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 visuality and observation in Europe, China and Japan; the creation of a global medical marketplace through trade in theriaca 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  R I T U A L
Sept. 11  Tea and Wine
Sept. 13  Blood-Sweating Horses of Ferghana

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

Week 3  T R A V E L
Sept. 18  The City
Sept. 20  Fire

* *Travels of Marco Polo*  (“Prologue” 33-45; “Kubilai 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**

- 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”  

**Week 6**

- 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”  

**Week 7**

- 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”  

*Event: Tarot Card Assignment*

**Week 8**

- 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/](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*  
*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!)  


**Event:** Scent assignment
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 13</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 27</td>
<td>Pagoda</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 29</td>
<td>Furs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 14</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 4</td>
<td>Spanish Fly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 6</td>
<td>Opium</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* *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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 15</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 11</td>
<td>Tasmanian tiger</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 13</td>
<td>Corpse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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