Freshman Seminar
Exploration: New Worlds
Prof. Susanah Romney
Spring, 2019

FYSEM-UA 648.
Tuesdays, 9:30 – 12:15

Description: For millennia, the people here on earth lived in a series of separate worlds, isolated by the oceans and landscapes that divided them. Then, in the 1400s, that isolation was forever shattered as new maritime empires violently brought everyone into contact with one another. As people explored this new shared world, they repeatedly had to decide, “Who is human?” We will look at the maps, letters, journals, pamphlets, and fiction that spread the knowledge of these cultural encounters in order to understand how people understood themselves. We will consider how our own, continuing search for new worlds still raises this question today.

Each week, we will read and discuss documents from the time and scholars’ interpretations of those documents. Students will write three papers of about four pages each, building on our discussions. You will also get a chance to do research of your own, using assigned sources alongside ones you find independently, culminating in a paper of around 8-10 pages.

Writing Tutors:
We are very fortunate to have been granted two writing tutors for our class. Together, they will visit our class to conduct workshops. They will be available to meet with you individually to go over drafts of your papers. These meetings are required, and will figure in to the participation portion of your grade (in addition to helping you get better grades on your papers!). Please see the bottom of the syllabus for more information on the tutor program. For this reason, the due dates for the rough drafts that you see on the syllabus are “hard” deadlines – you need to post your rough drafts by the dates listed in order for them to be able to meet with you and help you.

Required books:
Olaudah Equiano, *Interesting Narrative and Other Writings* (Penguin: 9780142437162)
Keneva Kunz, trans., *The Vinland Sagas* (Penguin: 9780140447767)
Miguel Leon-Portilla, *The Broken Spears: The Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mexico* (Beacon: 9780807055014)
Antonio Pigafetta, *Magellan's Voyage: A Narrative Account of the First Circumnavigation* (Dover Reprint: 9780486280998)

**Additional readings are available online through nyu classes or through electronic reserve.**

**Assignments:** There are four papers assigned for this course. The length and due dates for these papers are listed below on the course schedule. You will submit these papers through NYU Classes, in the Assignments section. You will need to submit rough drafts, also, for papers 2-4. Please be prepared to submit the paper as a Word file. All papers are required for completion of the course; refusing to do one of the papers will result in failure of the course.

**Grading:**

- Paper 1: 15%
- Paper 2: 20%
- Paper 3: 20%
- Participation: 15%
- Paper 4: 30%

**Please note:** attendance is required, and poor attendance can result in a grade deduction or failure of the class. Cheating or plagiarism (the presentation of someone else’s words, ideas, or data as your own) will have similar results.

**Schedule:**

**Week 1:** A Series of Separate Worlds: Views of Humanity. In class: Old maps. Selections from: Bible; Navajo Emergence story; Kojiki.

**Week 2:** Reading: *The Vinland Sagas*, pp. 1-50. Documents online: selections from *Ying-yai Sheng-lan, The Overall Survey of the Ocean’s Shores 1433*; Ibn Battutah, [30 pages].

**Week 3:** Reaching Out. Pigafetta, *Magellan's Voyage*, pp. 35-148. Also: Visit from Writing Tutors. *Due Friday: Paper #1.* Please write a paper of approx. three pages comparing the pre-Columbian travel narratives and Pigafetta’s tale. How did people categorize and make sense of “new” cultures and lands? Please upload your paper through the Assignments section of NYU classes.

**Week 4:** Meeting your Neighbors. Cabeza de Vaca, *Chronicle*, through p. 36. Also, documents by Columbus, Cortés, and Las Casas, pp. 138-159. Scholarship by Beatríz Rivera-Barnes, pp. 204-217. Documents online by Montesinos and Sepulveda.

**Week 5:** Cabeza de Vaca, *Chronicle*, pp. 36-91. Scholarship by Andrés Reséndez, pp. 200-203. Documents online by Fray Marcos de Niza (alternate translation in *Chronicle* pp. 119-132).

**Due Wednesday, rough draft of Paper #2.** Please write a paper of approx. four pages. With the violence of contact and conquest, how did people from Europe and America enact the boundaries of humanity? Please upload your paper through the Assignments section of NYU Classes. You will need to meet individually with a tutor about your paper.

Week 7: Visit to Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian.

**Due Friday, final draft of Paper #2.** Please upload your paper through the Assignments section of NYU Classes.

**No class. Spring Break.** Start reading on the plane, train, or in your lonely dorm room: Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko*.


Week 9: Reading: Thomas Harriot, *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* (90 pages). Scholarship online: Joyce Chaplin (13 pages). Please see the original John White watercolors at the British Museum or Virtual Jamestown

**Due Wednesday, Rough draft of Paper #3.** Please write a paper of approx. four pages. With the advent of European colonies in the Americas how did people justify or challenge new racial, cultural, and political boundaries? You are required to meet with tutors about this paper. Please upload your paper through the Assignments section of NYU Classes.


**Due Friday: Final draft of Paper #3.** Please upload your paper through the Assignments section of NYU Classes.

Week 11: World and Self. Charles Darwin, *Darwin*, pp. 67-95; 175-178; 197-201; 205-206. Also, scholarship, pp. 326-328; 342-344; 386-395. **This week: Talk to the prof!** Meet with me to discuss your final paper and your documents. Appointments required.

Week 12: Visit to Natural History Museum. Reading: Scientific exploration: Who do we think we are today? Readings online: Jon Mooallem, “Us and Them,” *New
*York Times Magazine*, January 15, 2017 [12 pages]. **You should be doing independent reading for paper #4 this week!**


Week 14: *Due today, Rough Draft of Paper #4.* Please write a paper of approx. 8-10 pages (partial draft is OK, but the more you have written, the better the feedback will be). Use primary texts (both those assigned for the class and those you find on your own) to assess the definition of humanity and the process of exploration. You are required to meet with tutors this week. Please upload your paper through the Assignments section of NYU Classes.

*Due Friday, May 12:* Final Draft of Paper #4. Please upload your paper through the Assignments section of NYU Classes.

**Note on Writing Tutors:**
In this class, we are fortunate to have help from the Undergraduate Writing Tutors Program. Writing tutors are curious, well-trained peers who provide feedback to students on drafts of writing assignments. Their role is to encourage and challenge students to strengthen their writing and clarify their ideas. Writing tutors are trained to support the aims of the class, learning about the expectations for writing in the class and listening and responding carefully to individual student writers. While writing tutors are not Teaching Assistants and will not assess papers, they will focus writing conferences on questions that generate clearer writing and stronger thinking about the content. Writing tutors will also look for patterns of grammatical error in student papers, explaining how students can learn to correct these errors. The writing tutors’ main goals are to help students develop their writing and thinking in response to particular assignments and to become better writers over the long term.

Writing tutors take a semester-long practicum to learn to think more deeply about writing and to develop practices for working with peers on writing during individualized conferences. Tutors audit several classes or recitations and read some course materials in the classes where they tutor. Their primary aim is, however, to work with students through a practice-based approach to writing and revising. That is, they will ask questions and work to prompt students to reread, rethink, revise, and craft new writing during conferences.
Students are required to participate in the program for each designated paper assignment, submitting of a draft of their paper on time for written feedback and attending a scheduled, 30-minute long, one-on-one conference. Writing tutors should receive complete drafts from students, not outlines or rough notes. Late submission of drafts to tutors and missed conferences are reported to the Professor, who may reduce a student’s final grade as a consequence.

Help!!!
There are many forms of support if you find yourself at sea. You can always come talk to me. I’m really not that scary: ssromney@nyu.edu
Try out NYU’s Writing Center. https://nyu.mywconline.com/
Students who need accommodations for any kind of disability should contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 726 Broadway, 2nd Floor, tel: 212-998-4980, www.nyu.edu/csd
If you are having trouble in your classes, contact the College of Arts & Sciences Advising Center: http://advising.cas.nyu.edu
If you are struggling in other ways, reach out to NYU’s Wellness Exchange: http://www.nyu.edu/life/safety-health-wellness/wellness-exchange.html
24-hour Hotline: (212) 443-9999