

**Oberlin College  
Department of History**

FYSP 071: Pirates and Piracy in Times Past  
Fall 2013  
MW – 2:30-3:45PM  
King Building 227

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Office Hours: W – 1:00-2:30, F – 11:00-12:30, & by appt.

Description

From the ancient Mediterranean to the Spanish Main, from the Barbary Coast to the South China Seas, maritime theft is a phenomenon transcending people, place, and time. It has served at once as a devastating problem plaguing some and a lucrative opportunity enriching others. As such, piracy offers a fascinating framework with which to assess historical contexts of violence, authority, economics, and law. In this seminar we will weigh anchor, put to sea, and sail in pursuit of history's notorious and obscure piratical personalities and their watery worlds. We will focus particular attention on both the socio-economic milieus from which these seafaring criminals emerged and those they subsequently fashioned in their swashbuckling exploits. When we call at port at the end of the semester, we will have developed an understanding of piracy as a striking trait of past cultures, but one whose precise nature is often hotly debated by historians today.

Course Goals

While this seminar will serve as an introduction to pirates and piracy in times past, it is also designed to equip first year students with certain transferable skills necessary to make the most of their liberal arts education. One important goal, for example, is to acquaint you with the dynamics of fruitful class discussions at the college level. This, in turn, can facilitate a higher level of learning about a particular text or idea. Secondly, you will come away from this seminar knowing how to read and analyze academic literature and primary source material. Much time will be given over to identifying an author's thesis as well as the methodology and evidence s/he employs to develop that argument. Students will also learn that history is not a definitive, settled, or static narrative (it's not a textbook), but is instead a contested, complicated, and messy creation of people today. To this end, many of our readings intervene in historiographic debates, some of them quite contentious, regarding such topics as the economic and political values of pirate societies. Thirdly, you will develop your written communication skills to meet the rigorous demands of college-level course work here at Oberlin.

Method of Instruction

This is a writing- and discussion-based seminar that demands your active participation and attendance at *every* meeting. 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 and attend all class meetings really goes without saying. But in a seminar such as this it is all the more imperative to think critically about our readings and actively contribute to the conversation at our meetings. As such, discussion (including your film presentation) is worth 40% of the total course grade. The writing components of the class include weekly participation in an online Blackboard discussion (10%), a monograph synthesis (15%), a primary source analysis (15%), and a final capstone paper (20%).

*Weekly online discussion* – each week prior to our class meetings, you are responsible for logging into Blackboard and engaging with your peers in an informal online discussion of the next assigned readings. The topics for discussion are entirely up to you; you may post a thought or question, or respond to a classmate’s comment. This exercise is designed to get you acquainted with the readings, and allow you to formulate fully- or partially-formed ideas, *before* you arrive in class. The discussion board will close at noon preceding the class meeting.

*Monograph synthesis* – this assignment requires you to creatively compare and contrast Marcus Rediker’s *Villains of All Nations* and Peter Leeson’s *The Invisible Hook*. Your goal here is to make the readings speak to one another in insightful and thought-provoking ways. In what ways, for example, can we think of these two authors as in dialogue with one another? What do they agree/disagree about? Are their arguments entirely compatible or incompatible? Be creative, but back up your ideas with the texts too. A four-page rough draft is due October 7. Students will sign up to meet with me individually to discuss their drafts. A six-page final draft is due October 16.

*Primary source analysis* – this assignment requires you to research and analyze three primary sources of your choosing. You may select three sources that shed light on a particular person or moment in time, or three sources pertaining to a certain theme across time/place. We will devote attention in the second half of the semester to the identification and analysis of primary sources. In addition, Ms. Jennifer Starkey, reference librarian at Mudd Library, will lead an informational session for our seminar that will include an introduction to primary source research tools at the library. Paper length is five pages. A rough draft is due November 13, and will be workshopped in class. The final draft is due one week after your paper is workshopped.

*Final capstone paper* – here you will analyze Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Treasure Island* in light of what you learned about historical piracy throughout this course. Which historians’ depictions of piracy resonate in Stevenson’s classic novel? Which do not? What might the novel suggest about the ways Stevenson’s contemporary society perceived piracy? A six-page final draft is due during our scheduled final exam period.

*Film presentation* – once throughout the semester, you will facilitate a conversation centered on a short clip from a film of historical fiction about piracy. You may choose any film (even animation) about piracy, but please get my approval beforehand. During your presentation, you must first briefly introduce the film and its basic plot, and explain what role your particular scene plays within the larger production. Offer your own insightful analysis of the segment. Does it suggest something about where/how piracy originates? Are viewers supposed to understand piracy as justifiable or inexcusable, purposeful or irrational, legitimate or illegitimate, and what indicates this? What does this scene suggest about our contemporary relationship with pirates and piracy in the past? Or make up your own questions. You have twenty minutes at the end of class to show the film clip and facilitate a conversation.

### Required Texts

Catherine Wendy Bracewell, *The Uskoks of Senj: Piracy, Banditry, and Holy War in the Sixteenth-Century Adriatic* (Cornell University Press, 1992)

David Cordingly, *Under the Black Flag: The Romance and Reality of Life Among the Pirates* (Random House, 2006)

Peter T. Leeson, *The Invisible Hook: The Hidden Economics of Pirates* (Princeton University Press, 2009)

Marcus Rediker, *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age* (Beacon Press, 2004)

Robert Louis Stevenson, *Treasure Island* [1883] (Dover Thrift Editions, 1993)

### Academic Dishonesty

Please do your own work. Cheating on any written assignment will not be tolerated by either myself or the college. This includes plagiarism (using someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as your own.) You will not, for example, copy another student's work, anything off the internet, or anything from a book while claiming it as your own and not using proper citation. If you have further questions about how this policy applies to a particular assignment, please consult either myself or the Oberlin College Honor Code.

### Miscellaneous

The use of electronic devices during class periods is strictly prohibited. This includes cell phones, computers, ipads, etc. Violating this policy will result in the lowering of one letter grade for the course per instance. If extenuating circumstances require that you use a computer in class, you must discuss this with me during the first week of class.

### Grade Breakdown

A+ 97-100%; A 93-96%; A- 90-92%; B+ 87-89%; B 83-86%; B- 80-82%; C+ 77-79%; C 73-76%; C- 70-72%; D 60-69%; F 59% and below

### Course Schedule

#### **Week One**

##### **September 4**

Introduction

#### **Week Two – *Hostis humani generis* – Defining Piracy in Times Past**

##### **September 9**

David Cordingly, *Under the Black Flag: The Romance and Reality of Life Among the Pirates* (New York, 2006), xiii-xxi, 3-25, 56-103, 125-140, 194-240

##### **September 11**

Philip Gosse, "Foreword" and "Chapter 1: Pirates in General," *The History of Piracy* (New York, 1932), vii-ix, 1-9

Henry A. Ormerod, "Chapter II. Piracy, Privateering and Reprisals," *Piracy in the Ancient World: An Essay in Mediterranean History* (London, 1924), 59-79

Philip de Souza, "Greek Piracy," *The Greek World* (London, 1995), 179-198

### **Week Three – Social Banditry in Theory and Practice**

#### **September 16**

Eric Hobsbawm, *Bandits* (New York, 2000), 1-45

#### **September 18**

J. S. Bromley, “Outlaws at Sea, 1660-1720: Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity among the Caribbean Freebooters,” *Bandits at Sea: A Pirates Reader* (New York, 2001), 169-194

Kenneth J. Kinkor, “Black Men under the Black Flag,” *Bandits at Sea: A Pirates Reader* (New York, 2001), 195-210

John C. Appleby, “The Problem of Piracy in Ireland, 1570-1630,” *Pirates? The Politics of Plunder, 1550-1650* (London, 2011), 41-55

John C. Appleby, “Women and Piracy in Ireland: From Gráinne O’Malley to Anne Bonny,” *Bandits at Sea: A Pirates Reader* (New York, 2001), 283-298

### **Week Four – Pirates and Power Struggles in the Early Modern Atlantic**

#### **September 23**

Marcus Rediker, *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age* (Boston, 2004), 1-82

#### **September 25**

Marcus Rediker, *Villains of All Nations*, 83-176

### **Week Five – A Multidisciplinary Approach to Pirates in the Golden Age**

#### **September 30**

Peter T. Leeson, *The Invisible Hook: The Hidden Economics of Pirates* (Princeton, 2009), xiii-81

#### **October 2**

Peter T. Leeson, *The Invisible Hook*, 82-196

### **Week Six – A Global Approach to the Economics of Piracy**

#### **October 7**

Exploring the sea at Allen Art Museum

Three-page rough draft of monograph synthesis due

#### **October 9**

J.L. Anderson, “Piracy and World History: An Economic Perspective on Maritime Predation,” *Journal of World History* 6:2 (Fall, 1995), 175-199

David J. Starkey, “Pirates and Markets,” *Bandits at Sea: A Pirates Reader* (New York, 2001), 107-124

### **Week Seven – Piracy vis-à-vis the Nation-State**

#### **October 14**

Anne Pérotin-Dumon, “The Pirate and the Emperor: Power and the Law on the Seas, 1450-1850,” *Bandits at Sea: A Pirates Reader* (New York, 2001), 25-54

Christopher Harding, “Hostis Humani Generis” – The Pirate as Outlaw in the Early Modern Law of the Sea,” *Pirates? The Politics of Plunder, 1550-1650* (London, 2011), 20-38

## **October 16**

Sebastian R. Prange, "A Trade of No Dishonor: Piracy, Commerce, and Community in the Western Indian Ocean, 12<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> Century," *American Historical Review* 116:5 (2011), 1269-1293

David J. Starkey, "The Origins and Regulation of Eighteenth-Century British Privateering," *Bandits at Sea: A Pirates Reader* (New York, 2001), 69-81

Five-page final draft of monograph synthesis due

October 21 – October 23 – No Class – Fall Recess

## **Week Eight – Researching and Writing about Pirates**

### **October 28**

Articles aboard Captain Bartholomew Roberts' *Royal Fortune*, 1720, in *A General History of the Pyrates* [1724] (New York, 1999), 211-212

Articles aboard Captain John Phillips' *Revenge*, 1723, in *A General History of the Pyrates* [1724] (New York, 1999), 341-343

"Chinese Pirate Pact of 1805," in *Pirates in the Age of Sail* (New York, 2007), 122-124

"Sulu Slave Raiding, early nineteenth century," in *Pirates in the Age of Sail* (New York, 2007), 146-148

### **October 30**

Informational session with Ms. Jennifer Starkey at Mudd Library

Catherine Wendy Bracewell, *The Uskoks of Senj: Piracy, Banditry, and Holy War in the Sixteenth-Century Adriatic* (Ithaca, 1992), 1-88

## **Week Nine – Empire, Religion, and Piracy in Eastern Europe**

### **November 4**

Catherine Wendy Bracewell, *The Uskoks of Senj*, 89-174

### **November 6**

Catherine Wendy Bracewell, *The Uskoks of Senj*, 174-304

## **Week Ten – Pirates of the South China Sea**

### **November 11**

Tonio Andrade, "The Company's Chinese Pirates: How the Dutch East Indian Company Tried to Lead a Coalition of Pirates to War against China, 1621-1622," *Journal of World History* 15:4 (December 2004), 415-444

Dian Murray, "Cheng I Sao in Fact and Fiction," *Bandits at Sea: A Pirates Reader* (New York, 2001), 253-281

"Cases of Wako Piracy in Sixteenth-Century China," in *Pirates in the Age of Sail* (New York, 2007), 108-111

"Narrative of Richard Glasspoole's Captivity, 1809," in *Pirates in the Age of Sail* (New York, 2007), 126-131

**November 13**

- Dian Murray, "The Practice of Homosexuality among the Pirates of Late Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century China," *Bandits at Sea: A Pirates Reader* (New York, 2001), 244-252
- "The Pirate Zheng Zhilong," in *Pirates in the Age of Sail* (New York, 2007), 111-114
- "The Pirate Ah'moi," in *Pirates in the Age of Sail* (New York, 2007), 138-142
- Rough draft of primary source analysis due

**Week Eleven – Peer Review of Primary Source Analyses****November 18**

Workshop Papers

**November 20**

Workshop Papers

**Week Twelve – The Barbary Corsairs****November 25**

Workshop Papers

**November 27**

Nabil Matar, "Introduction: England and Mediterranean Captivity, 1577-1704," *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption: Barbary Captivity Narratives from Early Modern England* (New York, 2001), 1-52

**Week Thirteen – Barbary Captives and Their Narratives****December 2**

- Robert C. Davis, "Counting European Slaves on the Barbary Coast," *Past and Present* 172 (August, 2001), 87-124
- C.R. Pennell, "The Geography of Piracy: Northern Morocco in the Mid-Nineteenth Century," *Bandits at Sea: A Pirates Reader* (New York, 2001), 55-68

**December 4**

- John Rawlins, *The Famous and Wonderful Recovery of a Ship of Bristol, Called the Exchange, from the Turkish Pirates of Argier* [1622], in *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption: Barbary Captivity Narratives from Early Modern England* (New York, 2001), 98-120
- Thomas Phelps, *A True Account of the Captivity of Thomas Phelps* [1685], in *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption: Barbary Captivity Narratives from Early Modern England* (New York, 2001), 195-217
- "John Foss' Captivity in Algiers, 1793-96," in *Pirates in the Age of Sail* (New York, 2007), 101-107

**Week Fourteen – Piracy as a Literary Construct****December 9**

Robert Louis Stevenson, *Treasure Island* [1883] (New York, 1993), 1-92

**December 11**

Robert Louis Stevenson, *Treasure Island*, 93-151

**Final Examination Period – TBD – Final capstone paper due**