Course Description
This interdisciplinary course assesses the history and culture of Mexico in three dimensions. Our readings on the Maya, Teotihuacan, the Mexica culture and the environment will orient students to the environmental history of Indigenous Mexico, and the course will facilitate students’ exploration, observation, and analysis of the climate and built environment. We will explore Teotihuacán, Mayan, and Mexica built environments and symbolic spaces, walk the various archeological and historical sites, and assess these civilizations as we see them. In the Yucatan, we will explore the Mayan past and the Mayan and Mexican present to understand the role of history in shaping our world. In Yucatan, we will visit major archeological sites, cities, urban markets, and natural wonders to assess the role of environment, space, and people in the production of history. In Mexico City, we will use the built environment and historical memory via murals springboard to assess production of the history. We will explore the Plaza Mayor, Catedral Metropolitana, and the Palacio Nacional, markets in Mexico City. Multiple professors bring their disciplinary perspectives to bear on common questions and concerns.

Academic Program and Learning Outcomes
We employ a "Place as Text" teaching methodology, which inserts students into social environments and fosters close observation of the local culture. We make use of five basic learning strategies: mapping, observing, listening, discussing, and reflecting. The central goal is for students to take an active role in the direction of their learning by:

- self-selecting course topics and readings (from among selections provided by professors at orientation) that most interest them;
- Dedicating themselves before and during the program to become "student-experts" in their chosen field;
• Providing faculty ahead of departure with a list of three questions that they regard as the crux of their self-selected topic and readings;
• Participating in small group excursions that (safely) place them in culturally and geographically uncomfortable situations;
• In pairs, leading seminar-style class discussions on their chosen topic, including fielding questions from classmates and professors; and
• Synthesizing readings, observations, and class discussions in short papers submitted to the faculty.

In addition to acquiring knowledge of Mayan and Mexican society, past and present, students learn to work effectively in small groups, improve their oral presentation and analytical skills, and develop a heightened sense of confidence and leadership. Students are required to give oral reports, record their observations and reflections, and complete a final (creative) project. On average, there are 3.5 hours of instruction per day, in the form of excursions, seminars, and debriefings, for 38.5 total contact hours. Seminars and debriefings will be held in designated class space at our hotels (e.g. a small conference room) and at excursion sites (e.g. in a shaded area at a given Mayan site).

Program Design
We spend eight days in the Yucatan Peninsula (based largely in the cities of Merida and Campeche) and then travel by plane to Mexico City for the final four days of the program. In the Yucatan, we explore the famous Mayan archaeological sites of Chichen Itza and Uxmal, the markets & neighborhoods of Merida and Campeche, small villages surrounding Merida, the ecological reserve of Celestun, two cenotes (underground natural swimming pools used by the ancient Maya), a beach village, among other excursions. In Mexico City, we explore the Historic Center, the original works of Mexico's famous muralists like Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo, the National Anthropological Museum (which houses many of the original Maya artifacts found in the Yucatan Peninsula), Chapultepec Castle, the capital city’s rich and diverse markets & neighborhoods, the Aztec Templo Mayor, and the famous temples of Teotihuacan. We conclude the program with a farewell dinner & surprise cultural outing.

At the pre-departure November 2018 program orientation, we will familiarize students with the Place as Text pedagogical approach. One important element will entail students dividing into small groups (2-3 students per group) based on common academic/intellectual interests. Each small group will self-selects one of the following program topics:

1. The construction of identity
2. Doing gender and ethnicity
3. “Selling” culture
4. Environment and sustainability
5. Art & social change
6. Mayan rituals and beliefs
7. The intersection of past and present
8. The influences/impacts of tourism
9. Museum and representation
10. Voices of history
11. Markets & neighborhoods

Each small group’s responsibilities include:
1. Investigate your selected topic ahead of December 26 program departure. As a small group, develop three central questions you regard as the crux of your topic and wish to explore once in Mexico. Each group should email its three questions to all program professors by December 24 (the day before Christmas).
2. Self-select and closely read 3 of the 30 program articles (available in our Dropbox folder). Members of each small group should read the same three articles. **Students should read their three articles prior to program departure on December 26.** Bring your three articles with you to Mexico; you will need them to complete on-site assignments.

3. Once in Mexico, each group will organize and lead one class presentation/discussion on its chosen (pre-departure) topic. **The goal of the program is for each group to become student-experts on its self-selected topic.** Each group should plan on a 30-45 minute presentation to the class, and then generate class discussion and field questions from students and professors. Presenters should not rely on PowerPoint, Prezi, or other visual aids.

Presentations are based on a) pre-departure investigation of your self-selected topic, b) self-selected Dropbox readings, and c) on-site observations, reflections and analyses (in Mexico). Approximately two days prior to a group’s presentation, members of the group will meet privately with Dr. Dizgun, Dr. Abrams, Dr. Hunt and Dr. Sierra to discuss group preparations, including a) how you intend to organize your presentation, b) which Dropbox articles you will use and how, and c) the ideas and questions you have formulated to generate class discussion. Following your class presentation, members of the group will submit a joint 2-page reflection paper on a salient aspect of their investigation (details will be provided on-site in Mexico).

4. In addition to the above group oral presentation, once in Mexico, students participate in Place as Text small-group excursion activities centered on observation and reflection. The composition of these excursion groups will be different from the above self-selected oral presentation groups (the professors will determine the composition of these excursion groups; the groups may differ from one small-group activity to the next). The Place as Text activities include, for example, a) “mapping” (broadly-defined) the neighborhood urban and rural areas we/you will visit; b) analyzing murals and other art forms; c) observing markets and public landscapes; d) interacting with locals; and e) sampling local cuisine. Prior to each Place as Text small-group excursion, faculty provide students with a one-page sheet to help better prepare them. Following each Place as Text small group excursion, we hold a seminar-style reflection/debriefing; each student then prepares a 1-2 page written reflection paper for submission. Students are permitted to “skip” one of these written reflections on the program so they may concentrate more fully on their small group oral presentation (see #3 above). Further details provided on-site in Mexico.

5. Final project: Students will create a storyboard, digital-story, photo-essay, or other approved creative project that encapsulates one or more of their central program reflections. Guidelines provided on-site in Mexico.

**Grading Procedures**

90 – 100 A  
80 – 89 B  
70 – 79 C  
60 – 69 D  
Below 60 F

The small group presentation to the class and accompanying 2-3 page reflection paper (see item #3 above) counts for 40% of your final grade. The small group Place as Text excursions and accompanying 1-2 page reflection papers (see item #4 above) counts for 40%. The final project (see item #5 above) counts for the remaining 20%.
**Summary of Your Pre-Departure Academic Responsibilities**

1. Investigate your self-selected topic with other members of your group.
2. Read closely your three Dropbox readings. Bring copies with you to Mexico.
3. In English or in Spanish, read the one common group text, Carlos Fuentes’s “Chac Mool” (Dropbox).
4. Together with the other member(s) of your group, devise your three core questions (see item #1 above). Email them (one email per group) to all program faculty by December 24.
5. In no more than one page, each student should answer the following question: “How would you define the authentic Mexican experience?” Email your individual response to the program faculty by December 24 too.

**Attendance Policy**

Students are expected to attend every program activity, including group seminars, excursions, and presentations. KIIS requires that any unexcused absence result in grade reduction, and multiple unexcused absences may result in expulsion from the program.

**Academic Honesty Policy**

Cheating, plagiarism (submitting another person's material as one's own), or doing work for another person which will receive academic credit are all impermissible. This includes the use of unauthorized books, notebooks, or other sources in order to secure or give help during an examination, the unauthorized copying of examinations, assignments, reports, term papers, or the presentation of unacknowledged material as if it were the student's own work. Disciplinary action may be taken beyond the academic discipline administered by the faculty member who teaches the course in which the cheating took place.

**Texts and References**

1. Prior to departure, all students and professors will read one common text: famed Mexican novelist Carlos Fuentes’s short story, “Chac Mool” (Dropbox)

2. Each group will self-select and closely read three of the following articles (Dropbox):

   - Azcárate, “Contentious Hotspots: Ecotourism and the Restructuring of Place at the Biosphere Reserve Ria Celestun” (2010).
   - Castañeda, "We Are Not Indigenous!": An Introduction to the Maya Identity of Yucatan” (2004).

Dehoorne, Murat and Petit-Charles, "El ecoturismo en el centro de las estrategias de desarrollo. Elementos de reflexión a partir de experiencias caribeñas" (2010).

Eiss, "Constructing the Maya" (2008).

Ellis, “Is community-based forest management more effective than protected areas? A comparison of land use/land cover change in two neighboring study areas of the Central Yucatan Peninsula, Mexico” (2008).

Figueroa Magaña, "El país como ningún otro: un análisis empírico del regionalismo yucateco" (2013).

Folan, "Triadic Temples, Central Plazas and Dynastic Palaces: A Diachronic Analysis of the Royal Court Complex, Calakmul, Campeche, Mexico" (2001).


Gillespie, "Body and Soul Among the Maya: Keeping the Spirits in Place" (2002).

Hostettler, "Rethinking Maya Identity in Yucatan, 1500–1940" (2004).


McAnany, "Perspectives on Actors, Gender Roles, and Architecture at Classic Maya Courts and Households" (2001).

Medina, "Commoditizing Culture: Tourism and Maya Identity” (2004).

Pyburn, “Consuming the Maya” (1998).


Torres, “Toward a better understanding of tourism and agriculture linkages in the Yucatan: Tourist food consumption and preferences” (2002).


Wilson, "Introduction: The Impacts of Tourism in Latin America" (2008).

General Reading on the Maya (optional)