

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
HIST*6380 Seminar in Early Modern Europe
Winter 2026

Instructor: [REDACTED]
Office Hours: [REDACTED], Thu. 11:00-12:00 pm or by appointment
Classes: Fri. 11:30-2:20 pm, [REDACTED]

CALENDAR DESCRIPTION

This seminar course examines current issues in early modern European history as selected by the instructor(s). Participants review current research and historiography, discuss the principal debates, and develop their own perspectives through encounters with primary source materials.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will examine European voyages of discovery in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Using early modern travel narratives in conjunction with secondary readings, we will examine early contact, conflict, and commercial interaction between European and non-European peoples. We will investigate the early efforts of Portugal, Spain and England to establish colonies and trading posts in the Americas, Asia and Africa, as well as the worldviews that framed them. Where sources exist, we will also examine the perspective of non-Europeans through firsthand accounts.

TEXTBOOKS AND OTHER RESOURCES

All readings will either be provided on Courselink or can be accessed through the library.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Evaluate the various motivations of the Europeans involved in the overseas expansion of the sixteenth century
2. Examine the impact of European expansion on non-European societies.
3. Interpret and compare primary and secondary sources from European and non-European perspectives, assessing bias, reliability, and historical context.
4. Assess the role of trade, religion, diplomacy and warfare in shaping early modern global interactions.

ASSESSMENT AND DUE DATES

Leading Seminar	15%	Weeks 3-7
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Seminar Participation	25%	Ongoing
Paper Presentation	20%	Weeks 10-12
Final Paper	40%	Friday, 10 April 2026

Leading Seminar

Each student will lead a seminar discussion (each one consisting of investigation and synthesis of a set of assigned readings). Students should post three or four in-depth questions on the discussion board in Courselink. If appropriate, you may identify particular passages of the primary texts to focus on. The student should begin the seminar by raising relevant themes through a short presentation of 10 minutes. The presentation should be followed by questions for the group, that include the questions posted on Courselink as well as three or four supplementary questions. Where two students are presenting on the same day, you should coordinate your presentations.

Seminar Participation

Seminars are largely student-led. Full participation implies that you have prepared for class fully by having completed the assigned readings. You should be prepared to talk about specific details, passages and points raised by the texts. **Print or e-copies of the texts must be brought to class.** Students are expected to investigate the context of the travel-writers and their subject matter.

Paper Presentation

Students will sign up for a presentation slot in either Week 10, 11 or 12. Presentations will be 15-20 minutes which discuss the Historical Context, the Research Question and Argument of the Paper. A question period of 10-15 minutes will follow. Further instructions will be discussed in class, and a rubric will be posted on Courselink.

Final Essay

Each student will write an essay of 3000-4000 words that examines European and non-European interactions overseas during the sixteenth century. The essay must draw on one primary source travel narrative written by a European. Where possible, the student should consult a complementary non-European source. More instructions and a rubric are posted on Courselink.

This course uses Turnitin Software to check for originality. Students are encouraged to check originality scores prior to submission. Please see me if you need further assistance.

All submissions must be original work and reflect the ideas and research conducted by the student. Use of AI software (e. g. ChatGPT) may result in charges of academic misconduct. Please see the instructor if you are unsure as to what tools may be used.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Fri. Jan. 09 Introduction to the Course

No Readings

Fri. Jan. 16 The Portuguese in West Africa

Readings: Zurara, Gomes Eanes de. *The Chronicle of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea*.

Fri. Jan. 23 Portuguese and the Estado da Índia

Readings: Ravenstein, E. G., ed. *A Journal of the First Voyage of Vasco Da Gama, 1497–1499*. (1898); Albuquerque, Afonso de. *The Commentaries of the Great Alfonso D'Albuquerque, Second Viceroy of India*; Alvarez, Francisco. *Narrative of the Portuguese Embassy to Abyssinia During the Years 1520–1527*. Page ranges and further readings will be published on Courselink.

Fri. Jan. 30: Forging the Spanish Empire

Readings: Columbus, Christopher. *Journal of Christopher Columbus (During His First Voyage, 1492–93): And Documents Relating the Voyages of John Cabot and Gaspar Corte Real*; Díaz del Castillo, Bernal. *The True History of the Conquest of New Spain. Volume 1*. Page ranges and further readings will be published on Courselink.

Fri. Feb. 06: The Dutch in Asia and the New World

Readings: Stade, Hans. *The Captivity of Hans Stade of Hesse in A.D. 1547–1555, Among the Wild Tribes of Eastern Brazil*; *Voyage of John Huyghen van Linschoten to the East Indies The First Book, Containing his Description of the East*; Page ranges and further readings will be published on Courselink.

Fri. Feb. 13: The French in North America and the West Indies

Readings: Champlain, Samuel. *Narrative of a Voyage to the West Indies and Mexico in the Years 1599–1602*; Cartier, Jacques, and Henry Percival Biggar, eds. *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier* Page ranges and further readings will be published on Courselink.

READING WEEK

Fri. Feb 27: English Pirates and Planters

Readings: Raleigh, Walter. *The Discovery of the Large, Rich, and Beautiful Empire of Guiana : With a Relation of the Great and Golden City of Manoa*; Drake, Francis, and Francis Fletcher. *The World Encompassed by Sir Francis Drake: Being His Next Voyage to That to Nombre de Dios*; Collinson, Richard. *The Three Voyages of Martin Frobisher: In Search of a Passage to Cathaia and India by the North-West, A.D. 1576-8*. Page ranges and further readings will be published on Courselink.

Fri. Mar. 06 Individual Meetings

Fri. Mar. 13 Individual Meetings

Fri. Mar. 20 Final Presentations

Fri. Mar. 27 Final Presentations

Mon. Apr. 06 Final Presentations

COURSE POLICY STATEMENTS

Late penalties and missed assignments

All written assignments should be submitted to the Courselink Dropbox by 11:59 pm on the day they are due. Assignments received after the due date are subject to a late penalty of 2% per weekday, calculated on the calendar day. If a student misses an assignment because they are experiencing exceptional difficulties (e.g., long term illness, a death in the family) or needs accommodation for a learning disability, they must contact the instructor as soon as possible, and prior to the assignment due date.

Reweighting of Assignments

The value of the various components for this course will not be reweighted, except in very exceptional cases (such as severe and prolonged illness or very serious health circumstances). Each component of the course is designed to contribute to and assess different aspects of the course's learning objectives, and students are expected to complete all of them.

UNIVERSITY POLICY STATEMENTS

Academic Integrity

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and it is the responsibility of all members of the University community –

faculty, staff, and students – to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. University of Guelph students have the responsibility of abiding by the University's policy on academic misconduct regardless of their location of study; faculty, staff and students have the responsibility of supporting an environment that discourages misconduct. Students need to remain aware that instructors have access to and the right to use electronic and other means of detection.

Please note: Whether or not a student intended to commit academic misconduct is not relevant for a finding of guilt. Hurried or careless submission of assignments does not excuse students from responsibility for verifying the academic integrity of their work before submitting it. Students who are in any doubt as to whether an action on their part could be construed as an academic offence should consult with a faculty member or faculty advisor.

The [Academic Misconduct Policy](#) is outlined in the Undergraduate Calendar.

Accessibility

The University promotes the full participation of students who experience disabilities in their academic programs. To that end, the provision of academic accommodation is a shared responsibility between the University and the student.

When accommodations are needed, the student is required to first register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS). Documentation to substantiate the existence of a disability is required; however, interim accommodations may be possible while that process is underway.

Accommodations are available for both permanent and temporary disabilities. It should be noted that common illnesses such as a cold or the flu do not constitute a disability. Use of the SAS Exam Centre requires students to make a booking at least 10 days in advance, and no later than the first business day in November, March or July as appropriate for the semester. Similarly, new or changed accommodations for online quizzes, tests and exams must be approved at least a week ahead of time. For students at the Guelph campus, information can be found on the [SAS website](#).

Accommodation of Religious Obligations

If you are unable to meet an in-course requirement due to religious obligations, please email the course instructor within two weeks of the start of the semester to make alternate arrangements.

See the Academic calendar for information on regulations and procedures for [Academic Accommodations of Religious Obligations](#).

Copies of Out-of-class Assignments

Keep paper and/or other reliable back-up copies of all out-of-class assignments: you may be asked to resubmit work at any time.

Drop Date

Students will have until the last day of classes to drop courses without academic penalty. The deadline to drop two-semester courses will be the last day of classes in the second semester. This applies to all undergraduate students except for Doctor of Veterinary Medicine and Associate Diploma in Veterinary Technology (conventional and alternative delivery) students. The regulations and procedures for course registration are available in the [Undergraduate Calendar - Dropping Courses](#).

Email Communication

As per university regulations, all students are required to check their <uoguelph.ca> e-mail account regularly: e-mail is the official route of communication between the University and its students.

Health and Wellbeing

The University of Guelph provides a wide range of health and wellbeing services at the [Vaccarino Centre for Student Wellness](#). If you are concerned about your mental health and not sure where to start, connect with a [Student Wellness Navigator](#) who can help develop a plan to manage and support your mental health or check out our [mental wellbeing resources](#). The Student Wellness team are here to help and welcome the opportunity to connect with you.

Illness

Medical notes will not normally be required for singular instances of academic consideration, although students may be required to provide supporting documentation for multiple missed assessments or when involving a large part of a course (e.g., final exam or major assignment).

Recording of Materials

Presentations that are made in relation to course work—including lectures—cannot be recorded or copied without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a student, or guest lecturer. Material recorded with permission is restricted to use for that course unless further permission is granted.

Resources

The [Academic Calendars](#) are the source of information about the University of Guelph's procedures, policies and regulations which apply to undergraduate, graduate and diploma programs.

When You Cannot Meet a Course Requirement

When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons please advise the course instructor (or designated person, such as a teaching assistant) in writing, with your name, id#, and e-mail contact. See the Undergraduate Calendar for information on regulations and procedures for [Academic Consideration](#).