

SEMESTER AT SEA COURSE SYLLABUS

Voyage: Spring 2013

Discipline: English Literature

ENGL 1559: The Sea And The Mirror

Lower Division

Faculty Name: Dr. J. H. Miller

Pre-requisites: An introductory literature course

COURSE DESCRIPTION

*There be three things which are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I know not:
The way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent upon a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of
the sea; and the way of a man with a maid.*

The way of a ship in the midst of the sea has fascinated human beings from the very beginnings of literature to the present day. Celebrating the elemental relationship of man and the natural world, the sea itself and voyages upon it have inspired poems, short stories, novels, and plays, often – as Hamlet said – “to show virtue her feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.” The sea also functions as a metaphor for the great, universal themes of humanity. From the darkness upon the face of the deep, to the spirit moving upon the face of the waters, to the way of a man with a maid, this course will study selected sea voyage narratives that enlighten our relationships to each other and to the sea around us.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Our geographic journey over the next four months will expose us to life at sea and to different cultures as we sail across oceans and visit fourteen countries on three continents. But we are also collectively embarking on another journey – an interior and highly personal one of exploration and self-discovery. Some might call it a pilgrimage – not necessarily to a specific sacred place or holy shrine, though we will undoubtedly visit many; but rather a pilgrimage to seek greater knowledge and truth. With these high thoughts in mind then: *Quo vadis?* Whither goest thou during the next four months? Where should you be going in the coming years?

To help us try to answer these universal existential questions we will be guided by literature, by our experiences at sea and in ports, by our understanding of the individual and collective dynamic of our fellow crewmembers, and by writing our own personal Sea Voyage Narrative. More specifically, our objectives are:

*To study representative voyage narratives and explore them as a unique genre – a genre with its own archetypes, themes, and conventions.

*To acquire a deeper understanding of the many ways literature reflects our love-hate relationship

with the sea – from its beauty and majesty, to its danger and mystery; from its seductive call to explore the unknown, to its engendering a longing to return home to the safety and familiarity of ports, anchorages, family; from its reflection of the very best of human nature, to its depiction of mankind at its most depraved.

*To understand just what the sea is really like, how our ship is a microcosm of humanity, and how we passengers and crew are inextricably woven together – metaphorically and actually – into a community of sailors, adventurers, explorers.

*To understand the history and culture of maritime ports through field assignments and an in-depth field lab, both of which you will incorporate (along with references to reading assignments) into your personal Sea Voyage Narrative.

*To learn about ourselves through the process of writing our own narrative of this journey.

ASSIGNMENTS

Literature Writing Assignments:	4 x 5% = 20%
Field Lab Report:	20%
Voyage Narrative (with field notes):	40% <input type="checkbox"/>
Final Exam:	20%

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

AUTHOR: Herman Melville
TITLE: Moby Dick
PUBLISHER: Modern Library
ISBN #: 0-679-78327-X
DATE/EDITION: 2000 Modern Library Paperback

AUTHOR: William Shakespeare
TITLE: The Tempest
PUBLISHER: Penguin Books, Inc.
ISBN#: 978-0-12-071485-2
DATE/EDITION: 1999 / The Pelican Shakespeare

AUTHOR: Earnest Hemingway
TITLE: The Old Man and the Sea
PUBLISHER: Scribner Paperback
ISBN#: 0-684-80122-1
DATE/EDITION: 1995

AUTHOR: John McPhee
TITLE: Looking for a Ship
PUBLISHER: Farrar, Straus, Giroux
ISBN#: 0-374-52319-3
DATE/EDITION: 1990

AUTHOR: Jonathan Swift
TITLE: Gulliver's Travels and "A Modest Proposal"
PUBLISHER: Pocket Books
ISBN#: 978-1-4165-0039-1
DATE/EDITION: 2005

AUTHOR: Dava Sobel
TITLE: Longitude
PUBLISHER: Walker Publishing Company, Inc.
ISBN#: 0-8027-1312-2
DATE/EDITION: 1995

NOTE: The instructor will hand out copies of the following brief texts to students –

AUTHOR: Stephen Crane
TITLE: The Open Boat

AUTHOR: Samuel Taylor Coleridge
TITLE: The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

TOPICAL OUTLINE OF COURSE

(Class 1) *Quo Vadis?* The Sea Voyage Narrative as a Genre

Keeping Things Shipshape: introductions, hopes & fears, course overview, readings, assignments, field lab, field assignments, your own sea voyage narrative, attendance, grading, etc.

Discussion: Why do individuals put out to sea? What is a "sea voyage narrative?" What is a "genre?" Discuss the sea voyage narrative as setting out on a quest, a test, a meditation, an initiation, an anatomy of society, an exploration, a discovery, and a return. I will read aloud Charles Dickens's description of departing for the USA aboard a steamer from Liverpool, England, in 1842. How similar and different was his departure from our own departure from Ensenada, Mexico? Begin reading selections from Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* for Classes 2-4.

Writing Assignment #1 (about departures) due at beginning of Class 2

(Classes 2, 3, 4, 5) "Call Me Ishmael:" A Sea Narrative as Quest, Test, Initiation, Meditation, Exploration, and Discovery

Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* is one of the greatest American novels and a monument in world literature. While voyaging over the very Pacific waters Melville wrote about, we will read and discuss sections of the novel with special focus on exploring what kind of literary work it is, what holds it together, and what themes emerge from the author's discursive and glorious language. Of

particular importance will be our response not only to the main plot (Ahab's well-known manic hunt for the whale) but also – and perhaps most important – to the many digressions, eddies, and meanders that run through the novel. In many ways these digressions are the very essence of the meaning of the book. While MV *Explorer* is no whaling vessel and our captain no Ahab (we hope!), *Moby Dick* is the great archetype of the sea voyage narrative. The novel's harrowing scenes, its strange characters, and its meditative and sometimes ruminative mood will expand our consciousness and open our eyes to the possibilities of this genre.

Writing Assignment #2 on Moby Dick due at beginning of Class 6

(Class 6) “Gaining Our Sea Legs:” Exploring MV *Explorer*

To become familiar with MV *Explorer*, our temporary “home,” we will tour the vessel – from stem to stern, from bridge to engine room, from crews' quarters to captain's quarters. We will learn about piloting, navigation, and communications; we will talk to officers and crew to understand where they came from, how they found this berth, and what roles they play in the efficient managing of the vessel. You will take notes about this “field experience” for later submission and incorporation into your Sea Voyage Narrative.

(Class 7) “A Man Can Be Destroyed But Not Defeated:” A 20th Century Sea Narrative

If Melville's *Moby Dick* is one of longest sea narratives, Ernest Hemingway's novella *The Old Man and the Sea* is one of the shortest. Whereas Melville's style is expansive and leisurely, Hemingway's is terse and compact. We will discuss the major themes of this seemingly simple story and explore how style and story complement each other. In-port experiences will also provide insights into the disappointments and rewards of commercial blue-water fishing.

(Class 8 & 9) “Coming Up By The Hawsepipe:” A Modern Quest For A Shipboard Berth

After reading two works of fiction, we turn to a non-fiction narrative, John McPhee's *Looking for a Ship* about life aboard the SS *Stella Lykes*, one of the last American merchant vessels. Like Ishmael and Queequeg in *Moby Dick*, Second Mate Andy Chase faces many challenges in securing a berth aboard ship. We will follow Chase's experiences and learn about ports and harbors, seamanship and nautical nomenclature, captains and crews, and the hazards and joys of going to sea with the merchant marine. And we'll learn why Capt. Paul McHenry Washburn, master of *Stella Lykes*, says “I'd rather be here than anywhere else.” McPhee's narrative will complement our tour of MV *Explorer* and its navigation systems as well as provide a context for merchant marine operations in our ports of call.

(Class 10) “Funny No One Sees Us:” Narrative As Initiation

Stephen Crane's powerful short story “The Open Boat” is based upon the author's ordeal following the sinking of the ship *Commodore* off the Florida coast. In this story nature is presented as hostile, cruel, and indifferent to the plight of four shipwrecked sailors. Three survive. One does not. We will examine Crane's use of spare language and fragments of dialogue to conjure up a frightfully realistic situation in which the survivors are changed forever. Storms, shipwrecks, and (sometimes) rescue and survival are the staples of many sea voyage narratives. On our own voyage we will learn to sense the moods of the sea: its ability to inspire thoughts of beauty and harmony as well as feelings of fear, loneliness, and alienation; its otherness to us, and its essential oneness with us.

(Class 11 & 12) “One Of The Most Exquisite Movements Ever Made:” The Quest of Determining Longitude

Dava Sobel, the author of *Longitude* subtitles her book “The True Story of a Lone Genius Who Solved the Greatest Scientific Problem of His Time.” *Longitude* is about Londoner John Harrison’s 40-year efforts to build a highly accurate clock for shipboard use, known today as a chronometer. We will examine the challenges of sea navigation before Harrison and the benefits to navigation resulting from his solving “the longitude problem.” We will also enjoy the high drama of how our “hero,” Harrison, won a £20,000 prize awarded by Parliament in a hotly contested competition against a formidable antagonist, “anti-hero” Rev. Nevil Maskelyne. This book will also complement our tour of navigation systems aboard MV *Explorer* as well as visits to ports of call on our voyage.

(Class 13, 14, 15, 16) “Lilliputians, Brobdignagians, Laputians, Houyhnhnms, Yahoos:” Sea Voyage as Journey from Optimism to Despair

Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* has been classified as Minippean satire, children’s story, proto-science fiction, and forerunner of the modern novel. Discussion will focus on the imaginary sea voyages of Lemuel Gulliver who upon visiting strange lands gradually suffers a negative internal transformation from optimism to misanthropy. We will pay close attention to Swift’s masterful use of satire and irony in exposing the shortcomings and foibles of humanity. During our voyage we will undoubtedly experience various aspects of culture shock from observing cultures and behaviors that are strange to us. Gulliver’s voyage narrative can help us better see ourselves by learning to appreciate other people’s cultures and by learning that “strange” is in the eye of the beholder. We will discuss specific examples of how Gulliver’s voyage teaches us truths about our own journey. (Swift’s mercifully brief parody of poorly written sea journals will give us a valuable lesson in how not to write a travel diary!)

Writing Assignment #3 on Gulliver’s Travels due at beginning of Class 17

(Class 17) Workshop Session – Preparing Your Personal Sea Voyage Narrative

Your Sea Voyage Narrative counts for 40% of your course grade. It will be based on your effectively and creatively synthesizing literary works studied in this course with your field lab project and notes on visits to multiple ports of call – all in conjunction with honest and personal observations about what you have learned about yourself and about others. This workshop will provide guidelines and answer questions about preparing your Sea Voyage Narrative.

Your Sea Voyage Narrative is due at the beginning of Class 23

(Class 18) “A Sadder And A Wiser Man / He Rose The Morrow Morn:” Sea Voyage as Spiritual and Psychological Quest

In his preface (or “Argument”) to *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* Samuel Taylor Coleridge summarizes the main action of his poem: “How a Ship, having first sailed to the Equator, was driven by storms to the cold Country towards the South Pole; how the Ancient Mariner cruelly and in contempt of the laws of hospitality killed a Seabird and how he was followed by many and strange Judgments: and in what manner he came back to his own Country.” We will follow the Mariner’s fantastic journey, a voyage beset by sea monsters, ghosts, specters, weird dreams, and

nightmares. How this journey transforms the Ancient Mariner will lead us to explore inner spiritual and psychological landscapes that may reveal “there are more invisible than visible Natures in the universe.” What does Coleridge’s seemingly archaic poem mean to 21st century readers like us? How specifically does it apply to our own personal journey?

(Class 19, 20, 21, 22) “Suffer A Sea-Change / Into Something Rich And Strange:” The Sea Voyage as Anatomy of Society and Tale of Redemption and Renewal

One of the sources of Shakespeare’s play *The Tempest* may be the story of a shipwreck that occurred after a 1609 hurricane off the coast of Bermuda. In the imagination of Shakespeare, the historical “tempest,” “shipwreck,” and “island” are transformed into a mysterious and beautiful world – a world out of time where the laws of nature are temporarily suspended and where, through trial and tribulation, the social and moral evils of the Old World are transformed into “a brave new world.” That *The Tempest* is the final literary work of this course is particularly fitting. We will shortly leave the New World of our “magic island” (MV *Explorer*) and return to the Old World (Barcelona, Spain). Have we, like the characters in the play, suffered “a sea-change / Into something rich and strange?” With the help of the spirit Ariel, your instructor now releases you from the charms of our sea-journey, restores you to the safe haven of port, home, and family – and asks your indulgence also to set him free. To each of you, your instructor’s final charge: “Be free, and fare thou well!”

Writing Assignment #4 on The Tempest (to be written during first 30 mins. of Class 23)

(Class 23) In-class writing assignment. Sea Voyage Narrative due. Review for Final Exam. Reflections: Quo Vadis?

(Class 24) Final Exam

FIELD WORK

Poet Robert Frost wrote, “Home is that place where, when you have to go there, / They have to take you in.” During our four-month voyage our “home” will be the MV *Explorer*. From this home we will visit many ports of call, each of which is home for its residents and a short-term haven and refuge for those transient sailors who are temporarily home from the sea. As points of departure to other destinations in countries around the globe, ports have their own distinct culture and traditions. During our voyage one 8-hour field lab will be conducted on March 25, 2013 during which we will explore the history of the Port of Cape Town and tour the port to learn about harbor operations and the people who manage it. This field lab will require us to take extensive notes based on our observations, conversations, and special tours. This specific field lab will be supplemented by additional fieldwork conducted on our own in at least six other ports and aboard ship. Aspects of your fieldwork and field lab should be incorporated into your personal Sea Voyage Narrative (to which your field notes should be added as an appendix).

FIELD LAB

Cape Town Harbor & Port Operations (South Africa, Day 1 – 3/25) Major ports have their own unique cultures – as international destinations and points of departure they exhibit

extraordinary diversity of people and widely varying geography. Since the young Prince Alfred tipped the first load of rubble for the building of the Alfred Basin in 1860, the Port of Cape Town has developed into one of Southern Africa's most important links in foreign trade. In this lab we will not only tour the harbor at our port of call (by land and by sea) but also examine what goes on behind the scenes to learn about piloting, bunkering, lightering, cargo handling, and other aspects of port operations including hi-tech Vessel Traffic Services and other issues related to ship safety and the harbor environment. We will also learn about the people who run the port – from longshoremen to tug captains, pilots, and harbor managers. Academic Objectives: To understand the procedures and protocols of harbor operations (piloting, vessel traffic control, docking); to appreciate the history and culture of the port including sailors, cargoes, and ships; to learn about the harbor's specific challenges to mariners. Attendance is mandatory.

FIELD ASSIGNMENTS

Field Lab Evaluation: During our in-port field lab you must use a field notebook to record your initial observations, conversations, sights, and other impressions. You will later consult these notes to write a 3-4 page written report on what you experienced, including thoughts about the significance of your visit. This report will be submitted to your instructor for evaluation and feedback. Appropriate elements of your field lab report should later be incorporated into your Sea Voyage Narrative. The Field Lab Report will be submitted several days after the lab's conclusion. *Please note that participation in this field lab is mandatory for the course and that 20% of the grade is based on the field assignments drawn from the lab and other in-port experiences.*

Incorporation Of Other Ports Of Call Into Curriculum: Discussions of the complementary nature of literary studies and experiential port visits are incorporated into every class meeting, writing assignment, field lab, as well as your Sea Voyage Narrative, and final examination. While the field lab requires a special written report (relevant parts of which should inform the Sea Voyage Narrative) notes taken in at least 6 other ports and aboard ship must be submitted as an integral appendix to the personal Sea Voyage Narrative.

Documentation Of Completion Of These Experiences: (1) Field Lab: completion of a written report (2) Other Ports of Call: In-class presentations; submission of field notes as appendix to Sea Voyage Narrative.

Evaluation: The field lab report will be evaluated on the clarity of its writing, the relevance of its detail, the quality of insights presented, and its connection to one or more literary works in the curriculum. Similarly, in-class presentations and submitted field notes will be evaluated for originality, creativity, insightfulness, and clarity.

METHODS OF EVALUATION / GRADING RUBRIC

Methods of Evaluation:

The field lab report and other written assignments will be evaluated on the clarity of writing, relevance of details, and the quality of insights presented. In-class presentations and field notes will be evaluated for originality, creativity, insightfulness, and clarity. Class Participation means active, respectful, and relevant engagement in class discussions and other oral assignments.

Grading Rubric:

A = outstanding writing/speaking; highly insightful, creative, original; superior use of sources

B = above average writing/speaking; insightful; good use of sources

C = average writing/speaking; meets but does not exceed goals of assignment

D = below average writing/speaking; barely meets goals of assignment

F = unacceptable writing/speaking; does not meet goals of assignment or assignment not submitted

RESERVE LIBRARY LIST

AUTHOR: Robert Foulke

TITLE: The Sea Voyage Narrative

PUBLISHER: Routledge

ISBN #: 0-415-93894-5 (pbk)

DATE/EDITION: 2002

DVD “Longitude” – video adaptation of Dava Sobel’s book *Longitude*

DVD “The Tempest,” BBC Shakespeare (starring Michael Hordern and Derek Godfrey)

ELECTRONIC COURSE MATERIALS

TBD

HONOR CODE

Semester at Sea students enroll in an academic program administered by the University of Virginia, and thus bind themselves to the University’s honor code. The code prohibits all acts of lying, cheating, and stealing. Please consult the Voyager’s Handbook for further explanation of what constitutes an honor offense.

Each written assignment for this course must be pledged by the student as follows: “On my honor as a student, I pledge that I have neither given nor received aid on this assignment.” The pledge must be signed, or, in the case of an electronic file, signed “[signed].”