

EN355: Staging Pirates and Captives in Early Modern Romance
4 Credits * Spring 2024

Professor: Dyani Johns Taff
Class Time: TR 9:30-10:45 am
Class Location: Miller 008

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Left: late 17th C engraving of Mary Read, also known as Mark Read, English pirate. Image from Wikimedia Commons. Right: Luis Teixeira, Portolan Chart showing Mediterranean area. Lisbon, c. 1600. Image from Wikimedia Commons

Course Description

Pirates, slaves, and shipwrecks are ever present in romances from the 16th and 17th centuries. We will place representations of these figures from ballads, plays, and prose fiction—including texts by William Shakespeare, Miguel de Cervantes, and Margaret Cavendish—alongside historical accounts of captivity, forced migration, and environmental violence in both the Mediterranean and the Atlantic worlds. We'll examine early modern discourses about race, class, gender, and ability and the ways that writers use romance, across genres, to reinforce and also to challenge social prejudices.

Through a variety of reading, writing, creative, discursive, and analytical assignments, this course will contribute to the following English department learning outcomes:

- Reading and making across genres, platforms, and media
- Understanding how representation shapes the world
- Bring both analytical and creative skills to global histories and ecological challenges

Texts

The following required books are available at the Colby College Bookstore. **Please buy these editions in hard copy (not ebook) as soon as possible.** We will use introductions, notes, and additional materials that are only available in these editions; use the ISBN to double check that you have the right version. **If you have trouble locating or paying for these books, contact me and I can help.**

- Miguel de Cervantes, *The Bagnios of Algiers and The Great Sultana*, eds. Barbara Fuchs and Aaron J Ilika, Penn Press, 2012. ISBN 9780812222159
- Thomas Heywood, *The Fair Maid of the West*, ed. Robert K Turner, Regents Renaissance Drama Series, U of Nebraska Press, 1967. ISBN 9780803273306
- Daniel Vitkus, ed. *Three Turk Plays*, Columbia University Press, 2000. ISBN 9780231110297
- Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko*, ed Joanna Lipking, Norton, 1997. ISBN: 978039397014-2
- William Shakespeare, *Pericles*, ed. Stephen Orgel, The Pelican Shakespeare (Penguin), 2001. ISBN 9780140714692
 - ****NOTE:** this book is not available at the bookstore; please buy a copy through your favorite local bookstore, through bookshop.org, or from another bookseller. You may also buy another edition of the play, **as long as it has good notes.** If you're not sure what to buy, get in touch.

Since we will write frequently in this course, I recommend buying a book about writing. My two favorites are Graff and Birkenstein's *They Say / I Say*, 5th edition (ISBN: 9780393538700) and Trimble's *Writing With Style*, 3rd edition (ISBN: 978-0205028 80). We will likely read excerpts of these books during the semester, which I will provide as pdfs; both are excellent, friendly guides to learning to write well. The [Purdue Online Writing Lab](#) and the [Colby College Library "All About Citations" Guide](#) are excellent, free resources for citation, grammar, and writing help.

Grading System

I take a holistic approach to grading, aiming to reward process, collective support, and *learning* in as many forms as we can imagine it. I am inspired by the research of scholars including Alfie Kohn, Asao Inoue, Cathy Davidson, and Jesse Stommel; their work and my own observations of students during my fifteen years of teaching have led me to believe that numerical and letter grades are not especially useful tools for assessment and feedback. They can, in fact, cause harm and reflect systemic biases.

I have modeled our assignments and assessment structure on labor-based contract grading and ungrading systems. These systems seek to measure students' work differently, accounting for as many modes of learning as possible, and seeking to create equitable, socially just classrooms where students feel comfortable taking risks, exploring and being brave about new ways of speaking, reading, and writing, and even experiencing failure: these are key aspects of the process of learning.

We will work together—as a class community as well as in our one-on-one meetings—to reflect on and assess the work—the labor—that I ask you to complete this semester. I have designed all assignments for this course with care; everything I ask you to do is meant to support your work in **four core areas** that I take to be vital to learning at the college level:

1. Community

Proximity—simply being together in a room—does not equal community: making our class into a community takes the hard, rewarding work of being an engaged citizen. Assignments include: arriving on time to class sessions having completed reading and other assignments, **participating** fully during class **verbally or otherwise**, large and small group work, formal and informal **peer review** and class **discussion leadership** activities. With a small group, you will complete an **adaptation and performance project** which you will revise and present at CLAS in May.

2. Textual Engagement

Our texts are essential materials for learning in this course; they function like lab equipment for a science course or paints and brushes for an art course. We'll learn about early modern captivity, piracy, the romance genre, early theater practices, ourselves, and each other by *reading* and engaging actively with our texts both before and during class. To promote active reading, and to extend our learning community beyond the classroom, you will complete a **commonplace book**, engaging a renaissance practice of collecting, organizing, and annotating favorite or intriguing or troubling quotations from a variety of sources. We'll often use your collections/entries to spark discussion and writing in class.

3. Writing

We often think of writing as a medium of communication, which it is. But writing can also serve as a means for thinking itself; I often use messy drafts and freewriting to work out what I *actually* think or feel about a topic, or to organize my understanding, or to work through or synthesize complex or overwhelming scholarly work. We will do many kinds of writing, informal and formal, in this class, but your main assignments will include **six explorations (~500 words)** and a **longer, polished essay (2000-2500 words)** that revises and expands 1-3 of your explorations, placing your central claim in conversation with scholarly work on our topic. We will engage in drafting, peer-review, and revision work throughout the semester, and you will **meet with me 1-1 twice** to discuss your writing.

4. Reflection and Revision

As you complete your work for this course, I want you to think actively about *why* and *how* you are doing the work you are engaged in, and about how your work will influence your next steps within and beyond my course. Honest reflection is a powerful tool, and sustained learning cannot take place without it. To promote reflective thinking, you will track your time in a **labor log** for a month, and complete two detailed **self-assessments** (one at mid-semester and one at the end). You will also create a **portfolio** that showcases your learning.

Detailed assignment directions are available on Moodle and in the assignment handbook; see below for reading advice.

You will assess your work in these core areas, and I will use your self-assessments to arrive at your course grade. As a general baseline, completing assignments in a timely, thoughtful manner will earn you a B; rushed, missing, or otherwise lack-luster work will earn you a lower grade; work that exceeds expectations, deepens your own or the community's learning, or otherwise goes above and beyond will earn you a higher grade.

Community Care Policies and Resources

We are continuing to learn how to live with Covid-19; the Public Health Emergency Declaration in the US expired in May 2023, but we also know that Covid-19 is still circulating and vulnerable members of our communities are still at risk. I assume that each of you has your own complex relationship with the virus and its fallout over the last three years. We are all also subject to a welter of other circumstances that can affect our mental and physical health. In response, **we need to prioritize an ethic of care: caring for yourself and caring for your community.** Here are policies designed to promote self and community care:

- **Masks are optional;** I encourage you to wear a mask if you have a cold or other respiratory illness (Covid-19 or otherwise), if you have recently traveled by bus, train, or plane, if you think you might have been exposed to Covid-19, or for any other reason that you might have to keep germs in or out. **I will bring a few extra masks to class with me every day; if you need one, just ask.**
 - I strongly encourage you to get your flu and covid booster shots; it's not too late! Keeping up-to-date on your vaccinations can do A LOT to control transmission in our community and beyond.
 - *****If ANY member of our class community needs us to mask for their safety, we will alter this policy.** Please contact me as soon as possible if you need us to mask FOR ANY REASON: no need to explain why. Simply email me and write: "Dear Prof. Taff, I request that we wear masks in class for my safety."
- **Attendance and missing class:** In order to create and sustain a compassionate community, we all need to commit to preparing for class, showing up, and attending to what members of our community (students and professor) say and ask of us. That said, our lives are complicated; if, for any reason at all, you are unable to attend one or more of our class sessions, you may complete an **alternative attendance** assignment, described in the in-class notes document, that will count for participation in the missed session.
 - *****We'll need a critical mass of folks in class each week.** Participating asynchronously (after class has happened) will mean that you will miss out on group work and real-time insights. **Please prioritize synchronous, in-person participation,** but use this option as a back-up whenever you need to.
- **Late work:** Completing course assignments on time is part of how you show your commitment to community, textual engagement, and writing work. Completing assignments on time will also save you from the stress of having assignments pile up. That said, we all sometimes find ourselves overwhelmed or in need of more time for one reason or another. One or two late assignments is fine. Chronic lateness will affect your grade because it will affect your ability to complete the course work in a thoughtful, timely way.
- **Academic Support:** The Dean of Studies office offers comprehensive academic support in the form of academic success programs, learning consultants, tutors, and much more. [Consult the academic success page to learn more.](#)
- **Financial Security:** If you need support so that you can buy textbooks or food, pay rent, buy or borrow a laptop or interview clothes, or any other kind of financial relief, [contact your class Dean](#) (they are friendly and ready to help! If you want help reaching out, let me know!).

- **Counseling Services:** [Colby College provides cost-free mental health and counseling services](#) to help you manage challenges that threaten your personal or academic wellbeing. **Getting help when you need it is the smart, courageous thing to do.** I am not a mental health professional, but I can make you an appointment, walk with you to Counseling Services, discuss coursework-related stress (and make plans to alleviate it), or help you to see or know when you need to get help beyond my expertise. **Email me any time.**
- **Access and Disability Services:** In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act, reasonable accommodations will be provided to qualified students with documented disabilities. Students seeking accommodations should start by contacting the [Office of Student Access & Disability Services](#).
- **The Farnham Writers' Center:** From the FWC's website: "The FWC is a place for you to get skilled feedback on your writing. Our peer writing tutors have experience working with Colby's diverse student populations, and they are eager to engage you in collaborative conversations about your writing." [To learn more and to make an appointment, visit their website.](#) The Writers' Center also has a Multilingual Writing Specialist, Dr. Chaoran Wang, who meets individually with international and multilingual students and provides workshops to support multilingual writers. You can reach her at chaowang@colby.edu. Please feel free to contact her, either to discuss your writing concerns and issues in general or to discuss a specific course-related writing assignment.
- **Academic Integrity:** Please read [the Colby Affirmation](#) and review Colby's policies and resources regarding [academic integrity](#). It is the responsibility of every student and faculty member to be familiar with, and comply with, these expectations for honesty, integrity, and personal responsibility. If you have any questions at any time about whether or how to cite a source, about when it's ok to collaborate and when you must work alone, or other topics relating to your own or others' conduct, please ask me! I am happy to explain how to correctly give credit where credit is due or to discuss other concerns.
- **Large Language Models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT** are tools that generate text probabilistically, outputting the most likely next word. They are trained on large amounts of text taken from the internet *without the writers' permission*. I do not yet know, fully, what I think about LLMs. I do know two things:
 - ChatGPT and other LLMs raise **serious labor and ethics concerns**: who's going to make money from these tools? Who's going to lose a job? What happens when it is *so* easy to generate plausible but fake, misleading, harmful information?
 - **Writing is thinking** and thinking well is difficult and vital: if you let the LLM do your writing for you, you are not learning to *think*.**For this course, please do all of your own writing at each stage, including brainstorming, drafting, revising, and polishing.** Writing is hard and time consuming, but putting in that time will enable your intellectual growth, deepen your understanding of our texts, and hone your communication skills. If you would like to experiment with an LLM (and analyze and cite what it generates!), get in touch and we can discuss your plans.

- **Sexual Misconduct/Title IX Statement:** Colby College prohibits and will not tolerate sexual misconduct or gender-based discrimination of any kind. [Colby is legally obligated to investigate sexual misconduct](#) (including, but not limited to sexual assault and sexual harassment). If you wish to speak confidentially about an incident of sexual misconduct, please contact Colby Counseling Services (207-859-4490) or Kate Smanik, the Confidential Resource Advisor and Dean of Religious and Spiritual Life (207-859-4272).
 - Please note that as your professor, I am designated a “responsible employee,” a legal category that requires me to report to the Title IX Coordinator, Emily Schusterbauer (207-859-4266) if you disclose an experience related to sexual misconduct. This is not as scary as it sounds: if I contact Emily, she and her office will email you. If you want to follow up, you can. If not, you don’t have to.
 - **I will support you whatever you decide:** I can connect you to community resources for dealing with sexual misconduct without you needing to disclose specific information to me. If you wish to disclose a specific incident to me, I will help to connect you to Emily Schusterbauer. The college will take initial steps to address the incident(s), protect and support those directly affected, and enhance the safety of our community. Emily will work with you to determine the best way to proceed.

- **Bias Incident Prevention and Response Team (BIPR):** From the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion website: “BIPR is a non-disciplinary body charged with both responding to bias incident reports and implementing educational initiatives designed to decrease the frequency of bias incidents in our community. Community members who have experienced and/or witnessed a bias incident are encouraged to submit a BIPR report or contact BIPR chair Emily Schusterbauer (207-859-4093).” [To submit a Bias Incident Report, click this link.](#)

Course Schedule

The following schedule will give you an overview of our readings, topics, and schedule of assignments for the semester.

*****This schedule is subject to change, as needed, throughout the semester.** Our Moodle site will be our home base: I will update checklists and assignments there regularly.

Reminder: for a 4-credit course, you should expect to spend approximately 8 hours per week on your work *outside of class*. Some weeks you will need more than 8 hours and some less; I have designed my assignments with that time frame in mind. Plan your time outside of class accordingly and get in touch if you have questions!

	Readings and Assignments
Week 1:	<p><u>Unit 1: Romance? Piracy? Captivity? Environment?</u></p> <p><u>Th Feb 8:</u> Course Introductions; Alfie Kohn, “The Case Against Grades”; Rachael Meager, “Thinking is difficult”</p> <p>Begin your Labor Log and your Commonplace Book</p>

<p>Week 2:</p>	<p><u>Sign up for your group adaptation/performance date; get yourself a commonplace book; buy our course text books.</u></p> <p><u>T Feb 13:</u> Jennifer Morgan, selections from <i>Reckoning with Slavery: Gender, Kinship, and Capitalism in the Early Black Atlantic</i>; Claire Jowitt, selections from <i>The Culture of Piracy, 1580-1630: English Literature and Seaborne Crime</i></p> <p><u>Th Feb 15:</u> Tiffany Jo Werth, selections from <i>Fabulous Dark Cloister: Romance in England After the Reformation</i> and Todd Borlik, selections from <i>Shakespeare Beyond the Green World</i></p>
<p>Week 3:</p>	<p><u>Unit 2: Exploring and Rewriting Prose Romance</u></p> <p><u>T Feb 20:</u> Ludovico Ariosto, <i>Orlando Furioso</i>, cantos 1-2 and 7-8.</p> <p><u>Th Feb 22:</u> Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, excerpts from <i>The Florida of the Inca</i>; Hillary Eklund, “Early Modern Wetlands: A Brief History of the Unfast.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Exploration 1 DUE by 11:55pm F Feb 23</p>
<p>Week 4:</p>	<p><u>T Feb 27:</u> “The Famous Voyage of Sir Francis Drake”; Geoffrey Whitney, “Auxilio divino”; selections from Barbara Fuchs, <i>Mimesis and Empire</i> and Mary Fuller, “Writing the Long Distance Voyage.”</p> <p><u>Th Feb 29:</u> Excerpts from Sir Philip Sidney’s <i>Arcadia</i>, Mary Wroth’s <i>Urania</i>, and Hester Pulter’s <i>The Unfortunate Florinda</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">Exploration 2 DUE by 11:55pm F Mar 1</p>
<p>Week 5:</p>	<p><u>T Mar 5:</u> Margaret Cavendish, <i>Assaulted and Pursued Chastity</i></p> <p><u>Th Mar 7:</u> Margaret Cavendish, <i>Assaulted and Pursued Chastity</i>; Group 1: Performance / Adaptation</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Exploration 3 DUE by 11:55pm F Mar 8 Labor Log and Reflection DUE by 11:55pm on F Mar 8</p>
<p>Week 6: 1-1 Writing Meetings</p>	<p><u>T Mar 12:</u> Aphra Behn, <i>Oroonoko</i></p> <p><u>Th Mar 14:</u> Aphra Behn, <i>Oroonoko</i>; Group 2: Performance / Adaptation</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Exploration Peer Review Letters DUE by 11:55pm on F Mar 15</p>
<p>Week 7: 1-1 Writing Meetings</p>	<p><u>Unit 3: Staging Romance</u></p> <p><u>T Mar 19:</u> Selections from Thomas Overbury’s <i>Characters</i>; Thomas Heywood, <i>The Fair Maid of the West</i>, Part I, Act 1</p>

	<p><u>Th Mar 21</u>: Thomas Heywood, <i>The Fair Maid of the West</i>, Part I, Acts 2-3; Hayley Cotter, “Robbers of the Sea.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">REVISED Exploration DUE by 11:55pm on F Mar 22</p>
Week 8:	<p><u>Mar 23-31</u>: Spring Recess—No Classes</p>
Week 9:	<p>Mid-Semester Self-Assessment DUE by 11:55pm on M Apr 1 Commonplace Book reflection/goals check in DUE by 11:55pm on M Apr 1</p> <p><u>T Apr 2</u>: Thomas Heywood, <i>The Fair Maid of the West</i>, Part I, Act 4-5; Jean Howard, “An English Lass Amid the Moors: Gender, Race, Sexuality, and National Identity in Heywood’s <i>The Fair Maid of the West</i>”; Group 3: Performance / Adaptation</p> <p><u>Th Apr 4</u>: Miguel de Cervantes, <i>The Bagnios of Algiers</i>, Act 1</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Exploration 4 DUE by 11:55pm F Apr 5</p>
Week 10:	<p><u>T Apr 9</u>: Class in Miller Special Collections—Robinson Room; Miguel de Cervantes, <i>The Bagnios of Algiers</i>, Act 2</p> <p><u>Th Apr 11</u>: Miguel de Cervantes, <i>The Bagnios of Algiers</i>, Act 3; Collective Reading: Robert Daborne’s <i>A Christian Turn’d Turk</i>, Scenes 1-4</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Exploration 5 DUE by 11:55pm F Apr 12</p>
Week 11:	<p><u>T Apr 16</u>: Group 4: Performance / Adaptation (on <i>Bagnios</i>); Robert Daborne, <i>A Christian Turn’d Turk</i>, Scenes 5-12; Streifer, “Jewish Renegades and Renegade Jews”</p> <p><u>Th Apr 18</u>: Robert Daborne, <i>A Christian Turn’d Turk</i>, Scenes 13-end; Benjamin Vanwagoner, “Pirate Economics.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Exploration 6 DUE by 11:55pm F Apr 19</p>
Week 12:	<p><u>T Apr 23</u>: Group 5: Performance / Adaptation (on <i>CTT</i>); William Shakespeare, <i>Pericles</i>, Act 1</p> <p><u>Th Apr 25</u>: William Shakespeare, <i>Pericles</i>, Acts 2-3</p> <p>***Attend the Colby Theater Company’s production of <i>Macbeth</i>, Apr 25, 26, or 27, 7:30-8:45 pm.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Final Essay Planning Paragraph/s DUE F Apr 26</p>

<p>Week 13: 1-1 Writing Meetings</p>	<p><u>T Apr 30:</u> <i>Macbeth</i> performance discussion; William Shakespeare, <i>Pericles</i>, Acts 4-5; Group 6: Performance / Adaptation (on <i>Pericles</i>)</p> <p><u>Th May 2:</u> NO CLASS: <u>Performance / Adaptation presentations at CLAS!!</u></p> <p><u>F May 3:</u> Final Essay draft DUE; peer review workshop in class.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">CLAS reflection paragraph/s DUE by 11:55pm F May 3 Peer Review Letters DUE by 11:55pm on Sunday, May 5</p>
<p>Week 14: 1-1 Writing Meetings</p>	<p><u>T May 7:</u> Writing meetings and work session</p> <p><u>Th May 9:</u> Final Essay Lightning Presentations and closing thoughts</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Final Essay and revision memo DUE by 11:55pm F May 10 Commonplace Book Reflection Paragraph/s DUE by 11:55pm F May 10</p>
	<p style="text-align: right;">Portfolio DUE by 11:55pm M May 20</p>

A few notes on reading

All students read at different rates and different texts require different kinds of attention and time. Think about how it feels to read a twitter feed, a novel, a comic, a text from a friend, an art book, a poem, a play, a scholarly article, a scientific paper: these texts all invite you to engage in very different ways. This semester, we will be reading a wide variety of texts of varying length, topic, and density. **If you are struggling, or if it feels difficult to read our texts, don't worry:** that probably means you're doing it right! I can guarantee that you aren't alone in those feelings of struggle and difficulty. Here are a few things to try when the reading gets tough:

- **Assess your time/space:** try reading at a different time of day or in a different location. Some texts might require perfect silence, and some might actually feel easier to read with some ambient noise or music (in a coffee house, for instance).
- **Poems and other artistic texts:** re-reading is key! Read once quickly, for sound and initial impressions. Read again for comprehension. Read again for line breaks, rhymes, puns, metaphors, and so on. Your subsequent reads need not be linear! You might start in the middle or end; the key is to make time and space for reading slowly and re-reading.
- **Scholarly articles:** master the strategic skim. Read the first ~5 pages slowly and carefully, looking for the writer's central argument or point. Next, read section titles and topic sentences, and consider slowing down for a few paragraphs in the middle to see how the writer is using evidence (and to see what kind of evidence they're using). Next, read the conclusion or the final 3 paragraphs slowly. With your remaining time, go back and re-read as needed to clarify your understanding, ask questions, apply ideas, etc.
- **Use your resources (be a skeptical googler!):** bring the power of the internet to bear on your reading; I fully support you using SparkNotes, LitCharts, Schmoop, Wikipedia, and so on to aid you in understanding our texts. BUT: please note that although these sites provide great summaries, they also have errors and frequently provide one-dimensional or overly simplistic analyses. ALSO: **always, always, always** cite if you make use of these or any other aids in your writing or during class activities!
- **Listen to an audio book while you follow along in the text:** If listening while you read is helpful, check out LibriVox: they have crowd-sourced, FREE audio versions of many, many texts. One cautionary note: the reader quality is variable, and intonation IS interpretation, in my view. BUT: do you want to know how I got through reading James Joyce's *Ulysses* in college and Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* in grad school (twice!)? I read along while listening to LibriVox recordings. Particularly useful for difficult or long texts, but helpful for anything you're reading.
- **Come to office hours:** I am always happy to talk more about our texts, to read sections slowly with you, to clarify key concepts, and so on.

The Most Important Thing: embrace uncertainty and do your best.

Reading *some* is infinitely better than reading *none*; sit calmly with your confusion about or boredom with or other reaction to a text you're reading, read as much of it as you can, and then, crucially, try to articulate your confusion to our class. Engagement does not mean mastery; spend time, slowly, with our texts, and then bring your reactions, observations, perplexities, and so on with you to class for discussion.