

History 506.391

**CABINETS OF CURIOSITY:
Travels of Exotica in the Early Modern World**

Your Intrepid Professor: Carla Nappi
Come to Class: Mondays & Wednesdays, 7.40-9.00 pm, Scott 101
Come to My Office Hours: Monday 1-2.30, College Ave Au Bon Pain (& by appt.)
My Mailbox is in: Rutgers Center for Historical Analysis, 88 College Ave
E-mail Me: cnappi@rci.rutgers.edu
Can I Bring Caffeinated Beverages to Class during these Evening Hours?:
Why yes, you most certainly can. Also, snacks.

The Course

This course follows the voyage of several materials and objects through the early modern world as we investigate their roles in creating and transforming global history. Some of the topics we will cover are: glass and its transformation of modes of visibility and observation in Europe, China and Japan; the creation of a global medical marketplace through trade in theriac and other drugs (and the varying interpretations of these drugs in Arabic, Chinese, and European medicine); sugar and spice; human artifacts such as mummies and mermaids; and the linguistic exotica of foreign languages and terms in an early modern traffic in ideas and texts. This course is simultaneously an introduction to the methods of global history and a sustained discussion of trade networks in the early modern world and notions of “exotica” created and flourishing therein.

We will be reading different kinds of historical texts in different weeks, and one of the goals of the course is to introduce you to varied kinds of historical source material: text, image, object, scent, flavor. Keeping up with the weekly reading and assignments, and thinking deeply about them, is **absolutely integral** to success in this class. You will work hard, you will eat chocolate, you will play with tarot cards, and at the end of the term you will hopefully have found a path into the study of history that excites you.

The Numbers

Class participation (including map quiz)	20%
Weekly think-piece assignments	30%
Take-home midterm	20%
Final research paper/creative project	30%
Reading deeply, reading on time, reading actively	Priceless

The Course Website

We will be using the website a lot. Every week! Make friends with it:

<https://sakai.rutgers.edu>

Log in with your Rutgers netID. You all should be signed up for the course website already – if not, let me know ASAP.

To post thinkpieces and responses:

1. Log in to Sakai
2. Click on Tab for “506:391:01 F06”
3. Click “Discussion”
4. Click the black arrow beside the category “Weekly Discussion Thread”
5. Click the black arrow next to the thread for the appropriate week (e.g., “Week 2”)
6. To post a thinkpiece: click “Reply to Topic,” compose your thinkpiece, hit “Reply”
7. To reply to another person’s thinkpiece: Click on the title of the thinkpiece you want to respond to, click “Reply to Message,” compose your thinkpiece, hit “Reply”
8. And so on, and so on. Lather, rinse, repeat. To expand a thread, always click the black arrow next to the thread title.

Requirements

1. READINGS: The readings listed for each week should be completed BY WEDNESDAY of that week. Half of Wednesday’s class time will be devoted to discussion. Come prepared to talk! Aside from the books, articles and shorter pieces will be available through e-reserve and will be posted on the course website.
2. THINKPIECES: Each week, you will be required to BOTH post a thinkpiece on the website AND respond to one other person’s thinkpiece (or more, if you’re feeling particularly chatty; tawk amongst yourselves). This is meant to get our discussion started, and to give you a chance to think deeply and creatively about the week’s readings and themes before class. Use it as a space to raise questions, work through your ideas, try a creative approach to the topic. For some weeks I will assign the theme, for most it’s completely free-form. This should not be a stressful exercise - have fun with it. Shake it like a Polaroid picture. Use the Force.
Thinkpieces & responses are due EVERY WEEK by 10 AM WEDNESDAY.
3. EXAM: The mid-term exam will be take-home style, and is meant to give you the chance to synthesize the material from class. More details as it approaches. There will be no final exam.
4. PAPER: A major goal of this course is to help you find some historical topic that inspires you. You’ll have a 10-15 page research paper or creative piece on an exotic or curious object to hand in at the end of the term. I’ll meet with each person individually to help you decide on and work through a topic. This will be due WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 13. More on this later.

Required Texts:

Susan Whitfield, *Life Along the Silk Road*

Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*

Marco Polo, *The Travels*

Daston and Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature*
Worlds Together, Worlds Apart (WTWA)



Recommended Texts:

Findlen & Smith, *Merchants and Marvels* (Includes several articles we will be reading over the course of the term)

Week 1 INTRODUCTION

Sept. 6 Introduction to the Course

Week 2 RITUAL

Sept. 11 Tea and Wine

Sept. 13 Blood-Sweating Horses of Ferghana

* Susan Whitfield, *Life Along the Silk Road* (esp. “The Merchant’s Tale” 27-54, “The Horseman’s Tale” 76-94, “The Princess’s Tale” 95-112, “The Monk’s Tale” 113-137, “The Courtesan’s Tale” 138-154, “The Nun’s Tale” 155-173, “The Artist’s Tale” 206-222)

* Li Bai, “Bringing in the Wine” and “Drinking Alone with the Moon”

Week 3 TRAVEL

Sept. 18 The City

Sept. 20 Fire

* *Travels of Marco Polo* (“Prologue” 33-45; “Kublai Khan” 113-162)

* Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities* (The entire book is great, and is a very quick read. If you’re strapped for time, focus on the first 99 pages, Pt. 1 through Pt. 6.)

* *WTWA* Ch. 1

Week 4 B O X

Sept. 25 The Vegetable Lamb

Sept. 27 Mutant oranges

* Look through part of Cassiano dal Pozzo’s Paper Museum

* Mark A. Meadow, “Merchants and Marvels: Hans Jacob Fugger and the Origins of the *Wunderkammer*”

* Lynda Sexson, *Ordinarily Sacred* (Ch. 1)

Event: **MAP QUIZ on Monday Sept. 25

Week 5 PLAGUE

Oct. 2 Theriac and Bezoar
Oct. 4 Mummies and *mumia*

- * *WTWA* Ch. 2
- * Harold Cook, "Time's Bodies: Crafting the Preparation and Preservation of Naturalia"
- * *Apologie and Treatise of Ambroise Pare* (G. Keynes, ed: Falcon Educational Books, 1951), "Of Mumia" 143-146; and "Of Bezoar" 197-200.

Week 6 ORDER

Oct. 9 Dragons
Oct. 11 Magical Fish

- * Edward Topsell, *The History of Serpents*
Front page
The Epistle Dedicatory (Browse)
To the Reader
Of Serpents in General (1-17)
Of the Dragon (153 – 173)
- * Jorge Luis Borges, "John Wilkins' Analytical Language"
- * Paula Findlen, "Inventing Nature: Commerce, Art, and Science in the Early Modern Cabinet of Curiosities"

Week 7 IMAGE & EMBLEM

Oct. 16 Tarot Cards
Oct. 18 Bees

- * Jan Swammerdam, *The Book of Nature; or, the History of Insects* (excerpt)
- * Images from Joris Hoefnagel
- * William B. Ashworth, Jr "Emblematic Natural History of the Renaissance"
- * Browse the Tarot website: <http://trionfi.com/tarot-playing-cards-museum/>

*Event: Tarot Card Assignment

Week 8 WONDER

Oct. 23 Saint Relics
Oct. 25 Monsters and Mandrakes

- * Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature* (Selection)
- * Comparative accounts from Li Shizhen

*Events: **Take-home midterm distributed Monday, Oct. 23

**Meetings this week to decide on paper topics

Week 9 SYMBOLS OF EXCHANGE

Oct. 30 Hieroglyphs

Nov. 1 Silver

* *WTWA* Ch. 3

* Athanasius Kircher, *China Illustrata* 1667 <http://shl.stanford.edu/Eyes/china/> (Selections: "Part II - On various journeys undertaken in China" Chapters 4 & 5, and "Part IV - China illustrated with miracles of nature and art")

* *Hypnerotomachia poliphili* (Brief excerpt)

Event: **Take-home midterm due Monday, Oct. 30

Week 10 NEW WORLDS, NEW SENSATIONS

Nov. 6 Glass

Nov. 8 Chocolate

* *WTWA* Ch. 4

* Timon Screech, *The Lens Within the Heart*, Ch. 5

* Marcy Norton, "Tasting Empire: Chocolate and the European Internalization of Mesoamerican Aesthetics"

* John Chamberlayne, *The Natural History of Coffee, Thee, Chocolate, Tobacco* (London, 1682)

Week 11 TERRITORY

Nov. 13 Maps and Globes

Nov. 15 Tulips

* *WTWA* Ch. 5

* Ben Schmidt, "Inventing Exoticism: The Project of Dutch Geography and the Marketing of the World, circa 1700"

* Georg Rumphius, *The Ambonese Curiosity Cabinet* 1705 (Selection)

* Plates from Albertus Seba, *Cabinet of Natural Curiosities* 1734-1765

Week 12 SCENT

Nov. 20 Perfume

Nov. 22 Turkey and Stuffing (No Class!)

* Elisabeth de Feydeau, *A Scented Palace: The Secret History of Marie Antoinette's Perfumer* ("The Touches from the Heart" 33-70, "The Basic Tenor" 73-77, 86-99, "The Palette of Jean-Louis Fargeon" and "Procedures for the Manufacture of Perfumes" 117-131)

Event: Scent assignment

Week 13 W E S T

Nov. 27 Pagoda
Nov. 29 Furs

- * Lewis & Clark journals (Selection)
- * Selected letters from Mary Wortley Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters*

Week 14 P O I S O N

Dec. 4 Spanish Fly
Dec. 6 Opium

- * *WTWA* Ch. 6
- * Thomas de Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (Selection)
- * Coleridge, *Kubla Khan*
- * Commissioner Lin's statement & An American Merchant in Canton/A British Merchant's Answer

Week 15 N O W

Dec. 11 Tasmanian tiger
Dec. 13 Corpse

- * Browse the website: <http://www.bodiestheexhibition.com/intro.html>
- * Browse the website for the Bates College cryptozoology exhibit:
<http://abacus.bates.edu/acad/museum/crypto/main.html>
- * Check out the Minnesota Association for Rogue Taxidermists:
<http://www.roguetaxidermy.com/>
- * Mary Roach, *Stiff* (Selection)
- * Lawrence Weschler, *Mr Wilson's Cabinet of Wonder* (Selection) and visit the museum website:
<http://www.mjt.org/>

Event: Final Paper Due Wednesday Dec. 13!!!