

ISLANDS

HUM 210-0-20
University Hall 101
Mon., Wed., 3:30-4:50pm
Kaplan Scholars Course, Fall 2022

TEACHERS:
Daniel Immerwahr, History
Jules Law, English

Emails and office hours

Daniel Immerwahr: daniel.immerwahr@northwestern.edu, TuTh 2-3:15, 225 Harris Hall
Jules Law: jlaw@northwestern.edu, Tu 2-3:15, Th 1-2:15, 313 University Hall

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The stereotype of the island is that it offers a getaway: islands are remote spaces where one can enjoy nature and escape from modern life. But islands—both imagined and real—have been central to modernity. From Shakespeare to James Bond, from Haiti to Taiwan, they’ve functioned as utopias, colonies, refuges, zones of extraction, objects of “discovery,” centers of power, legal anomalies, and, most recently, harbingers of our environmental fate.

Islands loom large in the imagination. A large body of influential writing, painting, and dreaming about islands has accompanied—and even preceded—encounters with them. In this exciting and experimental course, we’ll look at islands across periods and places to explore their crucial role in our understanding of the world. Rather than treating them as isolated spaces, outside of historical currents, we’ll see them as places where the phenomena of modernity are amplified. Islands, in this understanding, are ideal sites for the study of capitalism, slavery, revolution, colonialism, cultural encounters, nationalism, and climate change.

Over the course of the quarter, we’ll look at a diverse and fascinating set of materials: novels, plays, paintings, songs, films, maps, and scholarly writing. We’ll encounter a varied cast of characters: pirates, navigators, revolutionaries, spies, cannibals, genetic mutants, soldiers of fortune, supervillains, sexual icons, castaways, and magicians. And we’ll trace a series of tragedies, both large and small: shipwrecks, slavery, genocide, nuclear destruction, and rising oceans.

As we ask about islands, we’ll also do something else in this class. We’ll take the act of humanistic inquiry seriously. We’ll practice asking useful questions, reading carefully and creatively, arguing with force and precision, and making the signature moves of historical and literary studies.

There will be no exams in this class. Instead, you’ll show us what you’ve figured out through discussion and through your writings. We’ll expect you to bring your A-game, and we’re excited to see what that looks like.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

You'll write seven assignments for this class. For all, we'll post guidelines on Canvas well before the deadline. We're looking for clear, concise, and persuasive prose that conforms to the established norms of the English language, and we'll work with you during this class on hitting that mark. Generally, the more seriously you take your writing—with “taking it seriously” meaning rereading, editing, and spending time trying to improve it—the better this will go.

Assignments submitted up to 24 hours late will be docked one half letter grade. Those submitted 24 hours to one week after the original due date will be docked one full letter grade. Those submitted between one and two weeks late will be docked two full letter grades. Assignments will not be accepted more than two weeks late.

CLASS DISCUSSION

In both the seminars and in the lectures, we'll discuss ideas. Our collective goal is to have an intelligent conversation from which we all learn. It may seem that the best or only way to participate is to make sharp, original observations. But asking a question, confessing confusion, connecting something already on the table to another thing, offering your own spin on someone else's idea, and supplying evidence from the text are also all valuable, sometimes more so. Examples:

RAJU: Did you notice that Gandhi's parable about the thief is set in a small village? I think that's important. I don't think the story would make sense in a city.

NINA: Yeah, I noticed that, too. But what about the rest of India? In lecture, we learned about all the Indians working in cities in the textile industry. It's weird to think Gandhi would ignore them when outlining his moral theory.

JUDY: I'm not sure Gandhi ignores them. Take a look at the third paragraph of page 9. He discusses cities. He's just worried that people in them will be “slaves” without any “moral fiber.”

JORGE: I agree with Judy. Maybe the point of that parable is to show why cities are so dangerous.

ANA: Yes! And Nina's example helps me understand *why* he's so nervous about cities. They're points of contact between India and Britain. For India to get self-rule, Gandhi thinks it'll have to focus on its villages.

It's relatively easy to come up with your own points. Harder is responding thoughtfully what others have said. Bonus points are awarded for contributions that

do that. Yet more bonus points are awarded for being aware of the dynamic of the classroom, particularly in the seminar meetings. If someone hasn't been talking a lot, help make room for her or try to develop one of her ideas. If you've been talking the whole class and other people want to get in, try sitting out a few rounds.

COURSE BOOKS

These books are all available at the university bookstore in Norris. We've also placed one copy of each on reserve at the library, where they can be checked out at two-hour intervals. It is fine with us if you use a different edition of the book than the one on sale at Norris (although you might have to look over someone else's shoulder when we refer to specific parts of the text in class).

- Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (Broadview Press, 9781551119359)
- Ian Fleming, *Dr No* (Thomas & Mercer, 978-1612185491)
- Thor Heyerdahl, *Kon-Tiki: Across the Pacific in a Raft* (Simon and Schuster, 978-0671726522)
- Marlon James, *A Brief History of Seven Killings* (Riverhead/Penguin, 978-1594633942)
- Charles Nordhoff and James Norman Hall, *Mutiny on the Bounty* (Back Bay Books, 978-0316611688)
- Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (Norton, 978-0393352566)
- Shawna Yang Ryan, *Green Island* (Vintage, 978-1101872369)
- William Shakespeare, *The Tempest* (Signet Classics, 978-0451527127)

GRADES

Your grade will be 75% papers and 25% participation. The full papers (assignments 1, 3-4, and 6-7) will be graded on an ascending scale, so that assignment 1 will be worth 5% of your grade, assignment 3 will be worth 10%, assignments 4 and 6 will be worth 15%, and assignment 7 will be worth 20%. All other assignments will be worth 5%. The participation component of your grade will cover reading quizzes, taken in seminar, and your contributions to the course in lectures and discussions. We'll automatically drop your lowest quiz grade. Your seminar teacher will do all your grading.

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS, READINGS, AND ASSIGNMENTS

All readings are due the day listed.

BEFORE CLASS STARTS

- Read Shakespeare, *The Tempest* and Aimé Césaire's *A Tempest* (on Canvas)
- Upload ASSIGNMENT 1 to Canvas: Aimé Césaire's *A Tempest* was written in response to William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Identify a theme of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* that Césaire revises or criticizes, and write an essay explaining how that theme appears and operates in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. You don't need footnotes or a bibliography, but use parenthetical citations for quotations and references to specific moments in the texts: page numbers for Césaire, act/scene/line numbers for Shakespeare (e.g., 2.1.105 for act 2, scene 1, line 105). 750–1,000 words. Upload this to Canvas by Sunday, Sept. 18th, 5pm.

WEEK ONE: BERMUDA

Note: Usually, the lecture course will meet on Mondays and Wednesdays in University Hall 101, with seminars on Tuesdays and Thursdays in seminar rooms. This first week, it will be different. There is no class on Monday and the lecture will meet on Tuesday in Kresge 2380. Wednesday and Thursday we'll be on our normal schedule: Wednesday lecture in University Hall 101, Thursday seminars in their normal locations: Immerwahr's in Kresge 2440, Law's in 2343.

Tues, 9/20: Introduction

- No reading.

Wed., 9/21: *Tempest*

- No new reading: lecture, seminar, and quiz (on Thurs.) will be on Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1610–1611).

WEEK TWO: THE FRENCH CARIBBEAN

Mon., 9/26: From Shakespeare to Négritude

- No new reading: lecture, seminar, and quiz (on Tues.) will be on Césaire's *A Tempest* (1969).

Wed., 9/28: The Haitian Revolution

- Read Trouillot's *Silencing the Past* (1995), chap. 3 on Canvas. Note, this text won't be discussed at length in lecture, so it's okay to leave your reading of it until Thurs.

Thurs. 9/29:

- Upload ASSIGNMENT 2 by 3:20pm, graded P/F.

WEEK THREE: AT SEA

Mon., 10/3: Defoe

- Read Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), pp. 47–105, 176–253. For those of you with a different edition, this goes from the start of the novel to the beginning of “The Journal” (September 30, 1659), and from Crusoe's discovery of human footprints (“It happened one Day about Noon . . .”) to the beginning of the escape plan (“I ask'd him . . . if they had form'd no Design of making any Escape?”).

Wed., 10/5: Navigation

- Read Heyerdahl's *Kon-Tiki* (1948), chaps. 1, 3, 6, and 8.
- Read Hau'ofa's “Our Sea of Islands” (1993) on Canvas.

Fri., 10/7

- Upload ASSIGNMENT 3 by 5pm.
- Upload, with ASSIGNMENT 3, an assessment of how you're doing in this class. Are you on top of the readings? Understanding things? Participating in seminar? Writing at the top of your game? Having any problems we should know about? Your goal should be an earnest assessment, which we can use to make sure you're on the right track.

WEEK FOUR: PLEASURE ISLANDS

Mon., 10/10: Gauguin

- Reading: Spend some time with the paintings in the Gauguin folder on Canvas, no quiz.

Wed., 10/12: The Bounty

- Read Nordoff and Hall's *Mutiny on the Bounty* (1932), pp. 3–110 (chs. I–VII), 143–215 (chs. X–XIV), and 370–79 (ch. XXVII).

Thurs., 10/13:

- 7pm screening of Pontecorvo's *Burn!* (1969) at the cinema of the Block Museum on campus, introduced by Kaplan alum Griffin Harris.

WEEK FIVE: FIRE ISLANDS

Mon., 10/17: Burn

- No reading, lecture, seminar, and quiz will be on Pontecorvo's *Burn!* (1969)
- Upload ASSIGNMENT 4 on Monday by 3:20pm.

Wed., 10/19: Maroons and zombies

- Read Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), pp. 15–104, 156.

Thurs., 10/20: Excursion by bus to the Art Institute of Chicago after seminar. Food will be provided before we board. Expect to be gone until 8:30pm.

WEEK SIX: TAIWAN

Mon., 10/24: War, communism, and nationalism

- By Monday., you should have read Book I and II (pp. 5-184) of Ryan's *Green Island* (2016).

Wed., 10/26: Islands and Exiles

- Read Book III and IV (pp. 187-381) of Ryan's *Green Island*.

WEEK SEVEN: JAMAICA, PART ONE

Mon., 10/31: Power is sovereignty, Mr. Bond

- Read Fleming's *Dr. No* (1958).

Wed. 11/2: Culture and empire

- Listen to Bob Marley's album *Catch a Fire* (1973, available on YouTube, Spotify, and other music platforms), no quiz.

Thurs., 11/3

- Upload ASSIGNMENT 5 by 3:20pm.

WEEK EIGHT: JAMAICA, PART TWO

Mon., 11/7: History, killings

- Read James, *A Brief History of Seven Killings*, pp. 1-204.

Wed., 11/9: More history, more killings

- *A Brief History*, pp. 205-313.

Fri., 11/11:

- Upload ASSIGNMENT 6 by 5pm.

WEEK NINE: SPACES OF EXCEPTION

Mon., 11/14: Bikini

- Read Cole's "(The) Bikini: Embodying the Bomb" on Canvas.

Wed., 11/16: Law and islands

- Read Ogle's "Archipelago Capitalism" on Canvas.

Thurs., 11/17:

- Excursion by bus to see the Court Theater's production of *The Island*, which starts in Chicago at 7:30pm.

WEEK TEN: ENDANGERED ISLANDS

Mon., 11/21: Climate change

- Watch: *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (2012) and *Moana* (2016).

Wed., 11/22: No class.

- Upload ASSIGNMENT 7, due Wed., Nov. 23rd, 5pm. Note, because of Thanksgiving and the attendant travel around that, all students will be given an automatic extension in this assignment until Monday, Nov. 28th at 11am. There is no need to ask for this extension, you can just take it.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

An easy way for an undergraduate to derail her college career is with an academic integrity violation, the most common of which is plagiarism. The university's rules can be found at northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/. Please read them, as you will be held accountable to them. Here are some key principles:

1. If you are relying on somebody else's ideas or information, cite that person.
2. If you use someone else's words, enclose those words in quotation marks and cite that person. Taking someone else's prose, modifying it slightly, and passing it off as your own is never appropriate, even if you include a footnote.
3. You may not turn in work that is identical to or derivative of work you have turned in for another class without both prior permission and a clear accounting of what is old and what is new.

We will report all suspected academic integrity violations immediately to the dean.

ACCESSIBILITY

Any student requesting accommodations related to a disability or other condition is required to register with AccessibleNU (847-467-5530; accessiblenu@northwestern.edu) and provide professors with an accommodation notification from AccessibleNU, preferably within the first two weeks of class. All information will remain confidential.

CIVILITY

We are committed to helping all students to fully engage in all areas of campus life. That means respecting each others' backgrounds, identities, and intellectual approaches, and seeking to learn from them. Attacks on another member of the class's identity, character, or motives are out of place in college, and they create an unpleasant, stifling environment. If you disagree with something someone said, feel free to say so, but do so politely, and make it about the proposition, not the person. When in doubt, err on the side of curiosity ("Interesting, tell me more about why you see it that way") and kindness.