Robert Stacy-Judd in Mayan Costume, 1932.

**Course Description**

The ancient Maya predicted the end of the world will occur on December 21, 2012—if you believe what you see in the movies, that is. Recent Hollywood films like *Apocalypto* and *2012* have woven fantastic stories around this date, which marks the conclusion of the Mesoamerican Long Count calendar. But what did ancient Maya civilization believe about 2012? This course will consider the issue of cultural appropriation by contrasting the original history and meaning of Mayan artifacts against their reinterpretation in U.S. museum displays, paintings, sculptures, comic books, and movies. Over the course of the semester, we will address questions such as: What can practices of cultural appropriation tell us about the societies involved? Is the adoption of visual elements from one cultural group by another ethically objectionable? Why or why not? What does it mean for an object to become divorced from its original context? Do new interpretations overwrite the old, or can multiple meanings and histories coexist for a single object? And finally, how does the example of Mayan mythology in the American imagination provide insight into other instances of cultural appropriation, both historically and in the present day?
Office Location
My office is located in 41 Wyllys, on the 3rd floor, Room 304.

Email and Telephone
You can email me at brobertson@wesleyan.edu or leave a message on my office telephone at 860-685-2721.

Office Hours
My office hours are Mondays and Wednesdays from 1:00 – 2:00 p.m., and by appointment.

Moodle
All course information including syllabus, research paper guidelines, electronic reserve readings, and research tips can be found on Moodle, which can be found at moodle2.wesleyan.edu. I will post announcements to Moodle; be sure to check the course site once a week.

Course Requirements
A. Readings and Class Participation
The readings for each session are on reserve in the Art Library or available through Moodle and the electronic reserve section of the library website. Every student in the class is responsible for completing the week’s reading assignment before the class meeting. You will want to familiarize yourself with the objects/images and themes to be addressed during class and you will be expected to respond to questions from the readings that might be posed as part of our discussion. It’s also a VERY good idea to make a print out of on-line readings -- having a hard copy enables you to highlight important passages and make notes on the print-out.

Class participation is essential for the success of the colloquium. Please come prepared with questions/responses/ideas regarding the week’s readings.

B. Response Papers
Each student will write three (3) responses (2-3 pages) related to the readings from the dates marked with an asterisk on the course calendar. This response paper will provide your critical insights on the week’s readings and are due to me no later than the Monday before class at 7:00 pm. You can select a passage or article for close textual analysis, raise questions or speculations from the reading, or attempt to think through the material in some way productive for your own work and interests. The response paper is not a book report or summary of the key ideas.

C. Presentation with Abstract and Bibliography
Each student is required to deliver a 20-minute oral presentation (either read from a paper or from notes) fully illustrated using PowerPoint. You will select a work of art engaged in cultural appropriation as the focus of your presentation. The central theme of our course is the cultural appropriation of Maya history and culture; however, you may feel free to choose an object that draws imagery from any pre-Columbian civilization, not only the Maya. On February 12, I will hand out a list of possible topics; the list will not be exhaustive and you should feel free to come up with your own topic. You must have your paper topic selected by March 5.
All students must submit to me an abstract (300-500 words) and one-page bibliography of their topics by April 16. I will disseminate the abstracts to seminar participants via the course list serve.

The presentation is not your final paper. In your presentation, you may choose to address a single point or a few points that your paper will expand upon. The presentation is governed by the necessity to engage your audience with visual material and your written paper is not under the same constraints. In short, while your presentation treats the same material that your final paper does, the presentation is not the same medium of expression, and it should therefore be treated independently, so far as its form is concerned.

D. RESEARCH PAPER
Each student will write a paper (15-20 pages) that expands on your presentation. The written paper must incorporate any critique or suggestions from the professor or seminar participants. Papers are due on May 15.

COURSE GRADING

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>REQUIREMENTS</th>
<th>WEIGHT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Attendance &amp; Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response Papers</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Research Paper</td>
<td>40%</td>
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</table>

COURSE TEXTS
All texts can be found on reserve in the Art Library or through the electronic reserves section of Moodle and the library website. You may want to purchase the following books:

ISBN: 9780292722217

ISBN: 9780500203279

ISBN: 9781444332711

eBooks are available through Wesleyan University libraries for the following titles:


**COURSE POLICY**

Attendance will be taken at each class meeting. More than one (1) unexcused absence (i.e. over a week of class) will result in the lowering of your class attendance and participation grade by one full letter.

In general, **late work is not accepted and there will be no make-ups or extensions**. When submitting papers electronically also be sure to:

- **Save the file in Word with either the .doc or .docx extension**
- **Name the file clearly with your name— for example: GeorgeCLOONEY_AMST311_Paper1.doc**

As a courtesy to your classmates, please turn off all cell phones before coming to lecture. Please do not walk in front of the projectors once the class has begun.

**UNIVERSITY POLICY**

**A. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Wesleyan University has a recognized Honor Code, administered by the Honor Board. This code sets standards for academic integrity for all undergraduate students. As a student you are responsible for upholding these standards for this course. Consequences for plagiarism can include zero points for the assignment, failure of the course, or expulsion from the college.

For additional information on the Honor Code visit the Student Handbook web site: [http://www.wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/studenthandbook/standardsregulations/studentconduct.html](http://www.wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/studenthandbook/standardsregulations/studentconduct.html).

**ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

It is the policy of Wesleyan University to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. Students, however, are responsible for registering with Disabilities Services, in addition to making requests known to me in a timely manner. If you require accommodations in this class, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible [during the second week of the semester], so that appropriate arrangements can be made. The procedures for registering with Disabilities Services can be found at [http://www.wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/disabilities/studentguide.html](http://www.wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/disabilities/studentguide.html).

**B. RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES**

University policy states that students should not be penalized in any way for participation in religious observances. Students shall be allowed, whenever practicable, to make up academic assignments that are missed due to such absences. It is the student’s responsibility to contact the professor, and make arrangements for make-up work or examinations. The student is responsible for providing written notification to the professor within the first two weeks of the semester. The notification must identify the religious holiday(s) and date(s).
**Course Schedule**

**Week 1: January 29**

Brief History of Pre-Columbian Studies
- In Class: *Cracking the Maya Code*

**Week 2: February 5**

Maya Art and Ritual Life: Kingship and City-States, Blood and Sacrifice
- Miller, Chapters 4-7: Sculpture and the Human Form, 88-167.
- Miller, Chapter 8: Maya Murals and Books, 168-189.
- Myth of the Hero Twins, from the *Popul Vuh*: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R6aGe4f1D9g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R6aGe4f1D9g)

**Week 3: February 12**

What is Cultural Appropriation?
Living Remnants of the Past: U.S. Archaeology & Display in the 19th Century
We will visit Olin Library Davison Special Collections for the second half of class.

*Week 4: February 19*

Mysterious Maya: Diffusionist Origins and a Fountainhead of Faith
- Young, “Cultural Appropriation as Assault,” 106-128.
- Evans, “Joseph Smith and the Archaeology of Revelation,” “The Toltec Lens of Désiré Charnay,” and “Bordering on the Magnificent: Augustus and Alice Le Plongeon in the Kingdom of Móo,” 88-152.

Optional:
**WEEK 5: FEBRUARY 26**

Maya as a Usable Past: Museums and National Identity
- Young, “Cultural Appropriation as Theft,” 63-105.
- Diana Fane, “Reproducing the Pre-Columbian Past: Casts and Models in Exhibitions of Ancient America, 1824-1935,” in *Collecting the Pre-Columbian Past*, 141-176. (ERes)
- Shelly Errington, “Nationalizing the Pre-Columbian Past in Mexico and the United States,” *The Death of the Authentic Primitive and Other Tales of Progress*, 161-187. (ERes)

Optional:
- Curtis M. Hinsley, “In Search of the New World Classical,” in *Collecting the Pre-Columbian Past*, 105-122. (ERes)

**WEEK 6: MARCH 5**

Modernist Primitivism and the Vanished Race
Case Study: Maya Architecture vs. Mayan Revival Architecture

*Paper Topic Due*

Optional:

**SPRING BREAK**

**WEEK 7: MARCH 26**

Beyond Time: Robert Smithson’s *Incidents of Mirror-Travel in Yucatan*
**WEEK 8: APRIL 2**

Prophetic Maya: The 2012 Phenomenon

- Hulk Battles the Mayan Apocalypse: http://www.comicbookresources.com/?page=article&id=37636

*WEEK 9: APRIL 9*

Ethics of Representation, Part I: *Apocalypto* and Sacrifice

- Young, “Profound Offense and Cultural Appropriation,” 129-158.
- Mesoamerican Ballgame: http://www.ballgame.org/

Optional:

**WEEK 10: APRIL 16**

Ethics of Appropriation, Part II: Colonial Legacies

**Paper Abstract and Bibliography Due**

- Documentary: *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, Episode 2: Conquest
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TgYZ6gfqsIQ
- NPR, “Finders Not Keepers, Yale Returns Artifacts to Peru”: Listen at http://www.npr.org/2012/01/01/143653050/finders-not-keepers-yale-returns-artifacts-to-peru

Optional:
Case Study: Undiscovered Amerindians and Ruins: A Fake Documentary

- Coco Fusco, “The Other History of Intercultural Performance,” The Drama Review (1994) (PDF)

**WEEK 12: APRIL 30**
Final Presentations

**WEEK 13: MAY 7**
Final Presentations

**WEDNESDAY, MAY 15**
Final Paper Due