

WOH 1432: Pirates & Power: A Global History

Fall 2025

Quest 1 Theme: Justice and Power
Primary General Education designation: H
Writing designation: WR2000 words

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Email: Office Hours: Tuesdays 2:30-4:30PM, Wednesdays 3:30-4:30PM

Office Location: Grinter Hall 333

CLASS SCHEDULE:

Lectures: Tuesdays & Thursdays,

Break-out discussion sections: Fridays (consult One.UF for time and location)

Teaching Assistants:

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Ye True Chart of Pirate Treasure. Courtesy of UF Libraries Special Collection

COURSE DESCRIPTION

“Every Man has a Vote in Affairs of Moment; has equal title to the fresh Provisions, or strong Liquors, at any Time seized, and use of them at Pleasure, unless a Scarcity make it necessary, for the good of all, to Vote a Retrenchment.”

In popular imagination, pirates are most often depicted as robbers, murderers, and outlaws whose violent actions and plundering challenged established power structures. But as the excerpt above--extracted from the “Articles aboard Capt. Bartholomew Roberts’ Royal Fortune”*--demonstrates, pirates abided by their own set of morals and rules. While their exterior actions clearly conflicted with habitual definitions of justice (such as the laws of empires, international law, etc.), an examination of the ulterior logic behind pirates’ actions and their social organization reveals alternative understandings of justice and uncovers particular power dynamics within pirate communities. This course therefore raises a series of questions around the roles that justice and power played in shaping pirate communities and their actions across time and space. What motivated men and women to engage in pirate activities? Were pirates pariahs, or were they vigilantes seeking justice against tyrant monarchs? Can pirate crews be classified as democratic? What are the similarities and differences between those classified as pirates during the “Golden Age of Piracy,” and contemporary pirate-like activities off the coast of East Africa? And to what extent is it accurate to use the term “piracy” to describe contemporary phenomena that circumvent copyrights and membership fees, such as online streaming and file sharing (Torrent, Sci-Hub, etc.)? This course examines these questions in a global framework, from the Ancient World to our own contemporary times.

*“Articles aboard Capt. Bartholomew Roberts’ Royal Fortune” (1720) in: Robert J. Antony, *Pirates in the Age of Sail* (Norton, 2007), 92.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Available for purchase at the UF Bookstore and other online vendors

- Robert J. Antony, *Pirates in the Age of Sail* (Norton, 2007) ISBN-13: 978-0393927887
- Kris Lane, *Pillaging the Empire: Global Piracy and the High Seas, 1500-1750* 2nd ed. (Routledge, 2015) ISBN-13: 978-0765638427
- Marcus Rediker, *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age* (Beacon, 2005) ISBN-13: 978-0807050255

Additional required readings will be provided on Canvas.

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADE DISTRIBUTION

See rubrics at the end

Assignment	Description	Requirements	Points
Map Assignments (x3)	Create a map from a word bank (precision and creativity will be rewarded). Assmt. 1: Mediterranean; Assmt. 2: Atlantic World; Assmt. 3: Indian Ocean		3x30
Primary Source Analyses (x2)	Read and evaluate primary course (specific prompt to be distributed in class)	500 words	2x80
Tests (x2)	Test consisting of a combination of IDs, short answers, and essay.		2x150
Active Reading Journal	Summarize and respond to assigned weekly readings		100
Capstone Project – preliminary steps	Select a work of fiction (novel, movie, TV show) for your capstone essay, and identify the relevant course material (readings and materials in Special Collections) that will help you analyze this work. Students will then write a preliminary description of the primary source material. Take a look at the Libguide! Digital Resources - Pirates and Power - Guides @ UF at University of Florida	Guiding question for the assignment: How are pirates depicted in the work of fiction of your choosing?	50
Capstone Project – Analytical Essay	Each student will select a work of fiction (novel, movie, TV show) and analyze it in light of the semester-long interactions with readings and materials in Special Collections. (Discussion sections throughout semester prepare students by engaging literary and visual materials - i.e. short clips from popular movies, cartoons, paintings, etc.) Guiding questions for the assignment: How are pirates depicted in popular culture? What stereotypes are propagated in these fictional representations? To what extent do representations align with and depart from historical realities?	1000-1500 words	200
Participation	Regular preparation for class, including bringing the required readings; sustained effort at contributing to class discussions through visible attention, helpful questions, and worthwhile insights into the issues being discussed		100

WEEKLY COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1. Introductions & Definitions of Piracy

First Lecture: 8/21, first meeting in break-out discussion sections 8/22

UNIT 1: POWER IMBALANCES: CONFLICT on the MEDITERRANEAN

Week 2. Piracy in the Ancient & Early Modern Worlds

August 26, 28, 9

Read: Souza, *Piracy in the Graeco-Roman World*, 1-14

**Map Assignment 1, in class on 8/9*

Week 3. Pirates and Corsairs in the Sixteenth-Century Mediterranean

September 2, 4, 5

Read:

Lane, *Pillaging the Empire*, ch. 1, 7-28

Antony, *Pirates in the Age of Sail*, doc. 10 “Maltese Corsairing License...” &

doc. 11 “An Episode at Estampalia” & doc. 12 “European Renegade and Corsair John Ward”

Week 4. Portugal, Spain, and the Rise of Global Empires

September 9, 11, 12

Read: Lane, “Potosí Mines,” 1-15

Martin & Wasserman, “The Iberians’ New World,” ch. 8 in *Latin America and its People, volume 1: to 1830*, 96-111

Columbus, “Memorandum to Antonio de Torres, Isabela, 30 January 1494” in *Columbus on Himself*, 115-127

**Primary source Analysis 1 due Thursday 9/11. Full assignment instructions on Canvas*

UNIT 2: POWER and JUSTICE in the AGE of ATLANTIC EMPIRES

Week 5. Smugglers, Pirates, and Privateers: The Elizabethans

September 16, 18, 19

Read: Lane, *Pillaging the Empire*, ch. 2, 29-56

Selected primary sources [Canvas folder]

**Map Assignment 2, in class 9/19*

Week 6. The Fight for Netherlands Independence and the Birth of the Dutch Sea Rovers

September 23, 25, 26

Read: Lane, *Pillaging the Empire*, ch. 3, 57-88

**Test 1 – in class on Tuesday, 9/23*

Week 7. Case Study in Early Modern Globalization – The Spice War and *Mare Liberum*

September 30 and October 2, 3

Read: Lane, *Pillaging the Empire*, 152-168

**Hand in Active reading journal for initial check on Friday, 10/3*

Week 8. Buccaneers of the Seventeenth-Century

October 7, 9, 10

Read: Lane, *Pillaging the Empire*, ch. 4 & 5, 89-151
Antony, *Pirates in the Age of Sail*, doc. 3 “The Manner of the Buccaneers”

**Map Assignment 3, in class on 10/10*

UNIT 3: REGIMES of (IN)JUSTICE on the HIGH SEAS

Week 9. The Golden Age of Piracy in the Atlantic, part 1

October 14 and 16 [NO SECTIONS on October 17, HOMECOMING]

Read: Rediker, *Villains of All Nations*, ch. 2-3, 19-59

**Capstone Project – Prelim. Due Thursday Oct. 16*

Week 10. The Golden Age of Piracy in the Atlantic, part 2

October 21, 23, 24

Read: Lane, *Pillaging the Empire*, ch. 7, 176-206
Antony, *Pirates in the Age of Sail*, doc. 4 “Deposition of Adam Baldrige” &
doc. 5 “John Dann’s Testimony against Henry Every” & doc. 6 “Captain William
Kidd’s Royal Commission, 1695”

Week 11. Economics and Ideology: (On Contraband, Free Trade, and Egalitarianism)

October 28, 30, 31

Read: Rediker, *Villains of All Nations*, ch. 4-5, 60-102

Rediker, “Hydrarchy and Libertalia,” in Antony, *Pirates in the Age of Sail*, 166-179

Antony, *Pirates in the Age of Sail*, doc. 9 “Pirate Articles”

**Primary Source Analysis 2 due Friday 3/19*

Week 12. Life, Labor, (and Love?) on Ship and in Port

November 4, 6, 5

Read: Rediker, *Villains of All Nations*, ch. 6, 103-126

Stanley, “The Women Among the Boys,” in Antony, *Pirates in the Age of Sail*, 153-166.

Antony, *Pirates in the Age of Sail*, doc. 7 “Captain William Snelgrave’s Captivity, 1719” & doc. 8 “The Life of Mary Read”

Week 13. The Waning Days of the Golden Age of Atlantic Piracy

November 13, 14 [NO CLASS ON November 11: Veteran’s Day Holiday]

Read: Rediker, *Villains of All Nations*, ch. 7, 8, conclusion, 127-177

UNIT 4: POWER CONVERGENCES in the SOUTH PACIFIC AND INDIAN OCEAN

Week 14. Three Great Waves: Piracy on the China Coast

November 18, 20, 21

Read: Antony, *Pirates in the Age of Sail*, I. iv, 32-43 & doc. 14 “Cases of Wakō Piracy...” & doc. 15 “The Pirate Zheng Zhilong” & docs. 17-19 on Cai Qian and 19th century piracy

Lane, *Pillaging the Empire*, 168-175

**Test 2 – in class on Friday 11/21*

Week 15. THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

Week 16. Raiders, Warriors, and Traders in Southeast Asia

December 2 [NO CLASS December 4 or 5, reading days]

Read: Antony, *Pirates in the Age of Sail*, I.v, 44-55

Antony, “Turbulent Waters: Sea Raiding in Early Modern South East Asia,” *The Mariner's Mirror* 99:1 (2013): 23-38

Antony, *Pirates in the Age of Sail*, doc. 23 “An Oral History of Sea Dayak Raiding” & doc. 24 “The Pirate Ah’moi”

Watch: *Raiders of the Sulu* (2013), [in order to stream from our library website, you must either be on campus, or use a VPN for off-campus access]

* Capstone Project – Analytical Essay Due Tuesday 12/2

*Turn in reading journal for final check 12/2 [must include reflection on readings assigned for 12/2]

RUBRICS

Participation Grading Rubric

	High Quality	Above Average	Average	Needs Improvement
Informed: Shows evidence of having done the assigned work.				
Thoughtful: Shows evidence of having understood and considered issues raised.				
Considerate: Takes the perspective others into account.				

WR Statements and Grading Rubric

For courses that confer WR credit, the course grades have two components:

To receive writing credit, 1) a student must receive a grade of “C” or higher, and 2) you must turn in all essays totaling 2,000 words to receive credit for writing 2,000 words. The writing requirement ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning.

PLEASE NOTE: a grade of “C-” will not confer credit for the University Writing Requirement.

The instructor and/or Teaching Assistants will evaluate and provide feedback on the student's written assignments with respect to content, organization and coherence, argument and support, style, clarity, grammar, punctuation, and mechanics. Conferring credit for the University Writing Requirement, this course requires that essays conform to the following assessment rubric. More specific rubrics and guidelines applicable to individual assignments may be delivered during the course of the semester. The instructor and/or Teaching Assistants will assess feedback and provide suggestions for improvement by the time of the second writing assignment. For additional assistance with writing, take advantage of the writing studio: writing@ufl.edu, at 2215 Turlington.

WRITING RUBRIC

GRADE	Introduction	Analysis	Organization	Clarity and Style
A	Contextualizes the topic in a way that addresses the prompt. Lays out clearly what the essay will accomplish, and anticipates the overall conclusion. Includes a detailed organizational statement guiding the reader.	Equal analysis of all portions of the prompt. Essay provides crisp and insightful assessment of the evidence, and clearly connects the primary source to the week's topic and readings.	Logically organized and easy to follow. Paragraphs are united by topic sentences that are relevant, accurate, and specific	Virtually no grammar/spelling mistakes. Style is crisp and eloquent. Correct use of foreign words and words from other historical periods.

B	The Introduction either contextualizes the topic to which the prompt relates, OR it points to the main insights the reader will gain from reading this essay.	Thoroughly explains and analyzes relevant evidence. Addresses most (but not all) points laid out in the instructions.	Most paragraphs have topic sentences that are accurate, and contain analysis.	Small grammar/spelling mistakes. An occasional word is misused.
C	The introduction directly addresses the questions noted on the assignment's instructions, in a direct answer style rather than an essay format. It may not provide a broader introduction to the topic at hand. Introduction may imperfectly communicate specific time and place.	Some relevant explanation and analysis, but insufficient connection to the week's topic and readings.	EITHER exhibiting clear organizational pattern but no/few topic sentences, OR topic sentences, but ones <u>lacking analysis or specificity</u> . May stray from organizational pattern.	Essay format partially or not achieved. Despite repeated grammar/spelling errors, writing is still relatively clear. Several words may have been misused.
D	The introduction does not give the reader a clear idea of the purpose of the essay, and fails to contextualize the topic at hand.	Analysis is irregular or generally lacking.	Topic sentences are attempted but are sometimes unclear, OR do not clearly answer respond to the prompt	Paper is full of grammatical errors that may hinder comprehension. Several words may have been misused.
E (failing)	There is no introduction	May contain accurate statements, but no analysis	No attempt to format as essay.	Paper is full of grammatical errors that hinder comprehension. Several words may have been misused.

Grading Scale

For information on how UF assigns grade points, visit: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

A	94 – 100% of possible points		C	74 – 76%
A-	90 – 93%		C-	70 – 73%
B+	87 – 89%		D+	67 – 69%
B	84 – 86%		D	64 – 66%
B-	80 – 83%		D-	60 – 63%
C+	77 – 79%		E	<60

IV. QUEST LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Experiential Learning Component

Students will spend a class session working with the librarians and curators in UF's Special Collections and Map and Imagery Library. They will be introduced to and examine pirate-related materials such as treasure maps, performance programs (Performing Arts and Popular Culture Collections), pirate chronicles (the Florida Literature section), and children's books (Baldwin Library). These items will be considered in light of historical documents from the Florida History Collection and Manuscripts Collection. Students will use the opportunity to gather material for their Capstone Project and be required to complete a directed entry for their Active Reading Journals.

[Note: faculty in the Department of History are in conversation with the librarians about using this course to create a WordPress site on the theme of Pirates and Piracy: Myths and Realities with student group contributions for images, blog entries, etc. The feasibility of this project will depend in part on the number of students in the class.]

Self-Reflection Component: Active Reading Journal

According to historian Mary Lynn Rampolla, author of *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*: “To do your best work in history, you need to become an active reader. In contrast to passive readers, active readers are engaged in a dialogue with the text. They ask questions, make comments, and connect what they are reading to information they already know and texts they have already read. This kind of careful and critical reading is crucial both for active and intelligent participation in class discussion and for writing effective papers.”

Students will keep an Active Reading Journal for the semester. For some weeks, they will be given prompts based on the assigned readings and the week’s topics; for others, they will be able to determine the nature of their entries. On occasion, the responses will be completed in sections in conjunction with discussions. Completion of the journal will allow you to:

- Keep up with the weekly reading
- Engage in a dialogue with the course materials, exploring what you think and why you think it
- Pose questions, explore new ideas, make connections across the reading
- Relate course materials, discussions, etc. to current events, your own experiences, and your intellectual development

Grading criteria: While this is a writing exercise and your expression needs to be clear, the journal will not be graded according to the formal writing rubric (see above). Rather, it will be graded in terms of your on-time submission, thoroughness, and level of engagement. Journal entries will not count toward the 2,000 word writing requirement.

V. General Education and Quest Objectives & SLOs

This Course’s Objectives—Gen Ed Primary Area and Quest [see [CANVAS page](#)]

This course complies with all UF academic policies. For information on those policies and for resources for students, please see <https://syllabus.ufl.edu/syllabus-policy/uf-syllabus-policy-links/>