

HIS 177A ❁ UCSC ❁ SPRING QUARTER, 2018

Tropics of Empire

Soldiers, Scientists, & Slaves

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Detail of Brazil from the Vallard Atlas, circa 1547.

Class time: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 3:20 pm to 4:55 pm
Classroom: Soc Sci 2 071
Office hours: Friday, 2-3, or by appointment (Stevenson 279)

❁ What is this course about?

The tropical belt is not just a place. The tropics is a symbol, too: of ecological awareness, or of imperial conquest, or the destruction of the earth's resources, or the redemptive power of nature. This class focuses on the history of the equatorial regions of the earth, particularly tropical Brazil and Sub-Saharan Africa, as a way of understanding the origins of our contemporary globalized world, from the rise of imperialism and global capitalism to the legacies of slavery and the development of academic fields such as anthropology and ecology.

❁ What do I hope you learn?

You will, ideally, leave this class with a solid understanding of the history of imperialism and slavery in the tropical belt, and the origins of fields such as anthropology, tropical medicine, and rainforest ecology.

But the *core* goal of this course is something bigger: I want to help you think and write in a more creative and compelling way. By learning how to critically analyze historical sources and books, for instance, you will also learn how to judge the reliability of the news you read or watch. These skills can also improve your ability to navigate an unpredictable future.

The hippocampus is the part of your brain associated with long-term memories and the formation of deep-seated emotions. I think of world history as the hippocampus of our species: without it, we might be able to get by on a day-to-day level, but we won't be fully *aware*. And we certainly won't be in a good position to make wise decisions, either as individuals or as groups. Think of this class as an exercise for your collective hippocampus.

🌸 Ok, that's great, but what are the assignments?

There will be three written assignments over the course of the semester, listed here in chronological order:

1) **Eckhout project.** Pick a subject from a painting by Albert Eckhout and write **4 pages** (double-spaced) imagining a day in their life, based on original research.

3) **Review of a novel (or non-fiction book, if you wish) relevant to the class themes.** You will be expected to compare the setting of the novel to the real historical reality (using 2-3 sources for your research) and to present a short summary of your review in class. **4 pages.**

3) **Final.** Research paper which will develop out of the preceding assignments/reading and incorporate original research. The minimum length required will be **8 pages**, double-spaced, 12 point font, 1 inch margins, etc. All papers must cite both primary and secondary sources using the Chicago Manual of Style citation guidelines (the standard for historians), which we'll be going over in class. *DUE BY MONDAY, JUNE 12.*

🌸 What's the grading policy?

In-class participation (including 2 pop quizzes on reading): 20%

Eckhout project: 20%

Book review: 20%

Final paper: 40%

Attendance for every lecture is not mandatory. But regular attendance is a necessity if you want to get a decent grade, because there will be no make-ups for the random pop quizzes.

All assignments will be marked down by one whole grade for each day they are overdue. Laptops are allowed in class, but I will take points off your class participation grade if I notice you habitually browsing Instagram, Reddit, Twitter, or whatever else. Even worse if you're on your phone!

Students are expected to spend 15 hours per week on the course, with 4.25 hours spent in class, approximately 8 hours for reading, and the remainder spent on preparation for the three papers due over the course of the quarter. If you read carefully, you will notice this, which I have hidden in the most boring part of the syllabus. As a reward for being a careful reader, email me the name of the author of the quote on page 7 to win 5 points extra credit.

What happens if you cheat?

More than most, history is a discipline built on the work of others. But doing good history - and being an ethical student and scholar - depends upon properly attributing ideas. Claiming other people's words and ideas as your own without crediting them is plagiarism. Any student who plagiarizes will receive a 0 on the assignment in addition to referral to your college provost for further disciplinary action.

Disability-related accommodations

If you qualify for classroom accommodations because of a disability, please submit your Accommodation Authorization Letter from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) to me within the **first week of the quarter**. Contact DRC by phone at 831-459-2089 or by email at drc@ucsc.edu for more information.

Required texts

available at the campus bookstore

- Charles Mann, *1493*
- Amitav Ghosh, *Sea of Poppies*
- A. J. R. Russell-Wood, *A World on the Move*

The book review project must be based upon one of the following novels, or a relevant book of your choice (just run it by me first for approval):

- o* Amitav Ghosh, *Sea of Poppies* (recommended, available at bookstore)
- o* David Mitchell, *The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet*

- o Barbara Kingsolver, *The Poisonwood Bible*
- o V. S. Naipaul, *A Bend in the River*
- o Gabriel García Márquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*
- o Chinua Achebe, *Arrow of God*

REMEMBER, PLEASE COMPLETE ALL READINGS BY START OF CLASS!

TUESDAY, APRIL 3

Class 1: Introduction

- No advance reading.

THURSDAY, APRIL 5

Class 2: The tropics as a concept: a beginning and an end

- **Reading to be completed by this date:** Columbus's first letter (on Canvas).

TUESDAY, APRIL 10

Class 3: First contacts and the myth of “Stone Age” peoples

- **Reading to be completed by this date:** 1493 chapter 1 (pages 3-51)
- **Assignment:** Go to the McHenry library, locate and check out a book relating to the tropical belt. Can be a travelogue, a history, a science book, etc. Bring your book to class on April 10.

THURSDAY, APRIL 12

Class 4: *no class meeting today*

- **Reading to be completed by this date:** 1493 chapter 2 (pages 51 – 99)
- **Assignment:** Watch the film *Aguirre, the Wrath of God* (download link on Canvas; can also purchase HD version for \$3 on Amazon Video) and submit a one paragraph response via Canvas by April 16.

TUESDAY, APRIL 17

Class 5: Pre-Columbian worlds

- **Reading to be completed by this date:** “Mapping Babel”:
<http://theappendix.net/issues/2013/10/mapping-babel-a-sixteenth-century-indigenous-map-from-mexico>
- **Assignment:** Research a Pre-Columbian Aztec “codex” of your choice, exploring digitized images and doing a bit of research into the who/where/when/why of its creation. Write a short description (1 page minimum) of what you find, to be collected at the beginning of the April 17 class. Suggestion: start your research by reading https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aztec_codices and

<http://www.library.arizona.edu/exhibits/mexcodex/aztec.htm>.

THURSDAY, APRIL 19

Class 6: Virgin soil epidemics and the Columbian Exchange

- Reading to be completed by this date: 1493 chapter 3 (pages 99 – 157)

TUESDAY, APRIL 24


Class 7: Traveler's tales

- Reading to be completed by this date: Lieutenant Nun: <http://theappendix.net/issues/2013/4/open-source-lieutenant-nun> and Psalmanazar: <http://theappendix.net/issues/2013/10/made-in-taiwan-an-eighteenth-century-frenchmans-fictional-formosa>
- + In class: write a traveler's tale

THURSDAY, APRIL 26

Class 8: Guest lecture on New Spain

- No reading this week – work on Eckhout project.

 **HOMEWORK DUE.** On Canvas **before** class, submit your Eckhout project (a 4-page double-spaced description of a day in the life of a figure of your choice from one of the paintings of Albert Eckhout, from 17th century Dutch Brazil).

TUESDAY, MAY 1

Class 9: Ceremonies of possession

- Reading to be completed by this date: Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, “New World, New Stars” [Canvas]

THURSDAY, MAY 3

Class 10: Guest lecture on the Amazon

- Reading to be completed by this date: *A World on the Move*, chapters 1-2 (pages 8-58)

TUESDAY, MAY 8

Class 11: Cannibalism and ‘Indies drugs’

- Reading to be completed by this date: *Sea of Poppies*, 1-38.

THURSDAY, MAY 10

Class 12: Transplanting tropical nature (and diseases)

- Reading to be completed by this date: *A World on the Move*, pages 119-148
- In class: play “The Fever” text-based game in groups of 2:
<http://theappendix.net/special/the-fever/>

TUESDAY, MAY 15

Class 13: Middle Passages

- Reading to be completed by this date: *1493*, chapter 8 (pages 359-421)
- In class: final paper prompt announced + workshop on research methods

THURSDAY, MAY 17

Class 14: The globalization of the tropics

- Reading to be completed by this date: Marcy Norton, “Tasting Empire,” [PDF posted on Canvas].

TUESDAY, MAY 22

Class 15: Book review presentations

- No reading, work on book review.

 **HOMEWORK DUE.** On Canvas, submit book review project before Class 15. 4 pages.

THURSDAY, MAY 24

Class 16: Anthropology and ethnobotany in the tropics

- Reading to be completed by this date: *1493*, chapter 7 (pages 304-359)

TUESDAY, MAY 29

Class 17: Science in the Torrid Zone

- Reading to be completed by this date: “Science in the Torrid Zone” on Canvas

THURSDAY, MAY 31

Class 18: Legacies of the imperial tropics

- Levi-Straus [Canvas] and Felipe Cruz, “Amazonia, 1952: Found,”
<http://theappendix.net/issues/2012/12/field-notes,-amazonia-1952:-found>

TUESDAY, JUNE 5

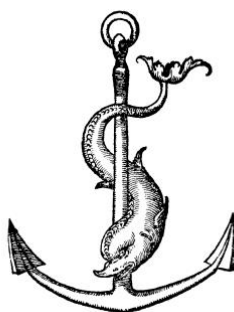
Class 19: Writing workshop

- *Work on final papers.*

THURSDAY, JUNE 7

Class 20: Final class

Final papers due by Tuesday, June 12, 5 pm.



“Tupi or not Tupi: that is the question.”

- FROM *THE CANNIBALIST MANIFESTO* BY OSWALD DE ANDRADE, 1928