

In the lecture given by Julia Roberts it is discussed that Columbus had many different motivations for making his historic journey. His origins in a sea fairing, trade dependent, Italian town would have heavily influenced his choices in life that lead him to gain the education and position necessary to become an explorer. The lecture also outlined the context of Europe at that time's dependence on overland routes to trade with the east as a motivational factor for the journey. Perhaps most importantly, the lecture provides the alternate view point of Bartolome de las Casas as a major critic of Columbus' handling and interactions with the natives of the "west indies".

Columbus's log works to describe the journey and initial actions of Columbus and his crew. It starts with a message to the queen and king of Spain, the intended audience for his journal. It then goes on to describe the departure and eventual arrival of his first journey. The majority of the journal describes the crew's interactions with the land and people they encountered. The general tone of the journal is that of a peaceful, if not reverential, attitude from the indigenous people of the Americas toward Columbus' crew.

While the 1400's were a time of great religious fervor for most of Europe it is clear from the lecture and readings that the primary goal of Columbus' journey was for the economic interests of Spain. In her lecture, Julia Roberts explains that many of the luxury items in Europe were produced in counties in the orient. She gives silk as a primary example as the European elite loved to wear silk, but no local producers could figure out how it was made. All trade with the orient had to be done over the lengthy and arduous Silk Road. Finding a sea based route to the orient would unlock great riches and political power for Spain. It is also evident from his background that Columbus was chosen for this trip for his sailing and trading expertise, rather than for a holy background. Roberts explains that Columbus was a trained trader as well as sailor due to his time spent as an apprentice to a businessman and as a trader along the coasts of West Africa. While Columbus was surely a very devout catholic he was certainly not hired for this mission for his ability to convert heathens.

The monetary nature of Columbus' motives in the Americas is also abundantly clear in his self recorded actions. One of the first things Columbus does is "[he] attempted to learn if they had gold" as stated in his own words. His journal frequently mentions his attempts to learn about what resources the Americas could provide but it does not mention any attempts on the part of Columbus or his crew to fulfill his initial mission of the "conversion to our holy faith" as he stated in the prologue of his journal. When he first meets peoples with gold jewelry he attempts to learn where they got it and thus travels to find a king with vast amounts of gold. If you follow most of Columbus' journeys inland they are made to find precious metals. While its not clear what Spain's primary motive was, it is clear that Columbus was very motivated by the untapped riches that the new world might hold.