

**COURSE SYLLABUS  
HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES  
CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY**

**HUM / H 13 BRAVE NEW WORLDS:  
RACE, HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE AGE OF DISCOVERY**

*9 units (3-0-6); SPRING 2024*

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:00-10:25 AM

Location: TBA

Instructor: Nicolas Wey-Gomez

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Office Hours: Tu. and Tr., 11:00 AM-  
NOON



**Race, Humanitarianism and the Age of Discovery.** This course traces the origins of modern racism and, perhaps surprisingly, of human rights advocacy itself, to a seminal moment in global history sometimes called the Age of Discovery. At this time, two small European kingdoms, Spain and Portugal, first conducted trade and conquest in Atlantic Africa, the Americas, and the Indian and Pacific Oceans, forging the world's first truly global empires. We study the legacy of racism and humanitarianism in eye-witness accounts, maps, images and other materials attesting to Spain's seminal encounters with the Americas.

**Racism and Human Rights.** Racism, and the calls for social justice it engenders, rage at the heart of today's national politics. But these two social phenomena bear a long history that can be traced to the earliest moments of European expansion around the globe. America wrestles more than ever between its aspirations as a pluralist nation forged by immigrants, and a racist legacy reaching back through every immigrant wave

to the early conflicts between English settlers and Native Americans and the importation of slave labor from Africa to Virginia in the early 1600s. Racist sentiment against Native Americans, Blacks and other people of color on our soil today is exacerbated by continuing immigration to the U. S. and other ‘developed’ nations from so-called ‘developing’ countries whose labor and natural resources helped forge early overseas empires like Portugal, Spain and England itself.

***Dealing with Complex History.*** Students are asked to reflect, not only on the consequences of European expansion for native Americans and imported African slaves, but also, more generally, on the difficulty of dealing with the past in all of its complexity – the good and the bad, the beneficial and the detrimental. What does it mean to think ‘historically’? How can we tell historical ‘fact’ from mere ‘fiction’? Why does such a distinction matter? And what is the difference between ‘remembering’ and ‘honoring’ figures and events that have shaped our present? Why does this difference matter? What does thinking ‘historically’ have to do with who we are or what our aspirations might be?

***Reading Materials.*** Our readings include Christopher Columbus's letters on the Discovery; Hernan Cortes's epic letter to Charles V on the conquest of Mexico and a collective testimony by the native peoples he vanquished; a bizarre pilgrim's tale by Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca, a conqueror who went "native" during his survey of the southern U. S. mainland and later proposed a novel alternative to Spain's bloody subjugation of native peoples; a famous indictment of the Spanish conquest by the priest Bartolomé de las Casas; a subversive history of the fall of the Inca empire, by the last Inca ruler, Titu Cusi Yupanqui; and, finally, an autobiography by Catalina de Erauso, a renegade nun who ran wild through the colonial Americas subverting the gender divide between male and female. All readings and discussions are in English.

#### **AI-FREE ZONE**



All use of AI Tools (ChatGPT, Bard, Bing Chat, Claude2, etc.) is **STRICTLY FORBIDDEN**, except for the purpose of locating information or research on topics related to our class. This course is about your own individual, and irreplaceable, ability to read and interpret written and visual texts closely, as well as your ability to put your insights about these materials into words. Reading is not just passive data-intake. You are problem-solving as you read. And writing is not just a medium to communicate with readers. It is about giving proper body to your ideas through words. You are problem-solving as you write.

## REQUIRED PRIMARY TEXTS:

Sel. from *Travels of Marco Polo*, 13th c. (online)  
*Capitulations of Santa Fe*, 1492 (online)  
Christopher Columbus, Letter to Luis de Santangel 1493 (online)  
Michele de Cuneo, Letter to Girolamo Annari, 1495 (online)  
Christopher Columbus, Letter of the Third Voyage, 1498 (online)  
Christopher Columbus, *Lettera Rarissima*, 1503 (online)  
Hernán Cortés, *Second Letter*, 1519 (online)  
Sel. Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, *Florentine Codex*, 1547-1580, ed. Anderson & Dibble (1981) (online)  
Sel. Bartolomé de las Casas, *The Devastation of the Indies*, 1552 (online)  
**\*\*Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, *Castaways*, 1542 (U California P, 1993)**  
**\*\*Titu Cusi Yupanqui, *How the Spaniards Arrived in Peru*, 1570 (Hackett, 2006)**  
**\*\*Catalina de Erauso, *Lieutenant Nun: Memoir of a Basque Transvestite in the New World*, ca. 1626 (Beacon 1997)**

**You are required to purchase texts marked by double asterisks (\*\*).** They are easily available on Amazon or any major online bookstore. You may use only the indicated editions of these texts. All other required and recommended materials are on our **CANVAS** website or on **RESERVE** at the library. All maps and images can be found through the **MAP AND IMAGES GALLERY** link on Canvas (you will be asked to sign in through your Caltech **BOX** account).

**IMPORTANT:** While you are welcome to download all available digital files to your computer, they are to be used only for this class. You may **NOT** print or circulate any map images. You may consult me about possible exceptions.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. **Participation (20% of final grade).**
2. **1st Paper, Final Draft, due MONDAY, MAY 06 (1250-1500 words; 30%).**
3. **Midterm Take-Home Exam, FRIDAY, MAY 10 (20%).**
4. **2nd Paper, Final Draft due WEDNESDAY, JUNE 12 (1250-1500 words; 30%).**

Although final grades for this course are "Pass" or "Fail," you will receive grades for individual requirements as part of my feedback on your performance. Each and all requirements – including participation – must be satisfactorily completed to merit a "Pass."

**PAPERS** must be 5-6 pages long (1250-1500 words-long), well thought-out, neatly printed, double-spaced, and turned in on time in **MICROSOFT WORD format ONLY**. You must include source and page numbers for your citations, as well as a **BIBLIOGRAPHY** at the end (Chicago Manual of Style or MLA formats). You are encouraged to meet with

me by ZOOM ahead of time to discuss topics and work in progress. **You are expected to turn in a complete first draft for each of your papers.** With my feedback on that draft, you must then rewrite it into a final draft to be graded. Papers that receive a C (or lower) must be rewritten.

As part of our program to promote and support your writing skills, you should take full advantage of the resources offered by Caltech's Hixon Writing Center, which include feedback from writing specialists or peer tutors: <http://www.writing.caltech.edu/>.

**PARTICIPATION** entails active involvement in the discussion of the works: you should expect to be asked specific questions about the readings; you may also be asked to prepare oral presentations or response papers; and you may be quizzed in class about the reading for that particular day. In order to facilitate class preparation and avoid too much reading in the middle of the week, you should prepare each week's reading ahead of time. More than *one* unexcused absence will automatically lower final grade at the rate of one letter grade per absence. *If you get an F for participation, you will be in danger of failing the class.* **Final grades of C (or lower) will ultimately be reported as a "Fail" on your transcript.**

**IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION and ZOOM PROTOCOLS:** Lectures are an integral part of this course; they do not simply summarize assignments nor does web-based material substitute for attendance at lectures.

1. You must complete all assigned **READINGS IN ADVANCE OF CLASS SESSIONS.** You must have each **ASSIGNED READING IN FRONT OF YOU** for every class, whether in printed form or on your computer.
2. You must **ARRIVE ON TIME** to our class sessions, and, if we switch to **ZOOM**, you are required to **KEEP YOUR LIVE VIDEO OPEN AT ALL TIMES.** Keep your **MIC MUTED** unless you are prepared to speak. **NO RECORDING** is allowed of class sessions.
3. You should expect to **TAKE NOTES** in class. While checking the web for information relevant to our class is permitted, all other surfing, or checking email and social media are discourteous, detrimental to your learning and will **NOT** be tolerated. **CELLPHONES ARE BANNED** from this class.

## **INSTITUTE POLICY**

As Institute faculty, I am fully committed to promoting Caltech's core values – **diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility.** This course adheres to Institute policy on nondiscrimination, harassment, and accommodations for disabilities. **If you require special accommodations, please talk to me as soon as possible.** This course also upholds Institute policy regarding the **honor code** and, more specifically, **plagiarism.** Written assignments in the humanities should reflect your individual engagement with class materials and discussions, specifying information and views that are not your own.

If you have any doubts concerning your use of ideas or sources at any time, please ask me for advice.

**By enrolling in this class, you automatically acknowledge that you have read, and abide by, the Hixon Writing Center's full guidelines and expectations on avoiding plagiarism (<http://www.hss.caltech.edu/academics/avoiding-plagiarism>). You also acknowledge that you will not use AI Tools, except as specified by instructor.**

## SCHEDULE:

### APRIL

#### Week One

##### INTRODUCTION: TROUBLED LEGACIES FROM THE AGE OF DISCOVERY

**TU 02** Christopher Columbus, "12 October 1492," entry from his *Journal* (online)  
The *Requirement* (1512), A Document for the Ages (online)  
"Christopher Columbus Statues in Boston, Minnesota and Virginia Are Damaged," *The New York Times* (online: <https://nyti.ms/2AdPxNO>)

##### MARVELS AND MONSTERS OF THE EAST

**TR 04** Sel. from *Travels of Marco Polo*, 13th c., pp. ix-xvii, 13-30, 209-224, and 230-286 (online)

#### Week Two

##### THE LURE OF DISCOVERY

**TU 09** Paolo Toscanelli's Letter to Canon Martins, 1475 (online)  
Reconstruction of Paolo Toscanelli's map (online map)  
Ptolemy's World Map, 2nd century (online map)  
Martin Behaim's Globe, 1492 (online map)  
*Capitulations of Santa Fe*, 1492 (online)

##### FURTHER READING:

E. G. Ravenstein, "Nomenclature and Commentary," *Martin Behaim: His Life and his Globe*, pp. 71-105, London, George Philip and Son, 1908 (online)  
Nicolás Wey Gómez, "The Meaning of India in Pre-Columbian Europe," Chap. 3 in *The Tropics of Empire: Why Columbus Sailed South to the Indies*, pp. 159-228 (on RESERVE)

## Week Two (cont'd)

### COLUMBUS AND THE ENDS OF THE WORLD

**TR 11** Prologue to Columbus's *Journal*, 1492-1493 (online)  
Nicolás Wey Gómez, "The Tropics of Empire: Why Columbus Sailed South to the Indies" (online)  
Columbus's Four Voyages (online map)

#### FURTHER READING:

Nicolás Wey Gómez, "Why Columbus Sailed South to the Indies" and "*Machina mundi*: The Moral Authority of Place in the Early Transatlantic Encounter," Introduction and Chap. 1 of *The Tropics of Empire* (on RESERVE)

## Week Three

### 1492: LANDFALL IN THE BAHAMAS

**TU 16** Christopher Columbus, Letter to Luis de Santangel, 1493 (online)  
First Voyage and Inset (online maps)

**TR 18** Christopher Columbus, Letter to Luis de Santangel, 1493, continued (online)

## Week Four

### CANNIBALS AND MEN: EXPLORATION AND COLONIZATION OF THE ANTILLES

**TU 23** Michele de Cuneo, Letter to Girolamo Annari, 1495 (online)  
Second Voyage and Inset (online maps)

### INFINITE LAND TO THE SOUTH: AMERICA AS PARADISE

**TR 25** Christopher Columbus, *Letter of the Third Voyage*, 1498 (online)  
Third Voyage and Inset (online maps)

#### FURTHER READING:

Nicolás Wey Gómez, "Columbus and the Open Geography of the Ancients," Chap. 2 in *The Tropics of Empire* (reserve)

Week Five

**MON APRIL 29 — FIRST PAPER - FIRST DRAFT DUE**

**CANNIBALISM AS DEFACEMENT: SATAN IN THE NEW WORLD**

**TU 30** Christopher Columbus, *Lettera Rarissima* (1503)  
Nicolás Wey Gómez, "A Poetics of Dismemberment: The Book of Job and the Cannibals in Columbus's Account of the Fourth Voyage, *Colonial Latin American Review* 16.1: 109-123.  
Juan de la Cosa's map, ca. 1500 (online map)  
Zorzi map, 1500  
Fourth Voyage and inset (online maps)

**MAY**

Week Five (cont'd)

**THE FALL OF MEXICO: HISTORY AS WRITTEN BY ITS VICTOR**

**TR 02** Hernán Cortés, Second Letter, 1519, pp. 47-84 (online)  
Focus on:  
**Preamble: pp. 48-51.**  
**War on Tlaxcalla: 58-62**  
**Pacification of Cholula and Embassy to Moteuczomah: 74-78**

**FURTHER READING:**

John H. Elliott, "Cortés, Velázquez and Charles V," in Hernán Cortés, *Letters to Mexico*, ed. and trans. Anthony Pagden, intro. John H. Elliott, Yale, pp. ix-xxxvii 1986 (online).

Week Six

**MON MAY 06 — FIRST PAPER - FINAL DRAFT DUE**

**TU 07** Hernán Cortés, *Second Letter*, 1519, pp. 84-end (online)  
Focus on:  
**Encounter with Moteuczomah, and imprisonment: 84-90**  
**Moteuczomah's Second Parliamente to Cortés: 98-99**  
**Description of Tenochtitlan: 105-111**  
**Defeat of Narváez and Moteuczomah's Deat: 126-133**

**FURTHER READING:**

Camilla Townsend, "Burying the White Gods: New Perspectives on the Conquest of Mexico," *The American Historical Review* 108.3 (2003): 659-687.  
Inga Clendinnen, "Fierce and Unnatural Cruelty': Cortés and the Conquest of Mexico," *Representations* 33, Special Issue: The New World (1991): 65-100.

### **SAHAGÚN'S AZTEC INFORMANTS: VISION OF THE VANQUISHED**

**TR 09** Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, *Florentine Codex* [1547-1580] (online)  
Prologues to Book I and Book XII, **Part I: pp. 45-51 and 101**

#### **FURTHER READING:**

Charles E. Dibble, "Sahagún's *Historia*," and Arthur J. Anderson, "Sahagún: Career and Character," in Arthur J. O. Anderson and Charles E. Dibble, *Florentine Codex*, 2<sup>nd</sup>. edition, revised, in 13 parts, Monographs of the School of American Research no. 14, Pt. 1-XIII (Santa Fe, NM: The School of American Research and The University of Utah, 1982), Part I: 9-23 and 29-41, respectively.

**FRI MAY 10 — TAKE-HOME MIDTERM DUE**

#### **Week Seven**

### **SAHAGÚN: THE FALL OF MEXICO**

**TU 14** Selection from Book I, *The Gods*, **Part II: pp. 1-12**  
Selection from Book XII, *The Fall of Mexico*, **Part XIII: pp. 1-45**

### **CABEZA DE VACA: CIVILIZATION, SAVAGERY, AND THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL IMPULSE**

**TR 16** Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, *Castaways*, 1542, **pp. xv-xxx and 1-26**

#### **Week Eight**

### **CABEZA DE VACA: MEDICINE MEN AND 'MALA COSA'**

**TU 21** Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, *Castaways*, 1542, **pp. 27-88**

### **CABEZA DE VACA: A PACIFIST MANIFESTO?**

**TR 23** Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, *Castaways*, 1542, **pp. 89-127**

#### **FURTHER READING:**

Rolena Adorno, "The Negotiation of Fear in Cabeza de Vaca's *Naufragios*," *Representations* 33, Special Issue: The New World (1991): 163-199.



## Week Nine

### LAS CASAS AND THE ORIGINS OF RADICAL HUMANITARIANISM

**TU 28** Bartolomé de las Casas, Sel. from *The Devastation of the Indies* (1552), pp. 1-25, 27-47, and 57-68.

#### FURTHER READING:

Helen Rand Parish, "Introduction: Las Casas's Spirituality – The Three Crises," in Bartolomé de las Casas, *The Only Way*, ed. Helen Rand Parish, trans. Francis Patrick Sullivan, S. J., pp. 9-58, New York, Paulist Press, 1992.

### THE FALL OF PERU: VISION OF THE VANQUISHED

**TR 30** Titu Cusi Yupanqui, *How the Spaniards Arrived in Peru*, 1570

#### Selection:

Author's Instructions to His Protector: 1-7

Manco Inca's Reception of the Spaniards: 9-31

Manco Inca's Imprisonment and Ransom: 37-57

Manco Inca's Call to Arms and Defeat in Cuzco: 91-105

Manco Inca's Final Instructions to His People: 113-121

#### FURTHER READING:

Raquel Chang-Rodríguez, "Writing As Resistance: Preuvian History and the *Relación* of Titu Cusi Yupanqui," Chap. 3 in *From Oral to Written Expression in Native Andean Chronicles of the Early Colonial Period*, ed. Rolena Adorno, Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University, 1982.

## JUNE

## Week Ten

### CATALINA DE ERAUSO: PROTO-FEMINISM AND THE QUESTION OF COLONIALISM

**TU 04** Catalina de Erauso, *Lieutenant Nun: Memoir of a Basque Transvestite in the New World*, ca. 1626, pp. xxv-xliv and 3-40

#### FURTHER READING:

Stephanie Merrim, "Catalina de Erauso: From Anomaly to Icon," in *Coded Encounters: Writing, Gender, and Ethnicity in Colonial Latin America*, ed. Jeffrey Cevallos-Candao, pp. 177-205, Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994.

**TR 06** Catalina de Erauso, *Lieutenant Nun: Memoir of a Basque Transvestite in the New World*, ca. 1626, pp. 41-80

**SAT JUNE 08 — SECOND PAPER, FIRST DRAFT DUE**

**Study Period and Finals Week**

**WEDS JUNE 12— SECOND PAPER, FINAL DRAFT DUE**