

Ancient Worlds
ANTH 1910
Fall 2019

Topics and Themes in the Study of Ancient Worlds

I. Primary Objectives

- A. Meaning
- B. Materiality

II. The Dual Nature of Archaeology

- A. Search for Objective Knowledge about the Past (Cultural Meaning and Materiality)
- B. Political Dialogue with the Present

III. Common Elements of Cosmological Belief

- A. Multiplicity
- B. Axiality
- C. Continuity
- D. Rituality
- E. Cyclicity
- F. Duality

IV. Variation in Cosmologies and Forms of Religious Experience

- A. Animism
- B. Shamanism
- C. Ancestor worship
- D. Polytheism
- E. Monotheism
- F. Paganism/Neo-paganism

V. Hermeneutic Method: Multiple Lines of Evidence

- A. Empathetic understanding
- B. Ethnographic analogy (San, Dande, Pueblo)
- C. Written Texts
- D. Oral history (indigenous knowledge)
- E. Material Culture (artifacts and settlements in context)
- F. Iconography
- G. Neuropsychology
- H. Imagination
- I. Phenomenology
- J. Archaeoastronomy

VI. The Governing Power of Religion: Roles of Religious Leaders/Ritual Specialists

- A. *intermediaries* with the divine.
- B. *representatives* of the divine.
- C. *personifications* of the divine.
- D. *instruments* of the divine.

VII. Ancient Dualities/Existential Anxieties

- A. Nature-Culture
- B. Life-Death
- C. Male-Female
- D. Individual-Community
- E. Order-Chaos
- F. Heaven-Earth

VIII. Histories

- A. Shallow
- B. Deep
- C. Reconstructed
- D. Produced (e.g., Moundbuilder Myth)
- E. Official (e.g., Egyptian “Kings Lists”; Mayan stelae)

IX. “Great Culture”

- A. Ideas & Attitudes
- B. Materialities (“Visual Aids”)
- C. Ritualities
- D. Mythologies

X. The Relationships between Materiality, Rituality, and Cosmology

- A. Caveworld (Band Society): Trance (ASC), “art”, shamanism.
- B. Tell, Henge, Pueblo, and Mound worlds (Tribes, Chiefdoms): Death, excarnation, burial, skywatching (solar, lunar), pilgrimage, feasting, ancestor worship.
- C. Palaceworld and Pyramidworld (Civilizations): Great Culture monumentality, divine kingship, pilgrimage, polytheism, human sacrifice (of self and others).

XI. Sacredness and the Shaping of “Mass Psychology”

- A. Sacred Objects: Venus figurines, Obsidian mirrors, Ramey pots, Mayan masks.
- B. Sacred Sites: Magic Caves, Henges, Great Houses, Great Kivas, Mounds, Earthworks.
- C. Sacred Geographies: roads and landscapes symbolize “spirit paths”, “symbolic umbilicals”, “middle places”, “heavens-on-earth”.
- D. Sacred Architecture
 - 1. Pyramids (Egyptians)
 - 2. Palaces (Minoans)
 - 3. Plazas (Mayans)
 - 4. Temples (Aztecs)
 - 5. Tombs
- E. Sacred Texts: Pyramid Texts, Popol Vuh, Codices

XII. Ancient Legacies and the Modern World

- A. Materialities
 - 1. Architecture
 - 2. Iconography
 - 3. Texts
- B. Ritualities
 - 1. Pilgrimage
 - 2. Sacrifices