

URI in Belize, Summer 2008
University of Rhode Island
July 21-August 10
Syllabus

Program Director:

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Belize:

Belize is a peaceful, English speaking country located on the northeast coast of Central America , it has borders with Mexico and Guatemala. There is a low coastal plain, much of it covered with mangrove swamp, but the land rises gradually towards the interior. The area of the mainland and cays is 8,867 square miles. The country's greatest length from North to South is 173 miles and its greatest width is 68 miles.

Belize shares a rich Maya heritage with its neighboring countries of Guatemala, Mexico, and Honduras, and is considered to have been the heart of the Maya civilization during the classic period. The legacy of the ancient Maya is present in the modern peoples and their customs as well as their language.

Description of Courses and Goals:

The program is targeted towards students who can work with others in a climate of cultural and linguistic diversity, in a tropical climate that at times can be physically challenging. The Belize Summer Field Course, offers students the opportunity of personal exploration, study and research in a rich environment and cultural setting with close supervision and instruction.

Section A: Archaeological Field Experience:

Students will have the opportunity to immerse in an archeological excavation at the Site of Cahal Pech under the supervision of Dr. James Awe and his field crew. Students will excavate from 7:00 AM to 3:00 PM Monday to Friday. On the 3d week they will incorporate to Archaeology of the Maya section of the program.

- Students will keep a daily journal of their observations
- Take a final exam
- Students will participate on the weekend Field Trips

Recommended readings before departure:

Field Methods in Archaeology by Thomas Hester, 1997

Grading:

Field work: 70%

Journal: 30%

Section B: Archaeology of the Maya

We will cover history of Maya studies, archaeological field methods, chronological setting, origins, growth, and decline of the Maya Civilization. By the end of the course students will understand the process by which the archaeologists evaluate different types of data and make conclusions about prehistoric cultures.

Day field trips to other Maya Archeological sites, Belize City, and other sites of interest will be included in the program

Textbook: Ancient Maya, The rise and fall of a Rainforest Civilization by Arthur Demarest, 2004

Other suggested readings:

A Forest of Kings, the untold story of the Ancient Maya by Linda Schele and David Freidel. Morrow and Co., 1990

The Blood of Kings: Dynasty and Ritual in Maya Art by Linda Schele and Mary Ellen Miller, 1986

Course Outline:

Classes will meet from 9:00 to 11:30 AM and from 1:00 to 2:30 PM. The afternoon time will be used to discuss specific readings given to the students in advance.

Week One: Introduction, General Background and History of Maya Studies.
Visit to the Maya Site of Cahal Pech
Archaeological Field Methods, Analysis and Interpretation
Maya Chronology
Economics
Social Organization
*Test

Week Two: Social Organization and Social Structure
Visit to a local farmers market
Politics
Religion and Ideology
Intellectual Accomplishments, Religion, Cosmology and Art
*Test

Week Three: Fall of the Maya Civilization
Present Maya populations of Belize, Mexico and Guatemala
*Test

*Tests will be based on class notes and articles discussed

Written assignment:

Each student will choose a general subject of Maya Civilization to write a 5 page essay. Papers will be done in long hand or printed. The papers must include the following: Objective, Research, conclusion, bibliography. Examples: Maya Agriculture, Craft Production for the Maya Royalty, Social Structure of the Ancient Maya, The Popol Vuh, Use of Plants modern Maya Populations, The Lacandon, The Yucatan Maya, and many others.

Grading:

Written Assignment: 30%

Tests: 70%

