

Belize Study Abroad: History, Art, and Culture

GE8 The Arts, Presentation Skills

SUNY Cortland 2020

Professor Jeremiah Donovan

Department of Art and Art History

Old Main G34 Office Phone x4310

COURSE DESCRIPTION ATH 332

Cross-cultural experience devoted to the art and history of the Maya civilization. Particular focus on the exploration of archaeological sites, and field excursions to contemporary Maya communities. Investigation of the ritual activities of the Classic Period (250CE-900CE). Students will develop an understanding of Belizean art and culture and its place in modern society while comparing and contrasting it with Maya Culture of ancient times.

CATEGORY 8: The Arts

The goal of this category is to help students develop an awareness of the arts as a system of inquiry in which aesthetic elements are involved. Courses in this category will help students understand the creative process, be broadly based within or among the areas of the arts and provide this breadth through an historical approach or participation in the creative process. Students will explore the idea that important learning experiences can take place through the use of senses and imagination.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will demonstrate an understanding of:

1. at least one principal form of artistic expression and the creative process inherent therein;
2. the significance of artistic expression in past and/or present civilizations.

Students will demonstrate an understanding of

1. at least one principal form of artistic expression and the creative process inherent therein;

This course is by its very nature experiential. Students will acquire the ability to describe the importance of ceramics as a creative practice of the Maya people. By hiking into the underground offering caves frequented by the ancient Maya and experiencing the ritual use and placement of pottery left behind, students will gain an understanding of the significant role of ceramics as an artistic expression. Field excursions to ancient archaeological sites and observations of the many stone-carved steles and other monuments will give students a new perspective on the role of the artist in recording historical record. Student will be able to analyze the perspectives of self and others and demonstrate this in daily reflective journaling and group discussion.

2. the significance of artistic expression in past and/or present civilizations;

Students will acquire the knowledge to be able to discuss the role narrative polychrome pottery played as a form of social currency in the ancient Maya society. Field excursions to museums, archaeological sites, and modern Maya communities will expose students to the value of artistic expression in the Maya culture past and present. Through written critical analysis, students will be able to compare and contrast the meaning and value of ancient artifacts (such as pottery and stone carvings) with their contemporary equivalents.

PRESENTATION SKILLS

Each student will give an oral presentation describing the history and significant highlights of one of the ancient sites we will visit in Belize and that has been researched prior to arriving in country.

Students will provide a detailed outline complete with sources identified regarding information and visuals associated with the presentation. Students will make at least one presentation in the course and respond to questions and comments following the presentation. Each evening students will enter into group discussions on the field excursions of the day.

1. Students must submit at least one outline with attached source list related to the presentation.

2. Students must evaluate their own presentation and those of other students, according to criteria provided by the instructor. Presentation skills count as 10% of your total grade. Students will be guided in the preparation for their oral presentation, including timeframe, research and delivery. This instruction will be provided during pre-departure meetings and orientation discussions upon arrival in Belize.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. To provide historical, cultural, and creative perspectives of Belize, while exploring ancient Maya sites.
2. To provide hands-on experiences while engaged in collaborative traditional activities within local Belizean communities.
3. To provide experiential learning, while developing an understanding of the Maya civilization through archaeological practices.
4. To achieve the ability to describe and analyze verbally and through critical written evaluation, traditional art practices and ways of life of the Maya civilization, and the vestiges remaining in Belizean culture.

COURSE CONTENT

This course will present a contemporary and historical view of Belizean culture with an emphasis on the Maya civilization, through lectures, field trips and a variety of participatory experiences. Students will be exposed to the significance of artistic expression, ritual practices, and everyday life of the Maya people, in past and present civilizations within Central America. As a hands-on study abroad course, students will gain an understanding and working knowledge of traditional art practices (examples: pottery making, stone carving, painting, architecture). Students will be introduced to archaeological findings through lectures and field studies.

There will be assigned reading of historical and contemporary art historical issues of the Maya civilization. Students will be required to write 2 papers and complete a day-day reflective journal. Papers, reflective journal and edited photo journal will be due January 22, 2012. We will discuss submission requirements at our orientation meeting prior to departure from US.

1. Each student will give an oral presentation to the class describing the history and significant highlights of one of the ancient sites we will visit in Belize. Accompanying this presentation, students will submit in draft form, a 5-page paper on the Maya site selected for their presentation. Upon return to the USA students will revise this draft reflecting the actual experiences of visiting the site. It will be resubmitted upon return to US as a final paper, allowing additional research and reflections from the experience in country.
2. Students will be required to select **one book** from the following list and write a 5-page paper in response to artistic practices and art objects of the Maya. The research paper will be submitted upon return to the US, allowing the opportunity to expand the content of the paper with additional research and to draw from personal experience.
3. Students will keep a written day -by-day 8-10-page reflective journal relating to the experiences of the trip. This journal will respond to a selected topic that will act as the lens through which the student views the day-to-day experiences. In addition, students are expected to keep a photo journal that will be edited and submitted upon return to the USA.

Book List

The World of the Ancient Maya - John S. Henderson- Comprehensive text on the Maya culture and history. Extremely informative (Cornell University professor).

Dancing into Dreams- Bryan Just- Great overall history and documentation of the Maya. Topics include customs and politics of the Maya as well as ceramics and other artifacts discovered in burial tombs.

Painting the Maya Universe- Dorie Reents- Budet- Great information on the lives of the ancient Maya gleaned from archaeological discoveries. One of my favorites.

Last Flight of the Scarlett Macaw- Bruce Barcott- Good overall history and contemporary information. Describes the plight of one woman's struggle (Sharon Matola of the Belize Zoo) to help bring awareness of the natural resources of Belize. Also, a favorite.

The Ancient Maya; New Perspectives- Heather McKillop- Heather McKillop examines the debates concerning Mayan hieroglyphs, the Maya economy, and the conflicting theories behind the enigmatic collapse of the Maya civilization. The most readable and accessible work in the field.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Attendance at all sessions, group activities and participation on field trips is required. Your engagement in class sessions and behavior at all times, including evenings is expected. They will be considered as factors in the final grade.

EVALUATION POLICY

As an International study- abroad program it is important to recognize that you are representing yourself, as well as SUNY Cortland, the USA, and myself professionally. One student's behavior, attitude, or disrespect will reflect on all. We are entering a different culture Final grade will be based on individual participation, professionalism, and the following factors:

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1. Pre-departure preparation and research on the three ancient sites. | 20% |
| 2. Attendance, participation, effort, and attitude. | 30% |
| 3. Final project, including written material, and revised paper. | 40% |
| 4. Collaborative oral presentation with slide lecture. | 10% |

EVALUATION DESCRIPTION

Prior to departure, students form groups of 2 each and select a topic of one of three ancient sites (Xunanchunich, Actun Tunichil Muknal, and Cahal Pech, including research on Dr. Jaime Awe) we will visit. All students will conduct research of all three sites individually and be ready to enter discussions about these sites prior to arrival in Belize. While in country and in preparation for a scheduled field trip the following day, one group of students will conduct a presentation to the rest of the group on the site they selected for research.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

The college is an academic community, which values academic integrity and takes seriously its responsibility for upholding academic honesty. All members of the academic community have an obligation to uphold high intellectual and ethical standards. For more information on academic integrity, please refer to the College Handbook, the College Catalog and the Code of Student Conduct and Related Policies.

It is assumed that you will submit only your own work that has been done expressly for this course, during the time parameters established. Written work must contain your own ideas, expressed in your own words and any quotations and sources must be cited.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

If you are a student with a disability and wish to request accommodations, please contact the Disability Resources Office at disability.resources@cortland.edu or call 607-753-2967. Information regarding your disability will be treated in a confidential manner. Because many accommodations require early planning, requests for accommodations should be made as early as possible. All students should consider meeting with their course instructor who may be helpful in other ways.

DIVERSITY

SUNY Cortland is dedicated to the premise that every individual is important in a unique way and contributes to the overall quality of the institution. We define diversity broadly to include all aspects of human difference. The College is committed to inclusion, equity, and access and thus committed to creating and sustaining a climate that is equitable, respectful and free from prejudice for students, faculty and staff. We value diversity in the learning environment and know that it enhances our ability to inspire students to learn, lead and serve in a changing world. We are committed to promoting a diverse and inclusive campus through the recruitment and retention of faculty, staff and students. As a community, we hold important the democracy of ideas, tempered by a commitment to free speech and the standards of inquiry and debate. To this end, we are dedicated to developing and sustaining a learning environment where it is safe to explore our differences and celebrate the richness inherent in our pluralistic society.” (College Handbook, Chapter 130)

INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

SUNY Cortland is committed to a diverse, equitable and inclusive environment. The course instructor honors this commitment and respects and values differences. All students enrolled in this course are expected to be considerate of others, promote a collaborative and supportive educational environment, and demonstrate respect for individuals with regard to ability or disability, age, ethnicity, gender, gender identity/expression, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic status or other aspects of identity. In an environment that fosters inclusion, students have the opportunity to bring their various identities into conversation as they find helpful, but are not expected to represent or speak for an entire group of people who share aspects of an identity. If you have any questions or concerns about this statement, contact the Institutional Equity and Inclusion Office at 607-753-2263.” (IEIO <http://www2.cortland.edu/about/diversity/>)

TITLE IX

Title IX, when combined with New York Human Rights Law and the New York Education Law 129-B, prohibits discrimination, harassment and violence based on sex, gender, gender identity/expression, and/or sexual orientation in the education setting. The federal Clery Act and NY Education Law 129-B provide certain rights and responsibilities after an incident of sexual or interpersonal violence. When a violation occurs, victims and survivors are eligible for campus and community resources. Where the College has jurisdiction, it may investigate and take action in accordance with College policy. If you or someone you know wishes to report discrimination based in sex, gender, gender identity/expression, and/or sexual orientation, or wishes to report sexual harassment, sexual violence, stalking or relationship violence, please contact the Title IX Coordinator at 607-753-4550, or visit cortland.edu/titleix to learn about all reporting options and resources. (Updated by SUNY Legal Feb. 1, 2018.)” (Title IX [www.2.cortland.edu/titleix](http://www2.cortland.edu/titleix))