From Homer’s *Odyssey* to Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, from *The Love Boat* to Star Trek, the ocean voyage has long served as a laboratory of social relations. Disparate populations (“the motley crew”) are thrown together at sea and forced into self-reliance and co-existence: nations and economies writ small.

Unlike members of a crew, however, single characters at sea – Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe, Hemingway’s Santiago in *The Old Man and the Sea* – must battle not only overwhelming natural forces, but also loneliness. Existentialism and isolation, therefore, along with condensed social relations (the rigid hierarchy of a ship’s command), mark the poles of maritime fiction.

One thesis we will explore in this course is why modernism and modernity depend on maritime tropes, from “drift “and “currents” to oceanic adventure and reflective meditation, the latter best represented by the work of Virginia Woolf in *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves*, for example.

Modern literature plays with the idea that landed identities – gender, nationality, individualism— are often best illuminated at sea. Melville’s *Billy Budd*, for example, with its background of hierarchy and mutiny, individualism and cruelty, exposes the emerging order of modern America. Conrad’s *The Secret Sharer*, with a ship’s captain and a stowaway mirroring each other, illustrates the doubts of many in Britain about aggressive imperialist behavior. Later, in the twentieth century, when the ship becomes a space ship, as in Stainislaw Lem’s *Solaris*, we understand that literature and society are always compelled to seek out the edges of known world and imagination.
Internet, from surfing through Yahoo to Internet Explorer and the term “navigation,” employs oceanic language to chart this vast new territory.

Philosophy and critical theory, too, have long employed imagery of the ocean to represent new ideas, from Edmund Burke’s concept of the “sublime” (the wild, unknowable ocean) through Freud’s “oceanic feeling” (a desire to retreat from this world) to Judith Halberstam’s “eddies of queer time” (an image developed to depict arrested, troubling temporalities).

In this class, we will read a number of classic maritime novels in order to trace the themes and styles of both modern fiction and literary theory.

**Themes to be explored:**
- Isolation, existentialism and the self (alone at sea)
- Society and labor (the crew)
- Piracy and legality (from buccaneers to hackers)
- Mutiny and social hierarchies
- Adventure
- Exploration and imperialism (from Homer’s *Odyssey* to interstellar travel)
- The language and insights of critical theory (from “the sublime” to “streams of consciousness”)

**Required Texts:**

**Novels**
- Herman Melville, *Billy Budd* and *Benito Cereno*
- Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*
- Ernst Hemingway, *The Old Man and the Sea*
- Stanislaus Lem, *Solaris*
- Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*
- Peter Barrie, *Peter Pan*
Television

- An episode of *Star Trek*.

Sea Songs and Shanties: We will listen to the following:

- “Lord Franklin” [exploration]
- “The Bonnie Ship *The Diamond*” [whaling]
- “The Wreck of Edmund Fitzgerald” [shipwreck]
- “Fiddler’s Green” [end of a hard life]
- “Blow the Man Down” [working shanty]
- “Canadee-I-O” [women escaping to sea],
- “Sloop John B” (Beach Boys) [escape],
- “Sailing” (Rod Stewart) [gospel spiritual]
- “Into the Mystic” (Van Morrison) [mysticism]

The Sea in Theory: From critical theory, we will read excerpts from the following authors:

- Eve Sedgwick (the “eddy”)
- Edmund Burke (“the sublime”)
- Karl Marx (globalization)
- Freud (“the oceanic feeling”)
- Michel Foucault (“heterotopia”)
- Zygmund Berman (“liquid modernity”),
- Deleuze and Guattari (“flows” and “currents,” “the smooth and the striated”)
- Adorno and Horkheimer (Odysseus and the dialectic of Enlightenment)

Film:

Poems: We will also read a selection of poems. See the list below.

1. “Sea-Fever,” by John Masefield
2. “maggie and milly and molly and may,” by e.e. cummings
3. “Exultation is the going,” by Emily Dickinson
8. “my way is in the sand flowing,” by Samuel Beckett.
15. Thomas Hardy, “The Convergence of the Twain.
Course Outline:

Week One:
Wednesday, Sept. 7.
In class: Syllabus and Introductions
Homework: Read
  • Hemingway’s *The Old Man and the Sea*
  • Chapter one, “The Nature of Voyaging,” of *The Sea Voyage Narrative*, by John Foulke.

Week Two:
Monday, Sept. 12.
In class: Discuss Hemingway, Foulke (1), and Masefield
Homework: Read
  • Book Twelve of *The Odyssey of Homer*.
  • “The Concept of Enlightenment” (2) from *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* by Adorno and Horkheimer.
  • Poem 2. “maggie and milly and molly and may,” by e.e. cummings
Wednesday, Sept. 13.

In class: Homer, Adorno and Horkheimer, and cummings

Homework: Read
- *Robinson Crusoe*, pages 1-32
- “Seafaring Odysseus,” the introduction to *The Novel and the Sea*, by Margaret Cohen (3).
- Poem 3. “Exultation is the going,” by Emily Dickinson

**Week Three:**

Monday, Sept. 19.

In Class: *Crusoe*, Cohen and Dickinson

Homework: Read
- *Crusoe*, pages 33-72
- John Locke, “Of Property.”

Wednesday, Sept. 21.

In class: *Crusoe*, Locke Grotius and Longfellow

Homework:
- *Crusoe*, 72-160
- Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*. (5)

**Week Four:**


In Class: *Crusoe*, Marx and Oliver

Homework:
- Crusoe, 160 – end.
- Foucault, “Of Other Spaces.” (6)
Wednesday, Sept. 28.
In class: *Crusoe*, Foucault and Walcott
Homework:
  - *Benito Cereno*, by Hermann Melville, 33-77
  - Michael Rogin, “Mutiny and Slave Revolt” (7).

**Week Five:**
Monday, October 3.
In class: Melville, Rogin and Coleridge.
Homework:
  - Finish *Cereno*.
  - Chps. 1,2,3 and 4 of *The Floating Republic* by Manwaring and Dobree (8).
  - Poem 8, “my way is in the sand flowing,” by Samuel Beckett.

Wednesday, October 5.
In class: Beckett, Melville and *The Floating Republic*
Homework:
  - “Introduction” to and “Evolution of the Slave Ship” from *The Slave Ship: A Human History*, by Marcus Rediker. (9)
  - *Slave Ship*, by Amiri Baraka.

**Week Six:**
Monday, October 10.
In Class: Baraka, Whitman and Rediker
Homework:
  - *Billy Budd*, Chapters 1-15
  - “Terror,” by Edmund Burke. Part 2 of Section Two of *On the Sublime and the Beautiful*. (10)
http://www.bartleby.com/24/2/202.html

Wednesday, October 12.
In class: *Billy Budd*, Baudelaire and Burke.
Homework:
- Finish *Billy Budd*
- Christopher Looby, “Of Billy’s Time.” (11)

**Week Seven:**
Monday, October 17.
In class: *Billy Budd*, Rimbaud and Looby.
Homework:
- Part 1, pages 1-24 of *The Secret Sharer* by Joseph Conrad
- Freud: Chapter one of *Civilization and its Discontents.* (12)
- Poem 12: “Dover Beach,” by Matthew Arnold.

Wednesday, October 19.
In class: *Secret Sharer*, Arnold and Freud.
Homework:
- Finish *The Secret Sharer*.

**Week Eight:**
Monday, October 24.
In class: Sharer, Kerr and Neruda.
Homework:
- Part One, pages 47-69 of Conrad’s *The Shadow-Line*.
- “Foreword” to *Tendencies*, by Eve Sedgwick. (14)

Wednesday, October 26.
In Class: Conrad, Yeats, and Sedgwick

Homework:
• Finish The Shadow-Line.
• Nayder. “History and Gender in Conrad’s Maritime Fiction.” (15)
• Poem 15. Thomas Hardy, “The Convergence of the Twain.”

Week Nine:
Monday, October 31. MIDTERM PAPER DUE

In class: Hardy, Conrad and Nayder

Homework: Three Short Stories:
• Hart Crane, “The Open Boat”
• Edgar Allen Poe, “A Descent into the Maelstrom.”
• Liam O’Flaherty, “The Mermaid.”
• Frank O’Connor. Author’s “Introduction” to The Lonely Voice. (16)

Wednesday, November 2.

In class: O’Connor, Crane, Poe, O’Flaherty and Keats

Homework:
• Bring in the title of and lyrics to a song that deals with the sea.

Week Ten:
Monday, November 7.

In class: Listen to five songs of the sea.

Homework:
• 9-83. Chapters 1-9 of To the Lighthouse, by Virginia Woolf

Wednesday, November 9.

In Class: Woolf and Tennyson

Homework:
• Woolf, 83 – 217, to end of Section 2.
• Zygmunt Bauman, “Foreword: On Being Light and Liquid,” from Liquid Modernity. (17)
• Poem 19, “Rule Britannia,” by James Thomson.

**Week Eleven:**
Monday, November 14.
*In class:* Woolf, Bauman and Thomson
*Homework:*
  • Finish *To the Lighthouse*
  • Viola. “Fluidity versus Masculinity.” (18)

Wednesday, November 16.
*In class:* Woolf, Frost and Viola.
*Homework:*

**Week Twelve:**
Monday, November 21.
*In class:* Aiken and watch the documentary film “Deep Water.”

Wednesday, November 23. No Class, THANKSGIVING.
*Homework:*
  • J.M.Barrie, *Peter Pan*, chapters 1-10.
  • “Introduction,” “What is Piracy” and “What is the Pirate Organization” from *The Pirate Organization*, by Durand and Vergne (19)

**Week Thirteen:**
Monday, November 28.
*In class:* Peter Pan, *Pirate Organization* and Byron.
*Homework*
  • Finish *Peter Pan.*
• “Peter Pan and the Spectacle of the Child,” by J. Rose.
  (20)

Wednesday, November 30.
In class: Peter Pan, Jacqueline Rose, and Williams.
Homework:
• Buckminster Fuller. Spaceship Earth. Sections 1 and 4. (21)

**Week Fourteen:**
Monday, December 5.
In class: Fuller, Goethe, and Star Trek’s “Balance of Terror.”
Homework:
• Poem 25. “Sea Calm,” by Langston Hughes.
  • Solaris, pages 1-90.

Wednesday, December 7.
In class: Solaris and Hughes
Homework:
Finish Solaris

**Week Fifteen:**
Monday, December 12.
In class: Solaris and Carroll

Wednesday, December 14.
Last Day. Conclusions and discuss final papers.
Assignments and Expectations

• Come to class, participate, read the material, and complete the assignments on time
• Be respectful to your classmates: listen to them, help them, discuss with them.
• Come to my office hours to talk about the material, to ask follow-up questions, especially if you are dealing with any problems. I will work with you to fix them.
• Attendance is mandatory. You are allowed, however, three absences, after which your grade will drop by a letter for each class missed. If you miss a class, you must make up the work.
• All work must be typed, legible, dated, and have your name on it.
• Always read with a dictionary.
• Bring questions to class. Aim to begin the class with a question or comment.
Participation 30%

Active participation as a group member and class discussant is required and will be one criterion upon which your overall grade will be based. It could be the deciding factor between a B and C.

Participation is essential and will be rewarded.

One essential aspect of the participation grade is raising comments or questions about the day’s reading. As you read, take notes about what you are thinking. For example, you could ask yourself:

- Which aspect of the plot interests me? How does it advance or complicate the narrative?
- What is the theme or central argument of the passage? Which two characters or positions are in conflict or tension?
- When was the piece written? Does that matter? Is there any context or historical background that one should know in order to better understand?
- Who wrote the piece? Does that matter? What about the author’s life sheds light on the material?
- Which elements of the writing style are noteworthy? Images? Metaphor? Particular dictions or words? Tone?
- Who is the narrator? What is his or her attitude toward the plot and theme?
- How does this text connect to your own life? Is it relevant? Completely foreign? What might you learn from it? What contemporary or personal issue does it address?
- Do you like the piece? Why or why not?
- Do you like narrator, the characters?

Two mandatory elements of the participation grade are the following assignments:
1. Each day in class we will read one poem that has the concept of the sea as one of its themes. Once during the semester, you will be responsible for reading the poem aloud to the class, stating to the class what you think the central idea or theme of the poem is. You may also demonstrate how some technical details contribute to the theme. Your comments need to be very precise and brief. You have a maximum of five minutes to talk. And don’t worry if you only end up taking two minutes! The point of reading a poem each day is mainly for enjoyment and to contrast poetry with prose, the central component of our class.

2. Once during the semester, each student will be assigned one of the critical articles to read. While everyone in the class will also read that article, the student to whom it has been assigned will ask two questions about the text to the class. I’m making you do this small task as a step toward building your confidence to ask a question or to make a statement in an academic setting, such as a conference or a seminar. Your two questions should be brief, no more than a minute each. The questions could be about a confusing or interesting word or phrase, or you may wish to question the thesis of the article. Or you may wish to provide an example to illustrate the argument. In short, read the article you’ve been assigned and address two ideas in it.

**Assignments 70%**

There will a mid-term paper (20%) and a final project (30%). The midterm paper is due on October 31 and the final project is due on Tuesday, Dec. 20th by noon. There will also be regular small nightly assignments (20%)

For the midterm you will write a four or five page exegesis of a passage from one of the texts that we have read. You will analyze a specific scene or a particular passage and explain it. You will connect the part to the whole, discussing how the passage that you have selected illustrates or engages the themes of the book. You will explain why you chose that passage and why it interests you. You will discuss some technical details of
the piece (tone, diction, imagery, plot). You will say what remains relevant about the passage. You may wish to bring in aspects of the author’s life, or provide important historical context. In short, you will explain to a reader a passage from one of our texts, showing why that passage matters and how it makes its argument. The tone should be professional and scholarly, and you should have a thesis. The point is to write about literature, but for this particular assignment you do not need to stress the finer points, such as footnotes, a polished introduction, a knowing conclusion, a bibliography. Your final project will incorporate those elements.

The final project should be upward of ten pages. You will research, illustrate and examine in depth any aspect of our course. You may choose, therefore, any text that we’ve read, or any text that connects to the themes of our course. You may choose to analyze a critical essay or a particular author. You will make an argument about any aspect of the sea in literature. You will have an introduction and a conclusion, a thesis statement, selections from the primary text to illustrate your argument; you will conduct broader research on the author and on the times in which the piece was written. You will provide a bibliography. In short, tell us something about one of the books or authors that you think is interesting and about which someone else should know.

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**The Grading Scale**

**X** You did not turn in the assignment.

**F** You turned in the assignment but did not attempt to fulfill the requirements.

**D** You attempted to fill the requirements of the assignment but missed specific details.
C  You completed the assignment and fulfilled all requirements.

B  You completed the assignment, fulfilled all the requirements, went beyond by contributing additional material or developing new insights.

A  You completed the assignment, fulfilled all requirements, went beyond by contributing additional material or developing new insights and distinguishing yourself through the use of a particularly creative or inventive approach.

Note:

We have a lot of ground to cover this semester, and quite a few articles to get through. It is quite possible that I may assign more articles to read than we will get to discuss in class. Just because we do not discuss every article in detail during class time does not mean that you should not read everything that assign. The more you read, the better, and the more informed you will be as a critic and scholar.