First-Year Seminar  
Exploration: New Worlds  
Prof. Susanah Romney  
Spring, 2018

Please note: Draft Syllabus. Subject to change.

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 10 minute class presentation and a paper of around 8-10 pages.

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.**

Grading:
Paper 1:  20%
Paper 2:  20%
Paper 3:  20%
Presentation & Participation  10%
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 One: A Series of Separate Worlds: Views of Humanity.* In class: Old maps. Selections from: Bible; Navajo Emergence story; Kojiki.

*Week Two: Reaching Out.* The *Vinland Sagas*. Documents online: selections from *Ying-yai Sheng-lan, The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores* 1433; Ibn Battutah.

*Week Three: Reaching Out.* Pigafetta, *Magellan's Voyage*. Be prepared to draw in the routes of Columbus, De Gama, Magellan, Drake, Cabot, Hudson, Cartier, and ?

**Due Friday, Paper #1.** Please write a paper of approx. four pages comparing the pre-Columbian travel narratives and Pigafetta’s tale. How did people categorize and make sense of “new” cultures and lands?

*Week Four: 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 Five: Meeting your Neighbors.* Cabeza de Vaca, *Chronicle*, pp. 36-91. Scholarship by Andrés Resénde, pp. 200-203. Documents online by Fray Marcos de Niza (alternate translation in *Chronicle* pp. 119-132). Today in class: J-Stor assignment. Use library databases (not Google!) to find a secondary article relevant to one of the topics discussed so far; bring it to class, and be prepared to discuss its argument in a few sentences with your colleagues.


**Due Friday, 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?

*Week Seven: Colonization.* Thomas Harriot, *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia*. Scholarship online: Joyce Chaplin. Please see the original John White watercolors at the *British Museum* or *Virtual Jamestown*.


*Due Friday, 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?


**This week: Talk to the prof!** Meet with me to discuss your final paper and your documents. Appointments required.


Week Thirteen: Presentations. Each student will give a succinct presentation on a primary document and share what that document suggests about the definition of humanity and the process of exploration.


*Due Friday, Paper #4.* Please write a paper of approx. 8-10 pages. 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.

**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/](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](http://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](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](http://www.nyu.edu/life/safety-health-wellness/wellness-exchange.html)

24-hour Hotline: (212) 443-9999