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Ancient Cultures of Middle America Week 9

Classic Period Mathematics, Science, and Writing

Cultures rise and fall. They always have. And they probably always will. James Michener says about seventy-five “civilizations” so far have followed the pattern, with few remaining at their peak—their own **Classic**—more than two to four hundred years. And they seem to fall when the elite’s greed reaches the point where the populous cannot, or simply will not support the upper class. In effect, it seems, the 99% seem to get tired of the 1% and change the system. Eventually the commoners seem to lose faith in the “system” and it begins to crumble. It’s an age-old pattern.





















And the dozen Ancient Mesoamerican Cultures followed the pattern, albeit that some of them did well for a longer time than most.

But the glory days are most glorious while they last. They’re **Classic**, literally and in almost all ways.

This week we’ll continue our review of the Classic, with some more highlights from the major sites, especially Teotihuacán, and we’ll look into the mathematical and writing systems especially of the Maya.

Diagnostic characteristics of the Classic Stage always include great advances almost all spheres of life, but especially in mathematics, science, writing, architecture and the arts.

On Tuesday—after a little walking around Teotihuacán—we’ll have a look at ***Culture and Math: The Maya*** (31 min., 2006, UM DULUTH Library Multimedia F1435.3.M35 C85 2006 DVD), a short but wonderful little film that sets forth the fundamentals of Mesoamerican mathematical systems, a base which permitted unparalleled development of the Middle American Ancient Classical civilizations.

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10	11	12	13	14
				
15	16	17	18	19
				

[Maya Numerals](#)
[Wikipedia](#)

We'll see "the mathematical system that showed them how to build pyramids and chart the stars and the written language they left behind that tell us of their triumphs."

This will be a great film—you can count on it.

On Thursday we'll have a look at what has been termed **one of the top 100 most significant accomplishments of the 20th century**—*Cracking the Maya Code* (54 min, 2008, UM DULUTH Library

Multimedia F1435.3.W75 C73 2008 DVD).






Maya glyphs in stucco at the *Museo de sitio* in [Palenque](#), Mexico





"The ancient Maya civilization of Central America left behind an intricate and mysterious hieroglyphic script, carved on monuments, painted on pottery, and drawn in handmade bark-paper books. For centuries, scholars considered it too complex ever to understand—until recently, when an ingenious series of breakthroughs finally cracked the code and unleashed a torrent of new insights into the Mayas' turbulent past. For the first time, NOVA presents the epic inside story of how the decoding was done—traveling to the remote jungles of southern Mexico and Central America to investigate how the code was broken and what Maya writings now reveal."

All things considered, it will be another Classic week.

As usual, be sure to check the activities of the week on your **Moodle** HomePage. . . . This week we'll focus on some findings related to Aztec math, and a note on our calendar of things due . . .

-  [Response to the film *Culture and Math: The Maya* \(Due by the end of Week 10—Friday, 7 November 2014; Your Name Will Be Logged\) Feedback](#)
-  [Response to the film *Cracking the Maya Code* \(Due by the end of Week 10—Friday, 7 November 2014; Your Name Will Be Logged\) Feedback](#)
-  [Forum: *How the Aztec Did Math* \(Due End of Week 10, Friday, 7 November 2014\)](#)

Remember to check the results of the class Video Responses from earlier weeks when they close. You can find the results in the **Moodle** Blocks where they first appeared. This week have a look at . . .

-  [Results--*Search for the Lost Cave People* f2014 File resource](#)
-  [Results--*Excavations at La Venta* f2014 File resource](#)
-  [Results--"Looking for One Beginning: The Fallacy of Diffusionism" f2014 File resource](#)
-  [Results--*Teotihuacán: The City of the Gods* f2014 File resource](#)

EXTRA CREDIT

A final word on Extra Credit. If you didn't do quite as well as you might have liked on the Midterm Exam, or if you did better than you even hoped on the Midterm exam but want to "bank" some insurance points for your final course grade, think about doing one (or even two—one of each) of the optional extra credit papers.

There are **two Extra Credit options: (A) a Term Paper Option**, and/or **(B) a Review Option** of a lecture or a related film (*other* than one of the films we see in class). For the review option you may also *compare* two or more films. (Remember from Week 1, one of the main features of anthropology is that it is *comparative*?) Some of the films that qualify for the Film Review Option are listed as "Recommended" and "Good Supplementary" films on the Video Schedule at . . .

[<http://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/troufs/anth3618/mavideo_schedule.html>](http://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/troufs/anth3618/mavideo_schedule.html)

- **Details on the extra credit** are on-line at [<http://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/troufs/anth3618/maextrac.html>](http://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/troufs/anth3618/maextrac.html).
 - **Term Paper Extra Credit Option**
[<http://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/troufs/anth3618/maextrac.html#EC-paper>](http://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/troufs/anth3618/maextrac.html#EC-paper)
 - **Lecture / Film Review Extra Credit Option**
[<http://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/troufs/anth3618/maextrac.html#EC-lecture>](http://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/troufs/anth3618/maextrac.html#EC-lecture)

Helpful information on writing Extra Credit Reports can be found at



(the Purdue Online Writing Lab)

<<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>>

APA Sample Papers

Sample APA Paper: [Definitions of Online Communication](#)




Sample APA Paper: [Adolescent Depression](#)

MLA Sample Papers

MLA Undergraduate Sample Paper: [Andrew Carnegie](#)

MLA Sample Papers: [Nineteenth Century Farming Handbooks](#)

f2014

-  Wiki for Project Collaboration
-  Live chat for Project Collaboration
-  Wiki for Project Collaboration
- QUICKMAIL (see sidebar)

The above items will be found at the top of your **Moodle** folder under “Student Collaboration Space”.

This week’s **(1) Topics, (2) Reading Assignments Listings, and (3) Activities** are detailed in the Week 9 Block of your **Moodle** folder.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to stop in after class, or post them on **Moodle**, or e-mail troufs@d.umn.edu. And that goes especially for questions about your Case Study and the Midterm Exam. Better yet, post them on you **Moodle Student Collaboration Section**.

Best Regards,

Tim Roufs