

HIST302-02: A Global History of Pirates



Spring 2024

Schedule: Mon-Wed 5.00pm-6.15pm

Location: EAS-3355

Instructor: Professor Jim Rankine

Email: jsrgla@rit.edu

Office Hours: Liberal Arts 6-2231, Monday 12.30-2.30pm

Course Overview and Objectives

Few figures loom larger in the modern imagination than the pirate. Yet fewer still could lay claim to being more misunderstood, misrepresented, and misinterpreted either. In this class, we will examine the history of piracy across millennia and around the world to develop a fuller appreciation for the development, role, and changing nature of piracy as a consistent feature of world history. Our investigation will take us from the wild edges of the Roman Empire, to the lawless seas of the Dark Ages, across the Atlantic, Indian, and Pacific Oceans, through centuries of imperial struggle, colonial expansion, anti-colonial resistance, and into the current day resurgence of maritime plunder. We will interrogate the most fundamental ideas of what pirates are, how they lived and died, and how they continue to plague the margins of our seas in reality and in fiction. Along the way, we will develop the key skills of the historian's craft, and apply them to historical materials, scholarly work, and modern media.

Course Materials

As our class examines so many different themes and concepts, there is no single assigned text. All readings and projects are available either through our MyCourses page, or freely available on the internet. Supplementary materials, and items that may emerge

from our in-class investigations and discussions will also be made available here.

Assessment

There are five core assessment items in the class, each tailored to a specific aspect of the course learning objectives.

Participation (20%): I construe participation broadly, and also strive to provide multiple ways for students to contribute to the class. Joining discussions, providing examples, helping your peers, asking questions, working in pairs and small groups are all ways that you can participate. There will be a variety of opportunities to bring your own experiences, skills, interests, ideas, and knowledge to the class! Of course, participation also includes being in the classroom. I recognise that it is not always possible to be in every class, and every student is afforded 2 absences with no questions asked (although of course you're encouraged to be in every class if you can!) If you require further absences, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Process Letter (Due 4th of March 10%): As the course unfolds, you will be encountering and engaging with a wide variety of ideas and concepts. Ideally, these will affect your appreciation and understanding of this history of piracy. The process letter provides you with an opportunity to clarify and explain the way that the ideas we explore in class are helping (or perhaps not helping) you to think in new or different ways. It also give me a chance to provide you with feedback and a better sense of how you are thinking about the content of the course and perhaps how that thinking is changing as we proceed.

The letter may be written documents, but other formats, such as audio or video are also acceptable if you wish. What is important is that you reflect on how the materials, ideas, and discussions in the class have had an impact or made an impression on you and why. In return, I will be providing you with feedback and prompts or ideas that you can help you develop your ideas through the second half of the semester.

Reading Leads (10%): Over the course of the semester, you are asked to take on one of the weekly readings that you find personally most intriguing or interesting to serve as a reading lead. This means you will take a more active role in the class discussion around the reading. You may choose to prepare questions ahead of time to pose to your peers, or prefer to bring a related item, story, or piece of media that you feel is illustrative for the reading. Many weeks will have multiple reading leads, which may require some light cooperation also. Consider the schedule and what perhaps speaks to you as particularly interesting, as well as your own schedule for the semester. A signup sheet will be made available for you to choose your reading lead early in the semester.

Pirates in Fictional Media Review (Due 10th of April 15%): The overwhelming popularity of pirates in fictional media has made them one of the most enduring features of our collective psyche. With this popularity, however, comes unique historical challenges. This assignment will invite you to engage with modern incarnations of pirates in popular media (books, film, television, and video games) from a critical perspective. Your review will assess the historical dimensions (not merely accuracy, but also value, perspective, and authenticity) of a piece of media, and apply the knowledge and interpretive concepts we cover in class. Ideally, this will arm you with the critical skills necessary to bring this perspective to all kinds of media, fictional or otherwise, that portrays (for better or for worse) our past.

Final Research Paper

As this is an advanced level history class, the final assignment is a major research paper. A research paper is an undertaking that aims to help you develop both your ability to conduct *original historical research* and to create and convey *original historical knowledge*. Of course, this can often be a difficult and perhaps intimidating endeavour, but the assignment is divided into several key steps that will help to keep you accountable, and ensure that *all* of your work is recognised and that you have a clear and consistent path to progress towards the finished paper. The steps also give me an opportunity to provide you with feedback and guidance to help you as you tackle this difficult undertaking, and to ensure that you understand what is being asked of you and why.

Research Overview (Due 21st of February 10%): In preparing for a major research assignment, it's important to establish a strong, clear foundation for your research goals. This assignment sets you up to ensure that your research assignment has sufficient resources available to be developed into a fully fleshed out research paper. It will also give you a grounding in the fundamental methods of historical research, distinguishing primary and secondary sources, evaluating scholarship, and organising your research into a coherent and executable plan. COLA Librarian Cami Golldowitz will be coming to class to give you a rundown of the specifics of using the library website to its full potential.

Paper Outline (Due 18th of March 10%): Once you've assembled your research, it is time to lay out a structured outline of your paper. This will help you to further refine your ideas and to develop the core aspects of your proposed paper, most importantly a thesis that you plan to advance in your paper, as well as the key points you wish to discuss throughout. How detailed and fleshed out you want your outline to be is up to you, but the more detail and substance in your outline, the more clear and useful feedback I can give! Ideally, this outline will become the scaffolding with which you build your final paper, and will allow you to shift from research mode into writing mode, a switch that can sometimes be rather difficult to make!

Optional Paper Draft (Due 3rd of April 10%): A common issue that students run into

with big papers of this kind of paper is that it can feel very worrisome to hand in a piece of assessment that is worth a significant portion of their grade without knowing if it is 'good enough'. A simple solution to this issue is to have a solid working draft ahead of time. The writing of a draft obliges us to move past vague or impressionistic ideas or points and condense and solidify them into clear, concise, and compelling prose. Just as taking a concept from design to prototype reveals unforeseen flaws and difficulties, and also helps us understand better how to solve and improve on the design, so too does a draft help us understand the moving parts of our paper and what we need to make it 'work' the way we want. However, a draft also gives you a vital opportunity to get feedback, advice, guidance, and help from me well ahead of the due date, and ensure you're on track to deliver a paper that you are proud of and confident in. Since this is key learning work, and grades reflect learning, your draft will be recognised in assessment. As the title suggests, this is an optional part of the assignment, but highly recommended. If you choose *not* to submit a draft, your final assignment will be graded as a larger portion of your full grade instead.

Final Research Project (Due 1st of May, 25/15%): The research paper remains the foundational assessment piece of history a discipline. In this class, you will have broad latitude to base your paper on a theme, incident, trend, region, or even individual related to the history of piracy. The research paper will be approximately 10-15 pages, and will include citations and a bibliography of reliable, scholarly sources. This will be your opportunity to delve deeper into one of the many different eras and regions of piracy, and explore for yourself aspects of this complex historical legacy. Of course, I also recognise that research papers can be intimidating, and through the course of the semester, I will be providing advice, insight, and guidance to help you conceive, develop, and realise your papers. One easy way to reduce the pressure is to complete the draft assignment, which will help to lower the stakes and give you a solid sense of where your paper is before you have to submit it. Once again, in completing the paper, you will be arming yourself with the critical research skills and prose writing abilities that are defining features of the historians craft, and applicable in a wide variety of other disciplines and contexts.

Grading

I am always happy to discuss grades, and if you have any concerns or questions I encourage you to reach out to me or visit during office hours to discuss them. Remember also that *grades are not your objective* in the class, but simply a measurement of your progress towards the real objectives which will be expanding and developing your understanding of our topic. If you are attending class, participating in activities and

discussions, doing the reading and reflecting on it, then you are certainly improving your understanding and thus your grade for the class will reflect that.

Grades for this course will be determined using the following criteria:

93-100 = A	73-76 = C
90-92 = A-	70-72 = C-
87-89 = B+	67-69 = D+
83-86 = B	63-66 = D
80-82 = B-	60-62 = D-
77-79 = C+	0-59 = F

Attendance

Attending *and* participating in the class is important, both for your learning and for your peers. Together, we learn more effectively as collaborators and interlocutors than as isolated individuals. Participation means bringing your thoughts, skills, knowledge and ideas to class **in any way you can**. Participating in discussions, doing the assigned readings, and helping your classmates with your own insights and perspectives through questions or answers are all strongly encouraged, and I strive to create a classroom where everyone can find a way to do so. You are allowed **three** unexplained absences, although I strongly encourage you to attend all the classes! More unexcused absences will negatively impact your Participation grade. If you need to miss a class, please reach out to me as soon as you can.

Participation also encompasses working in groups in a fair, respectful, and responsible manner. Helpful, engaged, and thoughtful participation in group activities will play a significant role in your overall grade for participation.

If you are absent, for any reason, **please contact me** for information about anything you may have missed.

Academic Honesty

As members of an academic community, students and faculty assume certain responsibilities, one of which is to engage in honest communication. Academic dishonesty is a serious violation of the trust upon which an academic community depends. A common form of academic dishonesty is plagiarism. The representation of another person's work as one's own, or the attempt "to blur the line between one's own ideas or words and those borrowed from another source" — more specifically, the use of an idea, phrase, or other materials from a written or spoken source without acknowledgement in a work for which the student claims authorship. Examples include: the misrepresentation of sources used in a work for which the student claims authorship; the improper use of

course materials in a work for which the student claims authorship; the use of papers purchased online and turned in as one's own work; submission of written work such as laboratory reports, computer programs, or papers, which have been copied from the work of other students, with or without their knowledge and consent. A student can avoid the risk of plagiarism in written work or oral presentations by clearly indicating, either in footnotes or in the paper or presentation itself, the source of any idea or wording that he or she did not produce. Sources must be given regardless of whether the idea, phrase or other material is quoted directly, paraphrased or summarised in the student-writer's own words.

Please familiarise yourselves with the [RIT Honour Code](#) and with the [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

AI Tools and Academic Work

AI is an important emerging tool in many fields, including no doubt history and other humanities. However, as this class is focused on cultivating and developing your ability to do the intellectual work of understanding, explaining, and generating historical knowledge, AI generation is not an appropriate tool for this kind of work. Your own original thoughts, analyses, and writing are what the class is designed to elicit and develop. As a result, please be advised that use of ChatGPT and other similar tools is not permitted and will be interpreted as a violation of the academic honesty policy outlined above.

Academic Assistance and More Resources

This classroom respects and welcomes students of all backgrounds and abilities. I invite you to talk with me about any concerns or situations that may affect your ability to complete your assignments and participate in the class successfully. The [Disability Services Office](#) (DSO) offer a range of critical support services for students, and can provide a wide range of accommodations. If DSO approves accommodations for you, I will meet with you as soon as possible to ensure that they are implemented effectively and successfully. [Access and Support Services](#) provide any necessary accessibility services, including note-taking, closed captioning, and other critical support.

Additionally, if you have any issues throughout the semester I strongly encourage you to contact the [Academic Success Center](#) (ASC). ASC supports students at RIT with services that promote academic success, including course-specific collaborative study groups, study skills counseling, a study skills course. The [RIT Writing Commons](#) provides focused assistance for writing assignments and is a great resource for improving your writing and getting crucial feedback on assignments prior to submitting them.

Class Schedule

Introduction: Pirates, History, and Pirate History

Week 1

Wednesday, 17th of January: Introduction—What is history and why is it worth your time?

- No Reading

Week 2

Monday, 22nd of January: What is a pirate exactly?

- No Reading—Come to class with your own definition of a pirate!

Wednesday, 24th of January: Land, Sea, Blood, and Gold—Understanding the Fundamental Dynamics of Pirate History.

- Reading: Stefan Eklof Amirell, Bruce Buchan, and Hans Hagerdal, 'Piracy in World History' in Eklof, Buchan, and Haderdal, *Piracy in World History*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021, pp. 9-34.

Unit 1: Ancient and Medieval Piracy

Week 3

Monday, 29th of January: *Mare Nostrum* and *Hostis Humani Generis*—Rome's Pirate Problem

- Reading: Alfred P. Rubin, 'The Origins' in Rubin, *The Law of Piracy*, Newport, Rhode Island: Naval War College Press, 1988, pp. 1-13.

Wednesday, 31st of January: Dark Ages, Dark Waters—Sea Raiding in Medieval Europe

- Reading: Thomas K. Heeball-Holm, 'The Anatomy of Medieval Piracy', in Heeball-Holm, *Ports, Piracy, and Maritime War: Piracy in the English Channel and the Atlantic c. 1280—c.1330*, Leiden: Brill, 2013, pp. 33-54.

Week 4

Monday, 5th of February: Medieval Maritime Mayhem in the Indian Ocean

- Reading: Sebastien R. Prange, 'The Contested Sea: Regimes of Maritime Violence in the Pre-Modern Indian Ocean', *Journal of Early Modern History*, Vol 17, 2013, pp. 9-33.

Wednesday, 7th of February: Battleground Mediterranean I—Merchants, Pirates, Crusades, and Corsairs.

- Reading: Kathryn Reyerson, 'Pirates as Marginals in the Medieval Mediterranean World', in Ann Zimo, Tiffany Vann Sprecher, Kathryn Reyerson, Debra Blumenthal (eds.), *Rethinking Medieval Margins and Marginality*, London:

Routledge, 2020, pp. 186-203.

Week 5

Monday, 12th of February: Research Rundown with COLA Librarian Cami Goldowitz

Unit 2: Piracy in the Early Modern Era

Wednesday, 14th of February: No Peace Beyond the Line—Piracy in the Sixteenth Century Atlantic

- Reading: Kris Lane, 'Spain and the Sixteenth-Century Corsairs', in Lane, *Pillaging the Empire*, New York: Routledge, 2015, pp. 8-28.

Week 6

Monday, 19th of February: Battleground Mediterranean II—Imperial Rivalries 1500-1780

- Reading: Molly Green, 'Introduction' in Greene, Molly, *Catholic Pirates and Greek Merchants: A Maritime History of the Mediterranean*, Princeton University Press, 2010, pp. 1-14.

Wednesday, 21st of February: Dire Straits—Maritime Violence in Early Modern Southeast Asia

- Reading: Robert Antony, 'Turbulent Waters: Sea Raiding in Early Modern South East Asia', *The Mariner's Mirror*, Vol. 99, No. 1, pp. 23-38.
- **Research Overview Due**

Week 7

Monday, 26th of February: New Trade, New Pirates—East Asia in the 17th Century

- Reading: Paola Calanca, 'Piracy and Coastal Security in Southeastern China, 1600-1780', in Robert Antony (ed.), *Elusive Pirates, Pervasive Smugglers*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010, pp. 85-98.

Wednesday, 28th of February: Buccaneer Bloodbath — The Seventeenth Century Caribbean Warzone

- Reading: Kris Lane, 'The Seventeenth-Century Caribbean Buccaneers', in Lane, *Pillaging the Empire*, New York: Routledge, 2015, pp. 89-120.

Week 8

Monday, 4th of March: Eastern Promises—'Red Sea Men' in the Indian Ocean'

- Reading: Kevin P. MacDonald, 'A Man of Courage and Activity': Thomas Tew and Pirate Settlements of the Indo-Atlantic Trade World, 1645– 1730 , 2005, E-Scholarship Repository, UC Digital Library, url: <http://repositories.cdlib.org/ucwhw/wp/2/: 21>.

- **Process Letter Due**

Wednesday, 6th of March: Primary Source Deep Dive—Pirates on Trial

- Reading: Selections from *The Trial of William Kidd*, 1701.

Week 9

Monday, 11th of March: SPRING BREAK

Wednesday, 13th of March: SPRING BREAK

Week 10

Monday, 18th of March: The Close of the Golden Age—Atlantic Piracy in the Early 18th Century

- Reading: David Wilson, 'From the Caribbean to Craignish: Imperial Authority and Piratical Voyages in the Early Eighteenth Century Atlantic Commons', *Itinerario*, Vol 42, No. 3, pp. 430-460.
- **Final Paper Outline Due**

Wednesday, 20th of March: The Empire Strikes Back—The Suppression of Piracy in the Atlantic

- Reading: David Wilson, 'Introduction' in David Wilson, *Suppressing Pirates in the Early 18th Century: Pirates, Merchants, and British Imperial Authority in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans*, Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2021, pp. 1-25.

Week 11

Monday, 25th of March: Primary Source Deep Dive—Pirate Diplomacy and Geopolitics

- Reading: A mysterious surprise

Unit 3: The History of Pirates Fiction and the Fictions of Pirate History

Wednesday, 27th of March: Primary Source Deep Dive—Pirates on the Page

- Reading: Selections from Captain Charles Johnson, *A General History of the Pirates*, 1725.

Week 12

Monday, 1st of April: Pirate Queens—Women Pirates on the High Seas

- Reading: John C. Appleby, 'The Women Pirates: Fact or Fiction?' in Appleby, *Women and English Pirates, 1540-1720: Partners and Victims of Crime*, London: Boydell and Brewer Press, 2013, pp. 189-224.

Wednesday, 3rd of April: Novel Pirates—Pirates in Literature and Fiction

Reading: Mel Campbell, 'Pirate Chic: Tracing the Aesthetics of Literary Piracy', in Grace

Moore (ed), *Pirates and Mutineers of the Nineteenth Century: Swashbucklers and Swindlers*, London: Routledge, 2016, pp. 11-22.

- **Optional Paper Draft Due**

Week 13

Monday, 8th of April: ECLIPSE DAY

- Reading: Do not look directly at the eclipse...

Wednesday, 10th of April: Playing Pirates on Screen—Pirates in Film and Video Games

- Readings: Raymond Knapp, 'The Musical Faces of Pirate Camp in Hollywood', *Music and the Moving Image*, Vol. 7, No. 2, (Summer 2014), pp. 3-33. AND Seth Rudy, 'Gaming the Golden Age of Piracy', *Digital Defoe*, Vol. 7, No. 1, (Fall, 2015), pp. 34-65.
- **Pirates in Fictional Media Review Due**

Unit 4: Global Piracy in the Global Age

Week 14

Monday, 15th of April: Colonial Nightmares—Piracy in the Age of Colonialism

- Reading: Anthony Reid, 'Violence at Sea: Unpacking "Piracy" in the Claims of States over Asian Seas', in Robert J. Antony, *Elusive Pirates, Persistent Smugglers: Violence and Clandestine Trade in the Greater China Seas*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010, pp. 15-26.

Wednesday, 17th of April: Modern Commerce, Ancient Problems—Piracy and Imperialism in 19th Century China

- Reading: C. Nathan Kwan, '"Putting Down a Common Enemy": Piracy and Occasional Interstate Power in South China During the Mid-Nineteenth Century', *The International Journal of Maritime History*, Vol. 32, No. 3, 2020, pp. 697-712.

Week 15

Monday, 22nd of April: Hotspots and Flare Ups— Contemporary Piracy and Current Affairs

- Reading: Ursula Daxecker and Brandon Prins, 'Describing Contemporary Maritime Piracy', in Ursula Daxecker and Brandon Prins, *Pirate Lands: Governance and Maritime Piracy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021, pp. 75-97.

Wednesday, 24th of April: The Pirates of the Future?—Piracy in the Era of Ecological, Economic, and Political Upheaval

- Reading: Basil Germond and Antonio D. Mazaris, 'Climate Change and Maritime Security', *Marine Policy*, Vol. 99, (2019), pp. 262-266.

Week 16

Monday, 29th of April: Reflections—Pirates, Piracy, Commerce, and Globalisation

- Reading: Bring your piping hot takes.
- **Final Research Paper Due**