

## Aztec atrocities: new discoveries in Mexico City explained

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**Start date** 20 May 2018 **Time** 10:00 – 16:45

**Venue** Madingley Hall  
Madingley  
Cambridge

**Tutor** Nicholas James **Course code** 1718NDX054

**Director of Programmes** Emma Jennings

**For further information on this course, please contact** Public Programme Coordinator, Clare Kerr  
[clare.kerr@ice.cam.ac.uk](mailto:clare.kerr@ice.cam.ac.uk) or 01223 746237

**To book** See: [www.ice.cam.ac.uk](http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk) or telephone 01223 746262

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### Tutor biography

Nicholas James is a consultant in management and interpretation of historical resources and he is Lecturer in social anthropology at Magdalene College. Amongst other research projects, he is working on Aztec social history.

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## Course programme

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09:30	Terrace bar open for pre-course tea/coffee
10:00 – 11:15	<b>Rise and apogee</b>
11:15	Coffee
11:45 – 13:00	<b>The sociology</b>
13:00	Lunch
14:00 – 15:15	<b>The economy</b>
15:15	Tea
15:30 – 16:45	<b>The rites</b>
16:45	Day-school ends

## **Course syllabus**

### **Aims:**

- to introduce the Aztec world and the capital in particular
- to analyse and assess the pattern of living in the capital
- to encourage further study of this subject or related topics

### **Content:**

On first entering Tenochtitlan, the Aztec capital, 499 years ago, the Conquistadores were stunned at once by its size and monumentality and then by the human sacrifices perpetrated in full public view. The Aztecs have remained a byword ever since for perverse savagery; but analysis of the historical sources suggests another interpretation that, disconcertingly, makes Tenochtitlan more familiar.

To explain the paradox of splendour and savagery, we must account, first, for the city's short but vivid history and then for the social and political order that held its teeming populace together. Assessment of the economy confirms that it was, indeed, an unlikely achievement that depended, perforce, on other people from all over tropical Mexico. Rituals well expressed the stresses of metropolitan life; and it is in this light that archeological discoveries in downtown Mexico City, from the Great Temple itself or nightmarish religious sculptures to ordinary household implements, make best sense, culminating in last year's exposure of a 'tower of skulls'.

### **Presentation of the course:**

Meetings will comprise illustrated lectures followed by discussion of the issues arising.

**As a result of the course, within the constraints of the time available, students should be able to:**

- account in general for Tenochtitlan's social, economic, political and cultural history
- assess the principal sources of evidence
- recognize what would be needed for undertaking such analysis of other such cities

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## Reading and resources list

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Listed below are a number of texts that might be of interest for future reference, but do not need to be bought (or consulted) for the course.

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Author	Title	Publisher and date
Berdan, FF	<i>Aztec archaeology and ethnohistory</i>	CUP 2014
Clendinnen, I	<i>Aztecs</i>	CUP 1991
de Rojas, JL	<i>Tenochtitlan</i>	University Press of Florida 2012
Durán, D	<i>The history of the Indies of New Spain</i>	University of Oklahoma Press 1994
Smith, ME	<i>The Aztecs</i> (3 <sup>rd</sup> ed.)	Wiley-Blackwell 2012
Townsend, RF	<i>The Aztecs</i> (3 <sup>rd</sup> ed.)	Thames & Hudson 2009

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## Additional information

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### Venue

Details of how to find Madingley Hall can be found on our website:  
<http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk/who-we-are/how-to-find-the-institute>

### Refreshments

Tea and coffee and lunch will be provided. If you have any specific dietary requirements or allergies and have not already advised us, please inform our Admissions Team on [ice.admissions@ice.cam.ac.uk](mailto:ice.admissions@ice.cam.ac.uk) or +44 (0)1223 746262.

**Note** Students of the Institute of Continuing Education are entitled to 20% discount on books published by Cambridge University Press (CUP) which are purchased at the Press bookshop, 1 Trinity Street, Cambridge (Mon-Sat 9am – 5:30pm, Sun 11am – 5pm). A letter or email confirming acceptance on to a current Institute course should be taken as evidence of enrolment.

*Information correct as of:* 19 January 2018