

HI 214
The History of Piracy
Fall 2017
MWF 9:05-9:55. CAS 203

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At an early point in The City of God, St. Augustine rehearses a story (originally passed on by Cicero) about an exchange between Alexander the Great and a pirate he had captured. “What gives you the right to disrupt the sea-lanes by force?” Alexander asked. To which the pirate boldly replied, “What gives you the right to disrupt the whole world by force? I use a small ship, so I’m called a thief; you use a great fleet, so you’re called an emperor.” (Compare the line in Bob Dylan’s song Sweetheart Like You: “Steal a little, and they throw you in jail; // steal a lot, and they make you king.”)

There is nothing romantic about piracy, although there is much that is Romantic in the image of piracy in popular culture. Maritime thievery is as old as maritime trade itself, and is indeed its shadow. For many centuries it represented a “high tech” form of crime since it required fast ships, a well-trained crew, an awareness of trade patterns, and an understanding of legal loopholes. Piracy’s supposed “golden age” was in the 17th and 18th centuries. We will begin by looking at the ancient and medieval forebears of the famous pirates of that era, and trace piratical activity up to the present. In some ways, the late 20th and early 21st century represents a second “golden age” of theft on the seas; certainly, it figures larger in the news media today than it has done in a very long time. The International Maritime Bureau estimates that maritime piracy today is a \$16 billion business. We will try to come to an understanding of the renaissance in maritime piracy and the efforts now under way to stop it. We finish the course by examining the global problem of the illegal duplication of digital files (copying movies, unlawful music downloads, etc), even though this is not piracy in the original sense of the term.

Piracy has played a surprisingly large role in Anglo-American popular culture, as we all know from recent movies and novels (Treasure Island, Mutiny on the Bounty, the Pirates of the Caribbean movies, the Patrick O’Brian novels, etc.) We will discuss the phenomenon itself, rather than individual works. Why, in other words, do we delight in the adventures of these particular thieves, murderers, and thugs?

There is no satisfactory textbook available for a course like this. Most of the many “histories of piracy” out there are amateurish picture-books for children. I have selected instead a handful of works that examine specific aspects of piracy in detail. Narrative cohesion will come from lectures, so it is important that you do not miss class.

Required Books at the BU Barnes and Noble:

1. Backman, Clifford R. Cultures of the West, 2nd edn. (Oxford Univ., ISBN 978.0190240455).
2. Defoe, Daniel. A General History of the Pyrates (Dover, ISBN 978.0486404882).
3. Haywood, Robert and Roberta Spivak. Maritime Piracy (Taylor, ISBN 978.0415781985).
4. Konstam, Angus. Pirates: The Complete History from 4300 BC to the Present Day (Lyons, ISBN 978.0762773954).
5. Leeson, Peter T. The Invisible Hook: The Hidden Economics of Pirates (Princeton Univ., ISBN 978.0691150093).
6. Rediker, Marcus. Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age (Beacon, ISBN 978.0807050255).

Please note: I make no money by assigning my own book. I donate all my book royalties to the BU general scholarship fund.

Course-grades: There will be three exams in this course, each one counting for one-third of your grade. Moreover, each exam will have two parts: an in-class quiz, and a take-home essay. Each quiz will consist of 30 objective questions (multiple choice, true/false, etc.), and each take-home essay will account for 70 additional points.

In-class Quiz #1: Friday, 6 Oct.	Take-home Essay #1 due: Tuesday, 10 Oct.
In-class Quiz #2: Friday, 10 Nov.	Take-home Essay #2 due: Monday, 13 Nov.
In-class Quiz #3: Monday, 15 Dec.	Take-home Essay #3 due: Friday, 15 Dec.

The prompts for the essays will be distributed at the In-class quizzes. Please submit your essays as email attachments.

My office hours for this semester are: Mon. 2:30-4:30. Wed. and Fri. 10:15-11:00
226 Bay State Road, Room 206

Email address is the best way to reach me. I check it twice a day, but never on weekends.
Please do not leave voicemail, since the service is unreliable.
Calls to my home or cell-phone will not be accepted.

Important dates to bear in mind:

18 Sept.	Last day to add classes.
10 Oct.	Last day to drop a class without receiving a “W” on your transcript.
10 Nov.	Last day to drop a class, with a “W” on your transcript.
28 Nov.	Last day to apply for a Leave of Absence from BU.

My Schedule for Fall 2017

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:00-8:50					
9:05-9:55	HI 214	9:30 lecture	HI 214		HI 214
10:10-11:00		until 10:45	Office hour		Office hour
11:15-12:05	CC 101		CC 101		CC 101
12:20-1:10			Dept. meeting		
1:25-2:15	HI 101		HI 101		HI 101
2:30-3:20	Office hour				
3:35-4:25	Office hour				
4:40-5:30					
5:45-6:35					

Classroom Protocol and Expectations

The CAS Student Academic Conduct Code, which covers most issues, is in force. You can find it at:

<http://www.bu.edu/cas/students/undergrad-resources/code/>

Regular attendance in class is expected as a matter of professionalism and basic courtesy. I recognize that circumstances sometimes arise that may make it impossible for you to attend class. Consequently, you are allowed to miss three (3) class-meetings; any more than that, however, will result in a penalty of one half-grade for each day (beyond the third) missed, from your course-grade.

I am happy to help if you are having any trouble with the course; but please be fair: let me know as soon as the difficulty starts. Don't wait until you discover that you haven't received the grade you wanted.

Speaking of grades, here is the College's guideline to faculty, which I will follow:

Avoid grade-inflation. Grades should reflect the distribution of effort and success in the class. In undergraduate courses, a useful (unofficial) guideline is that an "A" should mean that the student mastered the material and produced excellent work, "B" that the student understood the material but did not master it or whose work was good but not superior, "C" that there were significant gaps in understanding/accomplishment or that the work was lackluster ("satisfactory" is the term used in the Undergraduate Bulletin), "D" ("low pass") that there was limited understanding/accomplishment or effort, and "F" that there was little understanding/accomplishment or effort. If your distribution of grades is skewed toward the high end, it might imply that either an "A" does not require a high level of achievement in the course or you are demanding too little of your students. "High end" is a median grade of "B" or higher for a 100 to 200 level undergraduate course. A median grade of "B" is common for upper-level undergraduate courses. (In graduate courses "C+" is a failing grade, hence the average grade is higher than in undergraduate courses.)

If a student for good reason could not complete the last stages of your course (e.g., missed the final exam because of illness), you and the student can enter into a contract in which you specify the work that needs to be completed and the date by which it must be handed in to you. That date must be no later than one calendar year from the end of the semester in which the course was offered. An incomplete grade form, available through your departmental administrator, must be submitted with your grade sheet for the course for each "I" grade that you issue.

Classroom expectations are also based on professionalism and basic courtesy. If you are late to class, or if you need to leave the classroom for any personal reason, please do so – but with as little disruption to your neighbors as possible. No need to request permission. I am happy to permit the use of personal computers so long as you use them for class purposes; other students find it distracting if you are watching videos, playing games, or updating your Facebook page. If I receive any complaints, I will contact you privately and ask you either to change your behavior or to cease bringing your computer to class.

Class Schedule and Reading Assignments

B = Backman. D = Defoe. H = Haywood. K = Konstam. L = Leeson. R = Rediker.

6 Sept.	Introduction.	}	B 4-5
8 Sept.	Ancient Piracy: Greece.	}	K 1
11 Sept.	Ancient Piracy: Rome.	}	B 6-8
13 Sept.	Medieval Piracy: The Mediterranean, I.	}	K 2
15 Sept.	Medieval Piracy: The Vikings.	}	
18 Sept.	Medieval Piracy: The Mediterranean, II.	}	B 9-10
20 Sept.	Islamic Piracy: The Arabs.	}	
22 Sept.	Islamic Piracy: The Turks.	}	
25 Sept.	Renaissance Piracy, I.	}	B 11-12
27 Sept.	Renaissance Piracy, II.	}	K 3
29 Sept.	The Barbary Coast.	}	
2 Oct.	Piracy and Religious Hatred.	}	B 13-14
4 Oct.	The New World.	}	K 4
6 Oct.	In-class Quiz #1.	}	
9→10 Oct.	How to Read a Map. Take-home Essay #1 due.	}	K 5
11 Oct.	Who were the Buccaneers?	}	D ***
13 Oct.	Blackbeard, Jack Rackham, and Bartholomew Roberts.	}	
16 Oct.	Piracy and Printing.	}	Handout
18 Oct.	Piracy and the Scientific Revolution.	}	
20 Oct.	Who Owns Ideas?	}	
23 Oct.	The Technology of Piracy.	}	D***
25 Oct.	Captains Kidd, North, and Bellamy.	}	
27 Oct.	NO CLASS TODAY.	}	
30 Oct.	Enlightened Capitalism.	}	B 16
1 Nov.	Pirates as Capitalist Entrepreneurs?	}	L, all
3 Nov.	Pirates as Capitalist Entrepreneurs?	}	
6 Nov.	Pirates as Marxist Revolutionaries?	}	R, all
8 Nov.	Pirates as Marxist Revolutionaries?	}	
10 Nov.	In-class Quiz #2.	}	
13 Nov.	Absolutism and Piracy. Take-home Essay #2 due.	}	B 17-18
15 Nov.	Two Revolutions.	}	
17 Nov.	A Third Revolution.	}	
20 Nov.	Imperialism and Piracy.	}	B 23
22 Nov.	HOLIDAY.	}	
24 Nov.	HOLIDAY.	}	
27 Nov.	Imperialism and War.	}	B 27
29 Nov.	Decolonization and Globalization, I.	}	
1 Dec.	Decolonization and Globalization, II.	}	

4 Dec.	Digital Piracy.	}	H, all
6 Dec.	Today's Maritime Piracy.	}	
8 Dec.	Can Anything Be Done About Them?	}	
11 Dec.	In-class Quiz #3.		
15 Dec.	Essay #3 due by 12:00 noon		

***** There is no Final Exam in this course. Once you have submitted Essay #3, you're done! *****