

**S154: Early Modern Travel Narratives of the Americas
Summer 2024**

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This summer, we will journey through the Americas by way of the early modern travel narrative (first-hand accounts written by military personnel, colonists, merchants, pirates, and formerly enslaved mariners). We will experience these texts firsthand to discover how the English-reading public of the Atlantic World learned about places they had never been and likely would never see. Of course, the information and perspectives presented within these narratives offer skewed visions of the Americas and the people who inhabited the continent. The writers' imaginations, often informed by western European philosophies, biases, and prejudices, shaped the content and tone of the texts. We will read with and against the grain to probe the space in between the writers' expectations and realities and attend to silences, tropes, and caricatures within the sources. We will also learn from scholars of Race and Ethnicity, Indigenous studies, Black Diaspora studies, Women, Gender, and Sexuality studies, and Borderlands studies to identify tools and theories to examine travel narratives within their genre.

The goal of this course is twofold: 1) to introduce you to the history of the early modern Atlantic world and, subsequently, 2) to provide you with the skills and informative scholarship to interrogate the power dynamics of the historical archive and engage thoughtfully with historical documents. You will emerge from the course with a better understanding of early modern European production of knowledge on the Americas and the skills to grapple with the costs and consequences of colonialism and imperialism both historically and in the present-day. You will be invited to engage your own scholarly and personal interests through the analytical lenses that they apply.

In addition to learning historical content, you will also learn foundational methods of historical research, including paleography, primary source analysis, navigating institutional databases, critical reading, academic writing, and historical synthesis. We will also consider paratextual information including annotations, errors, in-line, edits, illustrations, and captions to piece together our interpretations of the text. Together we will explore Yale's vast physical and digital collections of manuscript sources and examine documents from the YCBA, the Beinecke, Manuscripts and Archives, the Lewis Walpole Library, and the Colonial Caribbean database.

GRADING & ASSIGNMENTS

Participation (20%)

Your participation grade will be the composite of several aspects: engagement in weekly class discussions, weekly written syntheses, and attendance.

Engagement in weekly discussions: The key is quality and genuine engagement over quantity. You may not have a comment on every text or discussion topic; there is no unofficial "quota" for speaking in class. While verbal discussions will sustain weekly class meetings, I understand that each student has unique learning needs and preferences. I am happy to work with each of you to determine how you can best tailor your engagement to your learning style.

Weekly written syntheses: One goal of this course is that you leave with helpful, usable notes on the course texts. We will devote the last ten minutes of each class meeting to

DRAFT syllabus

writing syntheses of the week's central themes. These syntheses will help me gauge your interests and curate weekly experiences that more organically reflect your individual connections with the main themes.

Attendance: This course is designed so that most of the work will take place in the classroom. I am trying to keep your "homework" and toll on your personal time to a minimum. For these reasons, attendance is crucial to your learning experience. We know that life happens. If you are unable to attend class or complete an assignment on time, please get in touch with me as soon as possible.

In-class Presentations (10%)

You will be required to present twice this session.* Your grade will be comprised of a holistic evaluation of both presentations.

Presentation 1: Book Presentation (~10 min.)

On the week that you present, you will initiate the class discussion. Your presentation must include: a summary of the text's core argument, notable examples that support this argument, and your assessment of this argument. You may include any details (scholar's biography and/or CV, texts/scholars in conversation with your text, contemporary current events that influenced the text, etc.) that contribute to our understanding of this text.

You must also create a one-page handout that summarizes your key points and includes 2–3 discussion questions based on the text.

Presentation 2: Final Paper Presentation (5 min.)

This is an informal exercise designed to hone your ability to talk about your own research. Your presentation should include: a summary of your main argument, some prominent sources that you are engaging, and ways in which your paper connects to the main course themes.

*I believe in fostering an inclusive classroom environment that allows students to engage in the ways that are most beneficial and comfortable to them. If you have questions or concerns about presenting, please schedule an appointment with me to collaborate on designing an alternative assignment.

Primary Source Exercise (10%)

This is a two-part assignment: you will select a primary source from one of Yale's collections and then you will analyze the text. (Assignment instructions and requirements will be distributed and discussed in class.)

Selecting a source: This is an exercise in acquainting yourself with the vast institutional resources at your disposal. I highly recommend that you seek assistance from one of our brilliant subject librarians. (Here is a list of our librarians' subject specialties: <https://web.library.yale.edu/subject-specialists>)

Analyze the source: This is a multi-layered process. First, describe the source by identifying the writer, date, publisher, and any relevant details of production. Then, contextualize the source by telling the reader what these details say about the document and its contemporary

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significance. Engage textual analysis and remark on any textual peculiarities and/or key words that seem central to the document. Last, relate this document to a course text and apply the scholar's key arguments/approaches to your reading of the document.

Final Paper Proposal (10%)

A good proposal will be helpful, rather than superfluous, to your final paper. Your proposal should include: your central research questions and their connection to central themes of the field and an annotated bibliography. (Assignment instructions and requirements will be distributed and discussed in class.)

Delineating central research questions: In about 500 words, outline your main questions. Contextualize these questions by connecting them to arguments and themes addressed by scholars we have encountered.

Annotated bibliography: Submit a bibliography of 4–6 sources (at least 3 must be drawn from course readings). Write 1–2 sentences for each bibliographic entry explaining how the text will inform your argument. Does the scholar coin a useful framework that has influenced how you understand the field? Is there a theme that connects this text to your research questions? Is there a specific gap in this text that complements your research questions? If you are using a primary source, explain how the document will exemplify your potential argument.

Final Paper (30%)

Write a paper of 10–12 pages that engages a debate, framework, or topic within Early Modern Atlantic History. You can write a historiographical paper that draws upon secondary sources or a research paper that analyzes primary and secondary sources. I welcome alternative formats and media you may wish to propose for the final assignment, as long as the proposal maintains analytical rigor and draws upon course texts. (Assignment instructions and requirements will be distributed and discussed in class.)

Annotated Alternative Syllabus (20%)

This course is designed as a learning *and* teaching experience. I want to know how you understand the course material. (Assignment instructions and requirements will be distributed and discussed in class.)

Take this course syllabus and rearrange the readings according to themes of your choosing. Which books do you wish we had read together? What alternative themes would you like to highlight? Rather than fret about completely reinventing the wheel, focus on digging deep and constructing a version of this syllabus that speaks to your interests and vision for this course.

CO-CREATING AN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM

I am committed to creating an inclusive, equitable, and welcoming environment so that all students can engage in this course safely and comfortably. Please feel free to speak with me, your Residential College Dean, or the History Department Director of Undergraduate Studies as soon as possible if you have any concerns.

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In this course we will encounter many difficult topics including: genocide, enslavement, racism, inequality, physical violence, Indigenous erasure, and anti-Blackness. I acknowledge that several discussions will be disturbing and triggering. Please feel empowered and safe to do what you need, whether it be stepping out of discussion or sending me a private email about your discomfort, for example.

My priority is for each of you to feel a sense of ownership of the course and weekly class discussions. Please join me in committing to fostering a respectful, lively, and collaborative classroom.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism will not be tolerated and will result in failing the course as well as referral to University disciplinary action. For Yale's policy on plagiarism and cheating, see:

<http://yalecollege.yale.edu/content/cheating-plagiarism-and-documentation>

Citation is a crucial aspect of historical writing. As historians, we not only rely on sources, but also build on the ideas and writings of others. I expect students to appropriately cite quotes and sources, including when paraphrasing. Students should consult the Writing Center for further guidelines.

<http://ctl.yale.edu/writing/using-sources/understanding-and-avoiding-plagiarism/plagiarism-quiz>

Inclusivity in the Classroom

I invite students to share with me their learning needs so that I may adapt my teaching materials and methods accordingly. All discussions are confidential.

For students currently receiving or seeking accommodations or services, more information can be found here: <https://sas.yale.edu/students/first-time>.

READING & DISCUSSION SCHEDULE

****DRAFT**** Some readings may change and selected pages are TBD

Week 1: Indigenous Geographies in the Eastern Caribbean

We will acquaint ourselves with the travel narrative genre. Who was the readership? Who was writing these narratives? How did the biases of the writer and readership affect the information that circulated? We will introduce the “Black Legend,” which both villainized Spanish Imperialism to justify northern European expansion in the New World and propagated the myth of Indigenous disappearance. We will read the “surface” story of European explorers who sailed the globe and probe the realities underneath by learning about Indigenous sailors that we seldom hear of. What does the Caribbean look like from an internal, rather than external, perspective.

****In-Class Reading Workshop****

- Nathaniel Uring, *A History of the voyages and travels of Capt. Nathaniel Uring with a new draught of the Bay of Honduras very useful for masters of ships that use the Leeward Island trade, or Jamaica, 1749*
- Jeppe Mullich, *In a Sea of Empires*
- Tessa Murphy, *The Creole Archipelago*

Week 2: Buccaneer Geographies of Sail

What preconceptions do we carry regarding pirate lore? We will add nuances to the stories we think we know, including aspects of sexuality, race, and environmentalism.

****In-Class Letter-writing exercise****

- Alexandre Exquemelin, *History of the Buccaneers of America*, 1678
- Arne Bialuschewski, *Raiders and Natives*
- Marcus Rediker, *Villains of All Nations*
- David Turnbull, *Maps are Territories: Science is an Atlas: A Portfolio of Exhibits*
- J.B. Harley, *A New Nature of Maps*

Week 3: Naturalists and Empire

We will discuss the inverse relationship between the rise of sugar plantations and the decline of the Golden Age of Buccaneering. The most experienced sailors on the high seas remained buccaneers while others transitioned into roles as gentleman scientists. We will observe how Enlightenment thinkers on both sides of the Atlantic attempted to claim the New World symbolically and intellectually, in addition to physically.

****In-Class Paleography and Primary Source Workshop****

- William Dampier, *A New Voyage Round the World*, 1697
- Sir Hans Sloane, *Voyage*
- Anna Neill, “Buccaneer Ethnography: Nature, Culture, and Nation in the Journals of William Dampier”
- Karen Stolley, *Domesticating Empire: Enlightenment in Spanish America*

Week 4: The Black Atlantic World

We have read numerous accounts of the New World from people detailing their own experiences. This week, we follow two global lives of Black men who experienced enslavement and freedom in the Atlantic world: Equiano’s tale was written as a memoir, while *The Story of Rufino* draws upon historians’ interpretations of archival sources to piece together Rufino’s life. The fields of Black Diaspora studies and Afro-Latin American history specifically seek to center Africans and Afro-descended peoples in their own stories.

****In-Class Secondary Source Synthesis Workshop****

- Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African*, 1745
- Herman L. Bennett, *African Kings and Black Slaves*
- Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital*
- Kamille Stone Stanton and Julie A. Chappell (eds), *Transatlantic Literature in the Long Eighteenth Century*
- João José Reis, Flávio dos Santos Gomes, and Marcus J. M. de Carvalho, *The Story of Rufino: Slavery, Freedom and Islam in the Black Atlantic*

Week 5: The Circum-Caribbean

Several scholars working on the western Caribbean have highlighted an interconnected circum-Caribbean world, in which people moved from Central America to Havana to Seville in greater numbers than previously acknowledged. Some of these movements were of people’s own

DRAFT syllabus

volition, while others were coerced. Still others occupied a space in between. Together, we will sketch out the overlapping geographies of a mobile historical Caribbean populace.

****IN-CLASS PAPER PRESENTATIONS****

- Thomas Strangeways, *Sketch of the Mosquito Shore, Including the Territory of Poyais*
- Ed. Erica L. Ball, Tatiana Seijas, and Terri L. Snyder, *As If She Were Free: A Collective Biography of Women and Emancipation in the Americas*
- Matthew Restall, “Manuel’s Worlds: Black Yucatan and the Colonial Caribbean,” in *Slave, Subjects, and Subversives: Blacks in Colonial Latin America* ed. Jane G. Landers and Barry M. Robinson