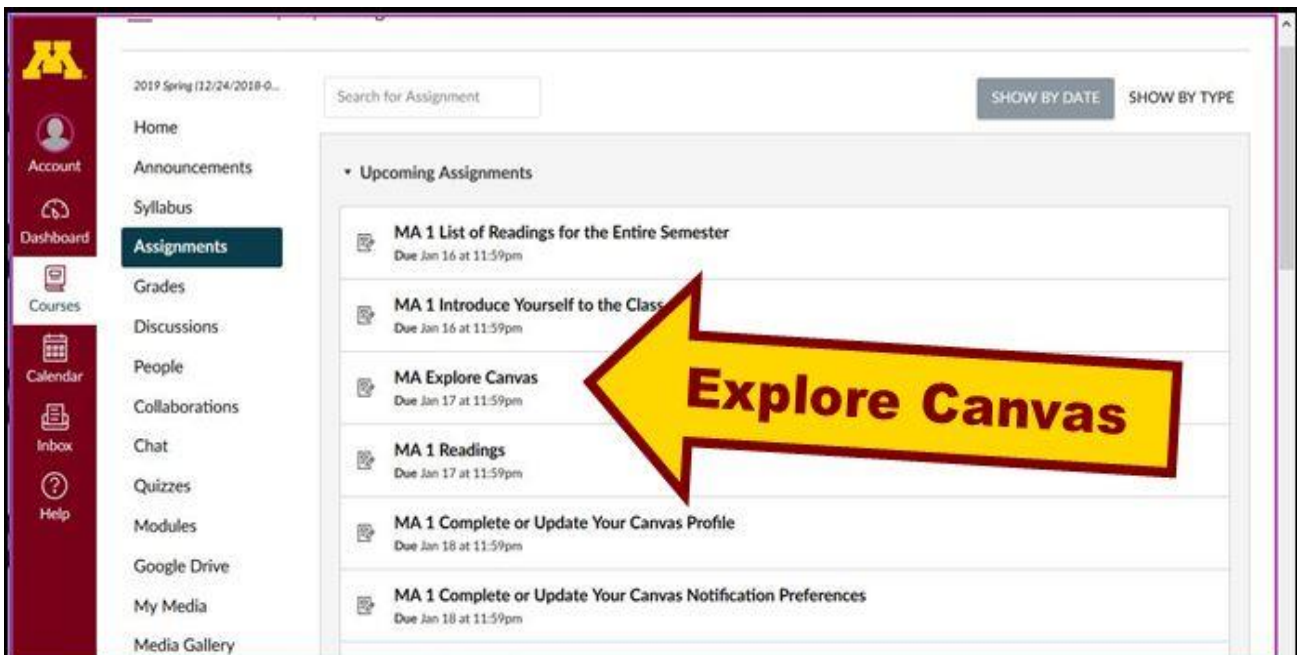


The screenshot shows a Canvas LMS interface. On the left is a dark red sidebar with navigation icons for Modules, Google Drive, My Media, Media Gallery, Student Rating of Teaching, Dashboard, Courses, Calendar, Inbox, and Help. The main content area features a 'Subject Index' with a grid of letters A-Z. Below this is a 'Welcome to Ancient Middle America' message with a large image of a stone head sculpture. At the bottom of the image is the caption 'Cabeza Colosal n°1 del Museo Xalapa'. On the right side, there is a list of course items: 'MA 1 Introduce Yourself to the Class n' (Jan 17 at 11:59pm), 'MA 1 Readings' (Jan 17 at 11:59pm), and 'MA Explore Canvas' (Jan 17 at 11:59pm), each with a close button (X).

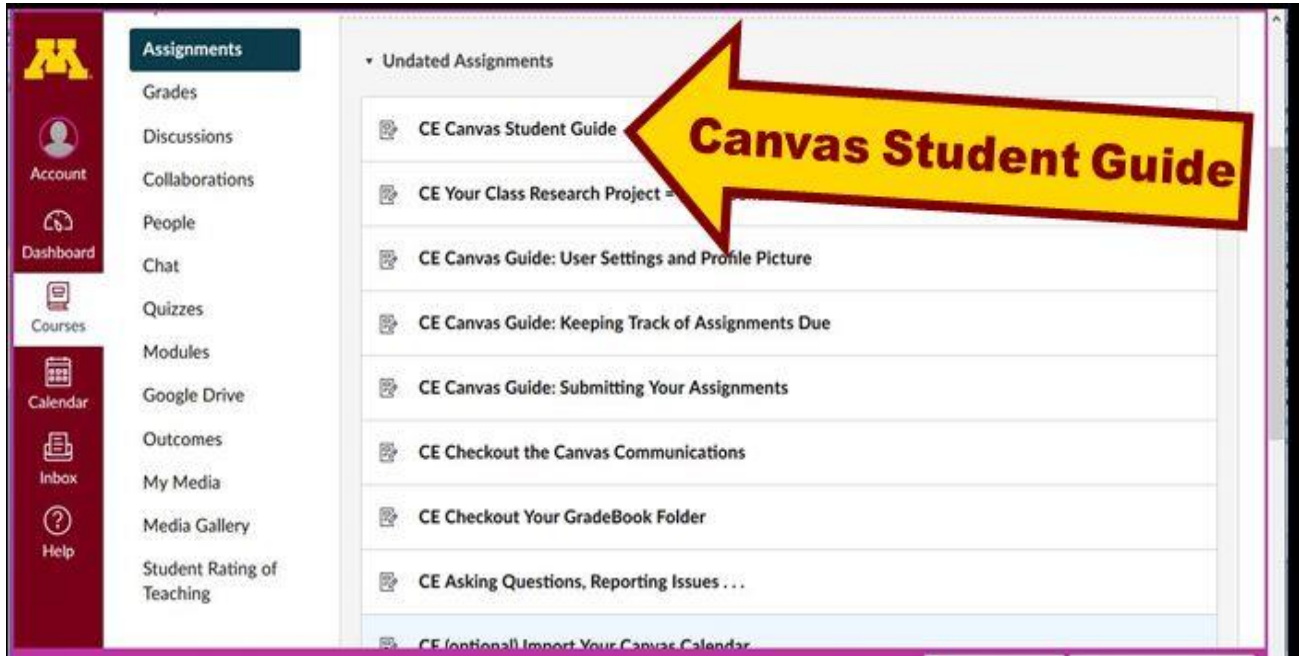
Play around with your Canvas folder materials. . . . From your “Home” page go to “Assignments” . . .



Then look at your Canvas folder materials by clicking the “Explore Canvas . . .” link.



Start with the **"Canvas Student Guide"** if you are new to Canvas.



Then checkout the other items that interest you most.

Then set/update your Canvas (1) **"User Settings"** and **"Profile Picture"**.

Complete or update your (2) **"Canvas Profile"**.

Then set your (3) **"Canvas Notification Preferences"**.

This screenshot shows the Canvas dashboard interface. On the left is a dark red sidebar with navigation icons for Account, Dashboard, Courses, Calendar, Inbox, and Help. The main content area is titled 'Assignments' and displays a list of 'Undated Assignments'. A yellow arrow with the text 'User Settings' points to the assignment titled 'CE Canvas Guide: User Settings and Profile Picture'.

- Grades
- Discussions
- Collaborations
- People
- Chat
- Quizzes
- Modules
- Google Drive
- Outcomes
- My Media
- Media Gallery
- Student Rating of Teaching

Undated Assignments

- CE Canvas Student Guide
- CE Your Class Research Project = (1) Presentation + (2) Term Paper
- CE Canvas Guide: User Settings and Profile Picture
- CE Canvas Guide: Keeping Track of Assignments Due
- CE Canvas Guide: Submitting Your Assignments
- CE Checkout the Canvas Communications
- CE Checkout Your GradeBook Folder
- CE Asking Questions, Reporting Issues ...
- CE (optional) Import Your Canvas Calendar

This screenshot shows the user profile page for 'Test Student'. The 'Account' icon in the sidebar is highlighted with a red box. A yellow arrow with the text 'Set Canvas Profile' points to the 'Settings' link in the user menu. The main content area shows a list of recent messages and notifications.

Account

Test Student

Logout

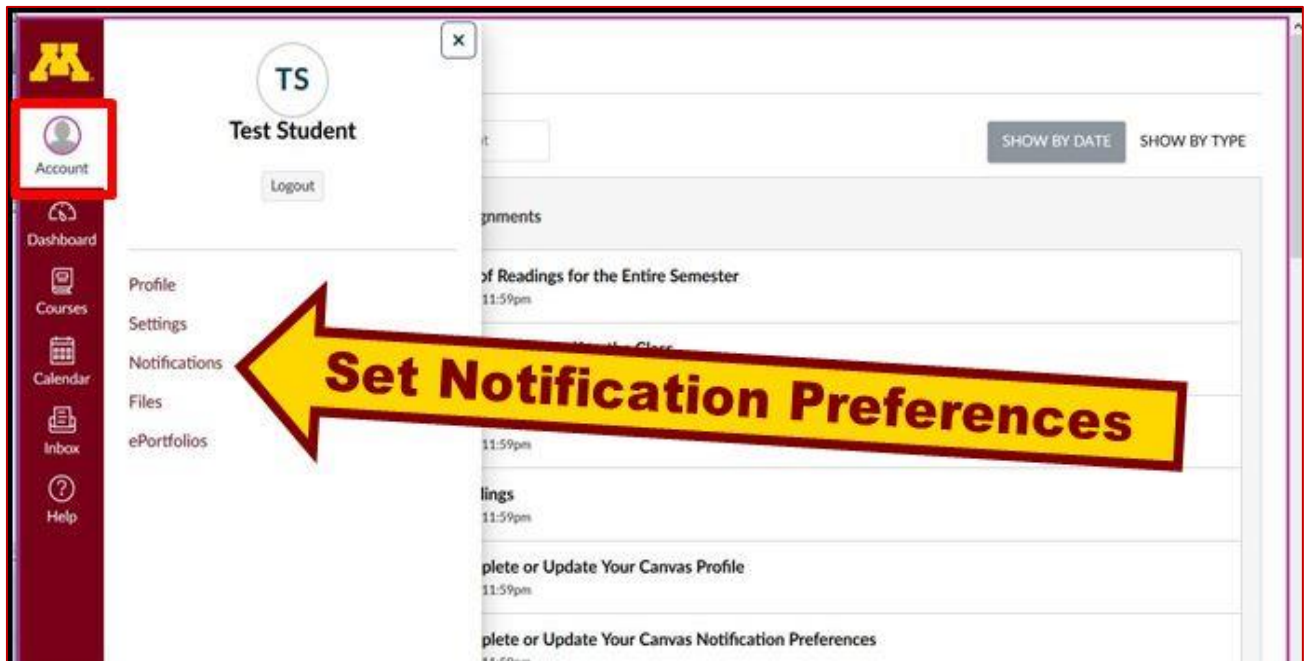
- Profile
- Settings
- Notifications
- Files
- ePortfolios

SHOW BY DATE SHOW BY TYPE

Assignments

Messages

- Complete or Update Your Canvas Profile
- Complete or Update Your Canvas Notification Preferences



**Enjoy the Course and Enjoy the holidays.
Best of the Holiday Wishes to you . . .**

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



Having said that, consider the latest research that suggests . . .

**"For better learning in college lectures,
lay down the laptop and pick up a pen"**

-- Susan M. Dynarski, Evidence Speaks Series, Brookings (10 August 2017).

Laptops Are Great. But Not During a Lecture or a Meeting.



-- Susan Dynarski, The New York Times (26 November 2017)

**So, if you use a computer in class, and your computer is so equipped,
how about compromising and writing on your laptop with an
electronic digital smart pen?**

Have a look at it at <http://canvas.umn.edu/>.

**So once again, welcome to Ancient
Middle America. This *will be* a great
course, and a great experience.**

You will see. . . .

**Thanks for signing on for Ancient Middle America. I am
looking forward to meeting you in class at noon on the 17th of
January. In the meantime, you might want to peruse the
information in your  canvas folder at <http://canvas.umn.edu/>. The
 canvas **Student Guide / Overview / Tour** can be very helpful.**

Student Guide -- written guides with step-by-step instructions for Canvas tools 

Canvas Student Overview (6:47 min) 


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>.

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

See you on the 17th.

Best of the warm Holiday Wishes to you . . .

Tim Roufs
Brisbane, Queensland, Australia
11 January 2019

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  course management system before, you might find it helpful to view the **Canvas Student Guide**.