

Heritage and Cultural Diversity in Oaxaca, Mexico

Indiana University, Department of Anthropology

Instructors: Stacie King, Anya Royce, Daniel Suslak, and Catherine Tucker

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Oaxaca is a culturally, linguistically and environmentally diverse state in southern Mexico, famous for its rich indigenous heritage, arts, languages, and natural beauty. It is home to 3.3 million people, 16 major ethnic groups, and speakers of two dozen distinct languages who live in 8 separate environmental zones. Many of these cultures converge in the capital of Oaxaca City, in places such as the markets where vendors from the communities sell their crafts and foods, and in the central plaza, a focal point for music and dance performances and a rallying area for groups with political, social, and economic agendas. Museums and cultural events within the city celebrate Oaxaca's cultural diversity and patrimony, and archaeological sites and colonial churches attest to the long history and diversity of Oaxacan peoples. Outside the city are communities of craft producers, farmers, and indigenous peoples with developed arts and unique ways of promoting the unique resources of their environmental and social context.

The Heritage & Cultural Diversity program is a 3 credit course and this program is designed to introduce you to a broad range of topics within anthropology: 1) cultural patrimony, 2) linguistic practices, 3) and cultural diversity. While being accompanied by anthropologists who are actively doing research in Oaxaca you will have the chance to experience Oaxaca's tremendous cultural and ecological diversity. These researchers will take you to the places where they work so that you can see the settings in which anthropologists carry out research. Oaxaca City will be our primary home base where you will explore linguistics, the arts, and archaeology by visiting museums, archives, archaeological sites, festivals, and markets. During the three week course you will travel to five field sites in other regions of Oaxaca where IU anthropologists maintain active projects: the high mountains of the Sierra Mixe, the Valley of Oaxaca, Nejapa and Quiechapa in the Sierra Sur, the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, and the Pacific coast. Before each excursion you will attend lectures on topics covering linguistics, arts and culture, history, and archaeology. These site visits will give each of you an opportunity to think about the production of anthropological knowledge and to see first-hand how anthropological research is done.

INSTRUCTORS

Alex Elvis Badillo (Director/Instructor, Archaeologist)

Ricardo Higelin Ponce de León (Associate Instructor, Archaeologist)

Stacie M. King (Archaeologist)

Anya Peterson Royce (Sociocultural Anthropologist)

Dan Suslak (Linguist/Sociocultural Anthropologist)

COURSE MATERIALS

Course packets of required readings will be copied and distributed upon arrival in Oaxaca City.

Optional – If interested in learning more about Oaxaca in preparation for the class, we recommend purchasing the Moon Handbook titled Oaxaca, which is by far the best and most up-to-date resource for traveling in Oaxaca (available in store or by order through Amazon, Borders, or Barnes & Noble).

EVALUATION

Journal entries (Badillo)	60
Discussion questions (Badillo)	10
Archaeological field notes exercise (Badillo)	5
Field observation & discussion exercise (Badillo)	5
Presentation of proposed research (Badillo, Higelin)	20
Total	100

SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES

(see calendar)