

Department of Anthropology

University of Pittsburgh

Anthropology 1548 – Amazonian Arts: Making and Meaning 45 contact hours
Summer 2019. 2:00-4:30 M-TH
Pitt in Ecuador

Dr. Tod Swanson,

Office hours will be posted for this course, and instructors are available by appointment.

Course description:

Content, purposes, and methods of this course:

This course introduces students to the visual arts, poetry, music, and dance of the Amazonian region in the context of their function and meaning. The course will be taught as a combination of lecture and hands-on experience working with Native potters from the Bobonaza River. Students will learn to make pottery in the Kichwa (Quichua) tradition, and to understand the role of pottery and material culture in the daily lives of people in this region. On a number of occasions, students will accompany the Native potters on journeys into the adjacent forest to gather materials and to study the patterns in nature that inspire them. Here students will observe related arts such as face paint patterns, beaded ornaments, ritual singing and storytelling. Carefully selected readings and lectures will use these arts as a window for exploring Amazonian thinking about the natural world behind the designs, and the ways in which the designs can be used to understand patterns of social interaction. Interviews with potters will aid in understanding these arts in the context of daily and ceremonial life. In the process, the arts become a doorway allowing the student to explore Amazonian culture and environment first hand. Comparative material from several other world regions will also be discussed.

Objectives and outcomes:

This course introduces students to Amazonian pottery and artistic traditions set within the context of pottery as a longstanding Native tradition. The course has three interrelated learning objectives:

1. To understand indigenous Amazonian aesthetics (philosophy of beauty) in comparative context
2. To learn to create and decorate pottery using Amazonian techniques and designs with the guidance of Kichwa artists;
3. To understand the mythic and ceremonial context of Amazonian ceramic art.

To explain how a holistic, analytical, and comparative framework leads to greater understanding of continuity and change in artistic and material culture.

Assignments and Grading Procedure

Grades reflect your performance on assignments and adherence to deadlines. Graded assignments will be available within 48 hours of the due date via the Gradebook. 3 tests for a total of 46% (Test 1: 15%; Test 2: 15%; Test 3: 16%). These tests are primarily multiple choice intended to measure comprehension and the ability to apply concepts learned from the assigned videos, readings and lectures.

4 essays of 400 words each that critically examine the readings, videos, or field engagement of indigenous culture. The essays are due by end of day each Friday and should be posted through that week's forum on the discussion board. (11% each for a total of 44%)

Bibliography:

Brown, Michael. *Tsewa's Gift: Magic and Meaning in an Amazonian Society*. Smithsonian Institution Press. 1986

[Swanson, Tod D. and Jarrad Reddekap, "Looking Like the Land: Beauty and Aesthetics in Quichua Philosophy and Practice." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Volume 85, Issue 3, 1 September 2017, Pages 682–708, <https://doi-org.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/10.1093/jaarel/lfw086>](https://doi-org.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/10.1093/jaarel/lfw086)

Course Schedule

- June 1:
 - Arrive in Quito
- June 2:
 - Travel to Iyarina
- June 3:
 - The Geography and History of Ecuador as the setting for the west Amazonian artistic tradition.
- June 4:
 - Relational Self -Relational Beauty: The Amazonian notion of shared body
 - Students continue to work on their first ceramic vessel.
- June 5:
 - Relational Self -Relational Beauty: The Amazonian notion of shared body
 - Students continue to work on their first ceramic vessel.
 - The story of clay woman
 - Students dig clay and prepare materials.
 - Make a Mucagua
- June 6:
 - Lecture on the use and form of Amazonian ceramics- Focus on the ritual drinking bowls called mukajas.
- June 7:
 - Hike in the forest with Quichua ceramic artists to study patterns in nature. Students select patterns and draw them on paper in preparation for painting their ceramic vessel.
- June 8:
 - TBD
- June 9-10:
 - Free Day. No class.
- June 11:
 - Art of Late Antiquity and Amazonian Art as "Primitive Art".
 - Islamic Patterns in Sacred Geometry
- June 12:
 - Alone in Nature: The Individual in 19th Century American Art _Hudson River School.pptx
- June 13:
 - Comparison of Japanese Art to Amazonian Art
 - Swanson Lecture 1, Key Buddhist Ideas (for Interpreting Japanese Art)
 - Swanson Lecture 2, Japanese Aesthetics: Ingredients of Zen Beauty
 - Graham Parkes, Japanese Aesthetics
 - Robert Epstein, The Empty Brain . We read this in week 1 because the idea of the IT metaphor Epstein presents in order to argue against it is something that follows from the myth of the blueprint. The alternative "Empty Brain" he argues for is much closer to the Buddhist idea of the self. I repost it here so that it can be a part of the continuing dialogue.
 - Scientists say your mind is not confined to your brain or even your body.

- June 14:
 - Swanson Lecture 3, Haiku as an Expression of Zen Buddhist Aesthetics
 - Addiss, The Art of Haiku.pdf
 - Byung-Chul Han, "The Copy is the Original" . Why, in China and Japan, a copy is just as good as an original – Byung-Chul Han | Aeon Essays. In China and Japan, temples may be rebuilt and ancient warriors cast again. There is nothing sacred about the 'original'
 - Matsuo Basho Haiku 1644-1694.pdf
- June 15:
 - TBD
- June 16-17
 - Free Day. No class.
- June 18:
 - Calling Animals With Beauty: Hunting Songs
 - Michael Brown, "The Uses of Affinity," from Tsewa's Gift, 67-96 .pdf
 - Swanson Lecture on Michael Brown, Tsewa's Gift
- June 19:
 - Magical Gardening Songs
 - Michael Brown, "The Garden's Children," from Tsewa's Gift, 97-132.pdf
- June 20:
 - Love songs
 - Brown. "A Technology of Sentiment." 133-161
- June 21:
 - Regina Harrison. "The Metaphysics of Sex: Quichua Songs from the Tropical Forest."
 - Bird images in Amazonian Love Songs
- June 22:
 - Test covering materials up through week three
- June 23-24:
 - Free day. No class
- June 25:
 - Looking Like the Land.
 - Hozhó: The Navajo philosophy of beauty
 - Reading: Tod Swanson and Jarrad Reddekap, "Looking Like the Land: Beauty and Aesthetics in Quichua Philosophy and Practice." Journal of the American Academy of Religion, Volume 85, Issue 3, 1 September 2017, Pages 682–708, <https://doi-org.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/10.1093/jaarel/lfw086>
- June 26:
 - Looking Like the Land.
 - Hozhó: The Navajo philosophy of beauty
 - Reading: Tod Swanson and Jarrad Reddekap, "Looking Like the Land: Beauty and Aesthetics in Quichua Philosophy and Practice." Journal of the American Academy of Religion, Volume 85, Issue 3, 1 September 2017, Pages 682–708, <https://doi-org.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/10.1093/jaarel/lfw086>
- June 27:
 - Amazonian face paint patterns

- Study short videos of Quichua women talking about the meaning of face and body painting. Students who so choose can have their faces painted in Amazonian style
- June 28:
 - The aesthetic of smell- Qichua interpretation of perfumes and taste.
 - Pedro Andi, "The Perfume of the Wanduk Flower."
 - Bélgica Dagua, "How an Unwanted Man Became the Spirit-Eye Tree." (Video recorded and edited by Tod Swanson) . This one of the key stories used in "Looking Like the Land" above.
- June 29:
 - The aesthetic of smell- Qichua interpretation of perfumes and taste.
 - Pedro Andi, "The Perfume of the Wanduk Flower."
 - Bélgica Dagua, "How an Unwanted Man Became the Spirit-Eye Tree." (Video recorded and edited by Tod Swanson) . This one of the key stories used in "Looking Like the Land" above.
- June 30:
 - Students paint their final ceramic vessel.
 - Course wind up. Test over week 4
 - Travel to the airport

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