

FRSHMN 50V: Sea Monsters Throughout the Ages: Fables, Films, and Facts

Course Overview and Contact Information

Instructor: Professor Peter Girguis

Location: Biological Labs Building room 1065 (MCB Faculty room on the 1st floor)

Office/ Office hours: Please feel free (!!) to request meetings by e-mailing jthomson@oeb.harvard.edu and pgirguis@oeb.harvard.edu Also do not hesitate to ask for meetings after class

Phone: (617) 496-8328

E-mail: pgirguis@oeb.harvard.edu

Course Description and Learning Objectives

There have always been tales of sea monsters. For as long as we humans have ventured into the ocean, our imaginations have conjured images of serpents, krakens, leviathans, and other creatures, all of whom seem bent on the destruction of those who dare set foot into the sea. Humankind's conviction that sea monsters are real is so powerful that even today rumors abound of sea monsters lurking in the depths. Indeed, every major religion—eastern and western—features sea monsters. Are these declarations true? Do giants roam the deep sea? Did the explorers of centuries ago see creatures from their small wooden boats that we do not see today?

During this course we explore sea monsters through a social, spiritual, literary, and scientific lens. We study the sea monsters that flourish on ancient maps to understand the minds of sixteenth century scholars. We examine the bodies of real sea monsters, and consider the world in which such grotesque creatures might evolve. We read tales of creatures from classic and contemporary literature. Most importantly, we develop a better understanding of how humans perceive the world, and how our consciousness can simultaneously embrace our wildest dreams and cower from our greatest fears. Sea monsters, both real and imagined, tell us much about life in the deep sea, and even more about humankind.

Course Materials

There are two required books, which you can purchase or borrow as you see fit:

1. *Monsters Of The Sea: The History, Natural History, and Mythology of the Oceans' Most Fantastic Creatures* by Richard Ellis. ISBN-10: 1592289673
1. *The Universe Below: Discovering the Secrets of the Deep Sea* by William J Broad. ISBN-10: 0684838524

In addition to the book chapters, we are providing a few additional readings as PDFs. These may be found on the course website, under the "Files" section.

ASSIGNMENTS:

- 33% = Writing assignment #1 is a *creative writing* assignment and in-class presentation on the topic of your choice (with instructor guidance)
- 33% = Assignment #2 is a *scientific or creative* assignment and in-class presentation on the topic of your choice (with instructor guidance)

- 34% = Final project, which is a more expansive *scientific or creative* assignment and in-class presentation (TBD)

FINAL PRESENTATION:

You will be expected to give a final 5-7 minute presentation to the class, on a topic related to sea monsters. We will provide you with guidance and feedback on developing a final project to present online. This can be a Powerpoint presentation, an original art piece, a song you'll sing, a scientific presentation...you name it! More details as we get closer to the end of the semester.

Expectations and Policies

Attendance: You are expected to be present for all classes. All students are allowed to miss one class without penalty; just let me know in advance. Missing additional classes may be allowed if discussed with -and permitted by- the instructor well in advance.

Accessibility: Harvard University is committed to providing an accessible academic community. The Accessibility Office offers a variety of accommodations and services to students. Please visit <https://accessibility.harvard.edu> for more information. Moreover, please do not hesitate to ask your instructor to make accommodations as needed for your well-being.

Academic Integrity/Honesty: Discussion and the exchange of ideas are essential to academic work. For assignments in this course, you are encouraged to consult with your classmates on the choice of paper topics and to share sources. You may find it useful to discuss your chosen topic with your peers or me, particularly if you are working on the same topic as a classmate.

However, you should ensure that any written work you submit for evaluation is the result of your own research and writing and that it reflects your own approach to the topic. You must also adhere to standard citation practices in this discipline and properly cite any books, articles, websites, lectures, etc. that have helped you with your work. If you received any help with your writing (feedback on drafts etc from peers or course instructional staff), you must also acknowledge this assistance.

Finally....do not ever plagiarize. It will be your responsibility to understand Harvard's policies on the matter. If need be, please see Harvard's Academic Resources for more information on what constitutes plagiarism.

Course schedule

Date	Week	Topic	Assignment
8/31	1	<i>Introductions and Sea Monsters in Ancient Times</i>	Draw your idea of a sea monster in class on the namecards!
		<i>Movie time (Professor Girguis will be out of town)</i>	Read chapters 1 (Introduction), 3 (Sea Serpents), and 5 (The Kraken) from <i>Monsters of the Sea: The History, Natural History, and</i>

9/7	2	Guest: Dr. Zane Wolf	<i>Mythology of the Oceans' Most Fantastic Creatures</i>
9/14	3	<i>Sea Monsters in Religion</i>	Skim <i>Religion and Its Monsters</i> by Timothy K. Beal (PDF on Canvas course site)
9/21	4	<i>Putting Sea Monsters on the Map:</i> Video: Chet Van Duzer (author of <i>Sea Monsters on Medieval and Renaissance Maps</i>)	Peruse <i>Sea Monsters on Medieval and Renaissance Maps</i> by Chet Van Duzer (Excerpts on Canvas course site) Read chapter 7 (Leviathan) from <i>Monsters Of The Sea: The History, Natural History, and Mythology of the Oceans' Most Fantastic Creatures</i>
9/28	5	<i>One Monster of a Book: Sea monsters in literature</i> Field trip to Harvard Museum of Natural History	Read selections from <i>Moby Dick</i> (found on Canvas course site)
10/5	6	<i>Sea Monsters in your Mind</i> Guest lecture: Ms. Jenn Thomson	Read <i>The Call of Cthulhu</i> by H.P. Lovecraft (PDF found on Canvas course site)
10/12	7	<i>Star/Fish: Sea Monsters in Film and Fiction</i> CREATIVE ASSIGNMENT AND PRESENTATION #1 DUE TODAY	
10/19	8	<i>Sea Monsters Up Close</i> part I Videos: Creatures of the deep sea	Read Chapters 1 (Lair), 3 (Garden of Eden), and 5 (Canyon) from <i>The Universe Below: Discovering the Secrets of the Deep Sea</i>
10/26	9	Movie: Blue Planet II	
		Field trip: Tour of the map collection at	

11/2	10	the Harvard map library	
11/9	11	<i>Sea Monsters On Early Earth and Other Worlds</i> Guest lecture: Dr. Rachel Harris	
11/16	12	<i>Mechanical Sea Monsters: The history of submarines</i> Video from <i>the History Channel</i> ’s special on the deepest two-person dive of the <i>Trieste</i> CREATIVE ASSIGNMENT AND PRESENTATION #2 DUE TODAY	
11/23	13	THANKSGIVING BREAK	
11/30	14	FINAL PRESENTATIONS and last day of class	
FINAL EXAM PERIOD		Good luck with your exams!	