

Announcing:

Spring 2010
ART HISTORY SEMINAR
ART 492A:
Sacred Art and Ritual Practice
In the Pre-Columbian Americas

Dr. Catherine DiCesare
MWF 2:00-2:50 Art Building F103
3 credits
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This seminar examines the concept of the “sacred” in the Pre-Columbian Americas, focusing particularly on the wide array of artworks, architectural monuments, and earthworks that were produced by humans seeking to engage with sacred realms and forces. It considers the ways in which the sacred was conceptualized and visualized in various Pre-Columbian cultures and, especially, the ways in which monuments, rituals, processions, and works of art functioned to engage the sacred realms. We will examine works of art and architecture produced in Mesoamerica and the central Andean region before the arrival of Europeans in the Americas (roughly 2000 bce-1500 ce).

The course will be organized around a series of thematic case studies. Thematic topics to be considered will include:

- water cults and waterworks
- representations of the Aztec “gods”
- subterranean realms and the underworld
- Inca stonework
- pyramids and sacred mountains
- nature cults and animal imagery
- ritual bloodshed and sacrificial practices
- urban planning and the sacred cosmos
- ritual pathways and processions: the Nazca lines

Course format will include lectures, discussions of readings, research projects, student presentations, and exams.

Prerequisites: ART 212, Instructor permission.

No prior experience with Pre-Columbian art necessary. Prerequisites may be waived for Latin American Studies students with special permission of instructor.