

## SEMESTER AT SEA COURSE SYLLABUS

**Voyage: Spring 2014**

**Discipline: History**

**HIST 3559-101: Medieval Travelers**

**Division: Upper**

**Faculty Name: Joyce E. Salisbury**

**Pre-requisites:** Lower level European or World History course

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Like travelers from long ago, we will embark upon a voyage of discovery that will cover the globe, and like them we will see unexpected things and meet people whose lives are very different from our own. In this course, we will look at the writings of medieval travelers (from between 1000 and 1500), and share their wonder as they encounter people and places that seem extraordinarily odd to them. The accounts of cross-cultural meetings in the past, reveal much about European prejudices but also tell about how easy it is to misunderstand what we see. These accounts were profoundly influential in shaping how Europeans approached the world during the Age of Explorations and beyond. This course will explore the major primary texts and encourage students to analyze their own explorations in the light of the experience of the past. The texts will include peaceful explorations – *Travels of Marco Polo*, *The Travels of Ibn Battuta*, and influential, yet imagined accounts like *Mandeville's Travels*. We will also read an excerpt from the “Acts of Thomas” which describe the apostle’s arrival in Chennai, India, and sets up the understanding of his church there. Through our travels, we will visit many of the sites described by the medieval travelers, and have an opportunity to compare their observations with ours. The close analysis of the texts will be supplemented by lectures on the regions we visit.

The goals of this upper level course are to learn about the events in the world in the Middle Ages, to gain facility in working with primary texts, and to study the theory behind historical study.

Methods of evaluation include field observation exercises (20%), 3 tests that include short answer and essay questions confirming understanding of readings and lectures (60%), and final paper in which students demonstrate their understanding of the past and how the past informs the present by comparing and contrasting their travel experiences with the texts we have analyzed (20%).

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

1. To learn about the events of world history and the many contacts between Europeans, Muslims, and the rest of the world during the Middle Ages.
2. To develop critical thinking skills in reading and analyzing primary texts and writing skills.

3. To understand motivations of travelers and see what causes misunderstanding among different cultures.
4. To gain more insights into our own travel experiences based on the examples from the past.
5. To improve our knowledge of world geography based on the experience of the travelers.

## REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

**AUTHOR** Tim Mackintosh-Smith, ed.

**TITLE:** *Travels of Ibn Battuta*

**PUBLISHER:** Picador

**ISBN #:** 9780330418799

**DATE/EDITION:** 2003

**COST:** \$17.95 (used available)

**AUTHOR:** Marco Polo

**TITLE:** *Travels of Marco Polo*

**PUBLISHER:** Penguin

**ISBN #:** 0140440577

**DATE/EDITION:**

**COST:** \$11.00 (used available)

### Reserve Readings on the intranet:

“Of the customs of the Isles around India,” *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, trans. Moseley. NY: Penguin, 1983, 120-126.

“Of the Great Khan of Cathay,” *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, trans. Moseley. NY: Penguin, 1983, 141-156.

Gregory, G. Guzman, “Reports of Mongol Cannibalism in the Thirteenth-Century,” in *Discovering New Worlds: Essays on Medieval Exploration and Imagination*, ed. Scott D. Westrem. NY: Garland, 1991, 31-68.

Iain Higgins, “Imagining Christendom from Jerusalem to Paradise: Asia in *Mandeville’s Travels*,” in *Discovering New Worlds: Essays on Medieval Exploration and Imagination* ed. Scott D. Westrem. NY: Garland, 1991, 91-114.

## TOPICAL OUTLINE OF COURSE

- I. Introduction, background and travels to Japan – 7 days
  - B1 Why do we travel?  
Short in-class essay
  - B2 History of Venice

- Lecture: Venice  
Read: Polo “Prologue” and “Japan”, p. 243-247 Discussion
- B3 Rise of Islam  
Lecture
- B4 Battutu’s Islam - Discussion  
Read: Battutu, ch. 3-7
- B5 Mongols in China - Discussion  
Read Polo: Ch. 3
- B6 Mongols in China II  
Read: Battuta “China”
- B7 Test 1**  
Ports: Hilo, Yokohama
- B8 Film: “Cosmopolitan Age: The Tang, 618-907”  
Discuss: How the Tang is Similar to today’s China.
- II. China to India – 5 days
- B9 Information and misinformation about China - Discussion  
Read: Mandeville “China”  
Read: Guzman “Mongol Cannibalism”  
**Bring Draft Thesis Statement for Discussion**
- B10 China explores the world  
**Observation Paper #1 Due**
- B11 Asian Religions – Lecture
- B12 Burma – Lecture  
READ Polo, p. 189-193.
- B13 History of India – Lecture  
Read: Polo Ch 7 - Discussion
- Field Lab - India**
- B14 From Burma to India - Discussion  
Read: Polo: Chapter 6; Battutu, ch. 13-15.  
Ports: Shanghai, Hong Kong, Viet Nam, Singapore, Myanmar
- B15 India – discussion  
Read: Battuta, Ch 9-12.  
**Observation Paper #2 Due**
- B16 Islands and the example of Mauritius - Lecture
- B17 Islands. Discussion:  
Read: Polo, ch 8; Battuta ch 5.  
Read: Mandeville “of the customs of the Isles around India”
- B18 Test 2**  
Ports: Cochin, Mauritius
- III. Africa and the Mediterranean = 6 days
- B19 sub-Saharan Africa: Religion and History – Lecture.
- B20 Africa: Discussion  
Read, Battutu Ch 18.  
i. **Observation Paper #3 due**
- B21 North Africa – Lecture
- B22 North Africa and Muslim Diversity - Discussion

Read: Battutu, ch 17. Polo, Ch. 1

B23 Mediterranean world

**Final paper due**

B24 Travel in the Imagination.

Read: Higgins, "Imagining Christendom"

B25 Conclusion: What is History? What is truth?

Ports: Cape Town, Ghana, Casablanca

## **FIELD WORK**

### ***FIELD LAB***

“The Ancient and Modern Sites of Cochin”. Both medieval travelers came here, and we will tour sites that they would have seen. Our goal is to both recapture the descriptions in the texts that we have read, and to consider the nature of observation by looking at what the medieval travelers described and what they didn’t, and compare what interests us with what interested them. We will look at religion: the Siva Temple and a Mosque in Cochin Then we will consider agriculture and economics at the Kunbalangi Integrated Tourism village on the island of Kunbalangi to see authentic rural culture. We will take a canal boat through the ancient canals that facilitated travel and trade from ancient times until today. Finally, there will be an opportunity to meet Indian students and discuss our differing observations.

### ***FIELD ASSIGNMENTS***

The field component of this course accounts for 20% of the grade. Like us, medieval travelers went in groups, and shared their experiences in conversation. Our Field Lab will reproduce this shared experience as we travel together and compare and contrast our experiences with those of the medieval travelers. The students will use this field lab as a primary source to write their own final papers.

Just as medieval travelers differed on what interested them – food, clothing, religion, markets, etc. – students may choose on what topics they will observe. Each student will be required to turn in written accounts of their observations on the topic they selected – three observation papers will be required that will account for 20% of the grade. Observation papers will be assessed on the degree to which they contain the following information:

1. Concrete observations of the topic selected – i.e., food, biology, technology, etc.
2. Discussion of ways in which their observations were similar and different from the medieval travelers’ views. Be sure to use historical theory in your analysis.
3. The observation papers should be considered building blocks for the final paper. As such, they should have a thesis statement, evidence and conclusion. In addition, students are encouraged to sustain the same theme around the world that will become the theme for their final paper. In this way, the field component will be solidly connected to the final project.

## **METHODS OF EVALUATION / GRADING RUBRIC**

### **METHODS OF EVALUATION**

Field Observation exercises – 3 @ 7%	20%
2 tests @ 20% each	40%
Field Lab Exercise	20%
Final paper	20%

### **EXPLANATION OF REQUIREMENTS**

1. Class participation. Students are expected to attend class on time, complete all assigned readings and to participate in class activities.
2. Field observation exercises. Guidelines will be distributed in class. Total will be between 1,000 and 2,000 words.
3. Tests: The tests will include short answer and essay questions. Tests are designed to confirm understanding of readings and lectures that form the background to the primary source readings.
4. Final paper: The final paper is in lieu of a final exam, and students will be expected to integrate readings, lectures, and field observations as they write their own "travel account." The paper will be graded on the following criteria: 1) Integration of readings and observations, 2) awareness of differences and similarities between medieval and modern travel observations, 3) correct expository writing (guidelines to be distributed in class 4) development of a thesis that reflects advanced historical analysis. Total will be between 3,000 and 5,000 words.

### **RESERVE LIBRARY LIST**

None

### **ELECTRONIC COURSE MATERIALS**

"When He came into India," *Acts of the Holy Apostle Thomas* in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 8, ed. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995, pp. 538-549.

"Of the customs of the Isles around India," *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* trans. Moseley, NY: Penguin, 1983, 120-126.

"Of the Great Khan of Cathay," *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* trans. Moseley, NY: Penguin, 1983, 141-156.

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### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

no

### **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]."