

Elon professor unveils the truth behind the 2012 myth

Professor dismisses Maya calendar's connection to myth about world's end

Caroline McDonough
Reporter

As 2012 draws nearer, the Maya calendar continues to ignite debate and make Elon students and others question the future.

Elon physics professor Anthony Crider has taken the time to explore the myth that the end of the Maya calendar is an indicator of the end of the world. Crider, who teaches astronomy at Elon, has tried to help his students understand the truth behind this myth that has turned into a cultural phenomenon.

"I wanted to explain who's responsible for perpetuating these myths," Crider said.

Crider began his research of the Maya and their calendar after leading Elon's study abroad program in 2005 and 2006, titled "Astronomy in Mexico: Maya to Modern." The class visited ancient Maya sites and the people who live there.

Crider was intrigued by the Maya and Aztec. He presented his research earlier this month at the Triad Starfest in Guilford during a speech on the Maya calendar and the never-ending question of what will happen in 2012. Crider's presentation stressed the importance of finding evidence and the credibility of the source.

"The simplest answer is the most probable one," Crider said. "If you see something and don't have the time to investigate it or don't know any better, you might start to question very basic things."

The truth behind the Maya calendar can cause confusion. The Maya created two calendars, the Haab and the Tzolkin. When looking at the

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PHYSICS PROFESSOR

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calendars, the Maya separated time into blocks called baktuns. Each baktun marks the end of 394 years. The 13th baktun will end in the year 2012, sparking controversy and panic.

"It will be the end of the 13th baktun, but there's nothing to suggest in their literature that they thought our world would end at the end of their 13th baktun," Crider said.

To date, there is only one physical piece of evidence that shows the end of the 13th Maya baktun. A piece of stone found in the Yucatan depicts what the Maya thought may happen. Though it hints at something happening in 2012, there is no proof that the world will end on that day, Crider said.

"The Maya didn't predict that," Crider said. "Even if the Maya did predict that, there's no reason to believe that they had special psychic knowledge."

Despite Crider's rationale, many simply do not know as much about the myth.

"It's confusing because I don't know anything about it," sophomore Hunter Parrish said. "It's hard to trust the facts when you don't really know the history behind them."

This is exactly the confusion Crider urges students to question.

"Who's actually perpetuating these myths?" Crider said. "People who sell things."

He pointed to notable figures in the media, especially filmmakers like Roland Emmerich who create movies essentially promoting the end of the world.

Crider says films such as "Independence Day" and "2012" create unnecessary fear in people. He pushes people to always go back to the source.

"If you don't go check the source, you might hear that something will happen in 2012 and think that maybe some incredible scientist said it," Crider said. "You can edit anyone to look like an expert."

Often, people find themselves believing these sources but with skepticism.

"Those movies are scary but seriously who would actually believe that these things are going to happen?" sophomore Carly Beggett said.

Surrounded by myths about the Maya calendar and the so-called oncoming apocalypse, there are those who believe the world will cease to exist in 2012.

"This is why I teach," Crider said. "After showing my students a video and realizing how gullible we are as a society, I made it the primary focus of my classes. I wanted students to critically think about who created this material and is it reliable."

Students struggle to sublet apartments for fall semester

Tracy McBride
Reporter

As the percentage of students planning to study abroad increases, the number of students looking to sublet off-campus housing also increases.

About 70 percent of Elon's students study abroad before they graduate. Students often commit to study abroad programs without considering finding someone to sublet their housing, according to Lisa Alcon, program assistant for Isabella Cannon Centre for international studies. Alcon said she often sees students forget to plan ahead before committing to study abroad.

The Isabella Cannon International Centre approved 229 students to study abroad for 2010 fall semester.

"All we do is tell them it's something you need to pre-plan," Alcon said of advising students about housing arrangements.

Students studying abroad desperately search to find someone to fill their housing, but many are not successful.

Since March 1, more than 30 ads have been posted on E-net as students frantically search to find subletters. There are numerous Facebook groups and online resources that assist students in finding others in need of housing.

"I don't know anything about sublets or apartments," sophomore Sarah Carideo said. "It would be better to have the school more involved because with student housing Elon does not hold your hand."

Forty-two percent of students live off-campus, and those individuals are expected to find their own accommodations for off-campus housing, which they do through online resources and local realtors like BC Parker.

"It is difficult because people you know are usually studying abroad at the same time," junior Catherine Waters said. "So all of your friends want to sublet for the same semester."

Most students struggle to find subletters because of the three-week Winter Term, which is often absorbed into semester study abroad.

"It's not only looking for someone to switch off with, but there is the awkward overlap month of Winter Term," Carideo said.

The majority of students looking for a sublet usually have multiple roommates and a common room, so students can easily find a fully furnished apartment with all of the amenities included.

Although subletting often costs the same price as most off-campus housing, some may find last minute

housing deals.

"Originally I would have made the subletter pay the same rent, but I cut the cost last minute in a desperate search for someone to pay the sublet while I was abroad," senior Liz McGlenn said.

While many students may find the search for subletting, Carideo urges students to keep trying and find the best solution.

"You truly have to take what you get, when it comes to subletting," Carideo said.

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