

## CompLit119 Travel Writing in the Pre-Modern Mediterranean

TR 3-4:20PM | Building 200-032  
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Office hours: Monday 1-2:30pm, Building 260-242

What did travel mean to people of the medieval and early modern Mediterranean? In a world in which travel presented the very real dangers of shipwreck, piracy, captivity, and death, why would anyone ever have chosen to embark on a voyage? The very contingencies and uncertainties that made such journeys perilous are what make the telling of them so grippingly compelling. In this course, we seek to understand the key role travel and its narration played in the construction of the pre-modern Mediterranean world.

The *rihla*, or voyage, was an integral part of intellectual development in the pre-modern Arabophone world. This journey was understood not to mean just the physical displacement of a scholar over land and sea and as essential for his acquisition of knowledge at the feet of the foremost scholars of his day, but also was a metaphor for change, adventure, and intellectual development. As documents of intellectual exploration, these texts are invaluable for tracking and understanding the transformative experiences of travel and disclosing the ways in which travelers make sense of the realms through which they move.

Travelers from the Iberian Peninsula, Italy, and England, too, went to Africa, Asia, and the Americas, and relied upon familiar ideas, images, and discourses from their own world to explain, describe, and engage with what they found on their voyages. Of paramount concern to many of these writers, too, was the possibility for imperial exploitation. In recycling, rehearsing, and generating imperial expectations, travel writing became one important tool in establishing East/West binaries that underwrote the intellectual structure of early modern European empire. Nevertheless, travel writers were not mere automatons that reinforced the intellectual structures empire, but were themselves changed by their journeys, becoming tools for the undermining of the very imperial process that facilitated their travels.

We will look comparatively at texts from Arabic and Western traditions, seeking to understand how narrators construct ideas of truth, identity, and discovery, how their experiences alter their conceptions of the geographical and social world, and how their narratives contribute to or undermine structures of power in their world. We will further consider the ways in which these texts, drawn from traditions that frame Muslims and Christians in diametrical opposition, break down or redraw those borders in unexpected ways and places.

<b>Grading:</b>	attendance & participation	15%
	presentations	15%
	reading quizzes & responses	10%
	paper 1	15%
	paper 2	15%
	peer review	10%
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	total	100%

**A** = 100% - 94%   **A-** = 93% - 90% | **B+** = 89% - 86%   **B** = 85% - 83%   **B-** = 82% - 80%  
**C+** = 79% - 76%   **C** = 75% - 73%   **C-** = 72% - 70% | ...   **F** = 60% and below

**Attendance:** Your decision to skip class affects not only your learning, but also that of your classmates. You will be permitted an absolute maximum of two absences. Please communicate with me if you must miss class in the case of a personal emergency.

**Reading quizzes (3):** Random reading quizzes are intended to make sure you've done the reading. They will be graded pass/fail. No make-ups.

**Reading responses (3):** Reflect on your personal reaction to any three readings (one page). What’s a poor response like? One that does not engage the primary source at all. What’s a good response like? One that demonstrates an understanding of the reading and clearly explains and supports your observations.

**Peer review (2):** Learning how to give constructive feedback helps one’s own writing process. For the first two essays, you’ll submit one copy of your first draft to a peer. You will carefully read your peer’s paper and provide constructive feedback. We will define what’s constructive feedback in class.

**Presentations (2):**

# 1 Group presentation: Your presentation will introduce one reading; summarize the work and address a particular theme that your group has decided to analyze (20 minutes)

# 2: Paper presentation: You will present the first draft of your final paper (its argument, main points, etc.). It’s a way of workshopping your paper in class (5-7 minutes)

**Essays (3):** First two papers are worth 15% of your final grade (each). Break down: 5% for the first draft and 10% for the final draft. Your first draft will receive comments and feedback from me, but no letter grade. You will receive letter credit only if you turn in a complete draft.

- The first draft of each paper must not be less than 3 pages.
- Paper one and two: 3-5 pages. Expand either one for the final paper: 7-8 pages.

**Note that...**

**Format:** All writing assignments are to be word-processed, double spaced, with 1-inch margins, in a standard size 12 font, Times or Times New Roman only. The bibliography does not count toward the page limit. Please use either Modern Language Association (MLA) style or Chicago style for citations. Consult: *MLA Handbook, 8<sup>th</sup> Edition* or *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

**“Better late than never”:** Papers turned in late, without prior communication, will receive a late penalty of 1/3 grade per calendar day late (for instance, B+ paper becomes a B- two days past deadline).

Week	Theme	Readings	Due
#1 9/26 - 30	<i>The World of Travel Writing</i>	Tuesday: Meet & greet. Sign up for group presentations  --- Thursday: -Edward Said, “Introduction” to <i>Orientalism</i> -Samuel Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations.”	
	<i>Marco Polo</i>	Tuesday:  -Marco Polo, “Prologue,” “Middle East,” and “The Road to Cathay,” <i>Travels of Marco Polo</i>	Oct 6:  Paper #1 proposal (one paragraph)

#2 10/3-7		--- Thursday: - Marco Polo, "Kubilai Khan," "From China to India," "Northern Regions and Tartar Wars," and "Epilogue" from <i>Travels of Marco Polo</i>	
#3 10/10-10/14	<i>Ibn Baṭṭūṭa</i>	Tuesday: - "Introduction," and "The Mamluks," from Ross E. Dunn, <i>The Adventures of Ibn Battuta</i> - From "qāla Ibn Baṭṭūṭa" to "dhakara sultān Tūnis" in Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, <i>Rihla</i> --- Thursday: - Dunn, "Rihla," <i>The Adventures</i> - L.P. Harvey, "Finance and the <i>Travels</i> " and "The Religious Framework," <i>Ibn Battuta</i> - Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, "Miṣr," <i>Rihla</i>	October 11: First reading response  October 13: First draft of paper #1 due
#4 10/17-10/21	<i>Ibn Khaldun</i>	Tuesday - Houari Touati, "Introduction," <i>Islam and Travel in the Middle Ages</i> - Ibn Khaldun, "The nature of civilization," and "Bedouin civilization," <i>The Muqaddimah</i> --- Thursday - Ibn Khaldun, "Countries and cities"	October 18: Peer review for paper #1  October 20: Revised paper #1 due
#5 10/24-10/28	<i>Leo Africanus</i>	Tuesday - Natalie Zemon Davis, "Introduction," <i>Trickster Travels</i> - Leo Africanus, "General description," <i>Description of Africa</i> --- Thursday - Leo Africanus, "His First Booke" <i>Description of Africa</i>	October 26: Paper #2 proposal due
#6	<i>Barbary Captivity Narratives</i>	Tuesday - --- Thursday	November 3: Reading response #2 due  November 5:

10/31-11/4		<i>No reading due</i>	Paper #2 first draft due
#7 11/7-11/11	<i>Thomas Pellow</i>	Tuesday -Thomas Pellow, <i>The Adventures of Thomas Pellow</i>  --- Thursday -Thomas Pellow, <i>The Adventures of Thomas Pellow</i>	November 8: Peer review paper #2 due  November 10: Final draft paper #2 due
#8 11/14-11/18	<i>Al-Ghassani</i>	Tuesday -al-Ghassani, <i>Rihlat al-Wazir fi iftikak al- asir</i> -Oumelbanine Zhiri, "Mapping the Frontier"  --- Thursday - al-Ghassani, <i>Rihlat al-Wazir fi iftikak al- asir</i>	November 15: Reading response #3 due
#9 11/28-12/2	<i>The Pilgrimage of Ahmad</i>	Tuesday -Ahmad b. Tuwayr al-Janna, chapters 1-7, <i>The Pilgrimage of Ahmad</i>  --- Thursday -Ahmad b. Tuwayr al-Janna, chapters 8-14, <i>The Pilgrimage of Ahmad</i>	
#10 12/5-9	<i>Final discussions, paper presentations</i>		November 29: Paper presentations  December 1: Paper presentations
Final	Submit a <u>hard copy</u> of your final paper on December 13, 2016 @ 5:00 P.M.		