Description
In the early modern era, the Atlantic Ocean functioned as an extensive superhighway facilitating the circulation of an array of people, goods, ideas, and power. The sea, in other words, connected rather than separated the disparate cultures and societies around its basin, in turn generating a nexus of unique experiences and identities. This nexus emerged as its own “world,” a singular place of distinct processes and opportunities. Over the past two decades, this way of conceiving the Atlantic has supplanted older understandings of European, American, and African pasts that emphasized the insularity and exceptionalism of those historical experiences. In so doing, the Atlantic World has obtained an enormously influential stature in the historical and literary scholarship of the early modern period. In this seminar, we will hoist our sails on our own Atlantic exploration, investigating various currents and coves of this world as portrayed by a diverse array of scholars. By the time we call at port at the end of the semester, we will have developed a solid grasp of the Atlantic World as a theoretical construct, a historiography, and a historical entity.

Method of Instruction
This is a reading-intensive discussion-based seminar that demands your active participation and attendance. Think of this class as an extended conversation. In order for this conversation to succeed, each participant must pull his or her share of the load. Students should accordingly arrive at each meeting ready to demonstrate that they both completed and thought about the readings. To accomplish this most effectively, you should plan to engage critically, constructively, and courteously with your peers. Your overall performance in this class will depend on your thoughtful engagement with the readings and with one another.

Class Requirements
That you accomplish the assigned readings, attend all class meetings, and actively participate in the conversation at those meetings really goes without saying. Attendance/discussion (including two article presentations) is worth 50% of the total course grade. The writing components of the class include a weekly quiz (précis) on Blackboard (15%), weekly participation in an online Blackboard discussion of the readings (10%), and a final synthesis paper, 12-14 pages in length (25%).

*Weekly précis* – each week prior to our class meeting, you are responsible for logging into Blackboard and responding to an assigned quiz question. This question will ask you to write a brief summary (usually one paragraph) of the main argument for that week’s book. On weeks when multiple articles are assigned instead of a monograph, the question will focus on one of the articles. You may have your readings open when you write the précis and use as much time as you wish. A précis requires none of your own analysis, opinion, or commentary on the reading (save that for the discussions and paper), just your understanding of its thesis or main argument. The open window for completion of the weekly précis is noon on Thursday through noon on Saturday, preceding the class meeting.
Weekly online discussion – each week prior to our class meeting, you will be responsible for logging into Blackboard and engaging with your peers in an online discussion of that week’s assigned readings. Along with the weekly précis, this exercise is designed to get you acquainted with the readings, and allow you to formulate talking points, before you get to class. The open window for participating in the weekly online discussion is noon on Thursday to noon on Sunday, preceding the class meeting.

Synthesis paper – this assignment requires you to creatively synthesize our course readings in a final paper due at the end of the semester. Your goal here is to make the readings speak to one another in insightful and thought-provoking ways. From week to week, you should read the books and articles with and against each other in order to explore larger historiographic issues. In what ways, for example, can we think of certain readings as in dialogue with others? What do they agree/disagree about? Or how does one historian’s work complicate or enrich another’s? Be creative, but back up your ideas with the texts too. This paper is due during our scheduled final exam meeting time. [I am more than happy to read an early draft of your paper and provide feedback, provided it is turned in at least ten days before the due date.]

Article presentations – twice throughout the semester, you will report to the rest of the class on an academic journal article of your choosing. You may choose any article exploring a topic related to the early modern Atlantic World. Your presentation to the class should include the author’s main argument; a summary of the article, its evidence and methodology; your thoughts about how this article fits into the class and/or speaks to other course readings. Each presentation should be 7-10 minutes in length, and will take place during the second half of the class meeting. The rest of the class will subsequently raise questions and offer comments about the article and its significance to the class. You will sign up for dates during our second class meeting.

Required Texts
- April Lee Hatfield, *Atlantic Virginia: Intercolonial Relations in the Seventeenth Century*
- David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735-1785*
- Stuart Schwartz, *All Can be Saved: Religious Tolerance and Intolerance in the Iberian Atlantic World*
- Susan Scott Parish, *American Curiosity: Cultures of Natural History in the Colonial British Atlantic World*
- Jane G. Landers, *Atlantic Creoles in the Age of Revolutions*
- Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire, and the World, 1600-1850*

Course Schedule

**Week One – September 10 – Introduction to the Course**

**Week Two – September 17 – Charting a Course and Weighing Anchor – Conceptualizing Atlantic History**

Nicholas Canny, “Atlantic History; or Reconfiguring the History of Colonial British America,” *Journal of American History* 86:3 (December, 1999), pp. 1093-1114 [available on JSTOR]


Alison Games, “Beyond the Atlantic: English Globetrotters and Transoceanic Connections,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 63:4 (October, 2006), pp. 675-692 [available on JSTOR]

According to Bernard Bailyn, when and why did the concept of Atlantic World history emerge, and what factors contributed to its coalescence as a distinct field of historical inquiry? Judging from the tone and structure of his argument, what compelled Bailyn to write this essay and what is he attempting to accomplish with it?

Where do Canny, Coclanis, Armitage, and Games’ respective understandings of Atlantic history converge and diverge? How can the Atlantic World as an interpretive framework illuminate our conceptions of early modern history in ways that move beyond previous approaches? What are its shortcomings?

**Week Three – September 24 – A View of the Atlantic from America**

April Lee Hatfield, *Atlantic Virginia: Intercolonial Relations in the Seventeenth Century*

**Week Four – October 1 – Atlantic Commerce and Trade**

David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735-1785*

**Week Five – October 8 – Piracy in the Atlantic World**

Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-1750*

**Week Six – October 15 – Religion and Empire in the British Atlantic**

Nicholas M. Beasley, “Ritual Time in British Plantation Colonies, 1650-1780,” *Church History* 76:3 (September 2007) [available on Blackboard]


October 22 – No Class – Fall Recess

Week Seven – October 29 – Faith and Salvation in the Iberian Atlantic
Stuart Schwartz, *All Can be Saved: Religious Tolerance and Intolerance in the Iberian Atlantic World*

Week Eight – November 5 – Hidden Meanings of Atlantic Commodities

Week Nine – November 12 – The Power of Ideas in an Intellectual Atlantic
Rebecca Earle, “‘If You Eat their Food…’: Diets and Bodies in Early Colonial Spanish America,” *American Historical Review* 115:3 (June 2010), pp. 688-713 [available on JSTOR]

Week Ten – November 19 – Creating Authority and Knowledge in the Atlantic
Susan Scott Parish, *American Curiosity: Cultures of Natural History in the Colonial British Atlantic World*

Week Eleven – November 26 – Life, Death, and Afterlife in the Black Atlantic

Week Twelve – December 3 – Creolization in the Black Atlantic
Jane G. Landers, *Atlantic Creoles in the Age of Revolutions*

Week Thirteen – December 10 – Captivity and the Fragility of Empire
Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire, and the World, 1600-1850*

Final Examination Period - TBD