**Freshman Seminar**
**Exploration: New Worlds**
Prof. Susanah Romney
**Spring, 2018**

*Please note: Draft Syllabus, January 2017. 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:**

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
Beatriz Rivera-Barnes, pp. 204-217. Documents online by Montesinos and
Sepulveda.

Scholarship by Andrés Reséndez, 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.

Week Six: Meeting your Neighbors: Native Responses. *The Broken Spears*,
Documents online: selections from Tenskwatawa, Guaman Poma. Please see
originals of Guaman Poma at:

**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?

Found Land of Virginia*. Scholarship online: Joyce Chaplin. Please see the
original John White watercolors at the British Museum or Virtual Jamestown

Week Eight: Colonization. Documents online: “The journal of Lourens Lourenszoones
and his 1618-1625 stay among the Arocouros on the lower Cassiporé River,
northern Amapá Sate, Brazil,” Bol. Mus. Para. Emílio Goeldi. Cienc. Hum.,

*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
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