The purpose of this seminar is to explore the intersections of maritime history, world history, and marine environmental history. At the center of our investigations is how humans and the groups that they coalesce into have shaped and have been shaped by their marine environments. While much of our focus will be on the last five thousand years, we will also be concerned with change and structure over the very long term, penetrating to the beginnings of the Holocene and perhaps even to the emergence of anatomically modern humans. A central aim of the seminar is to chart a course for a new ‘marine/maritime world history.’

In the broadest sense, this may be understood as a seminar in world history. The syllabus is organized along historiographical lines, not chronologically (temporally) or geographically (spatially). We will read widely in world history, environmental history, and maritime history. Naturally, there is a great deal that must be left off such a reading list. In choosing the readings, the instructor has sought to include pieces that offer provocative insights not just about the putative subject of inquiry (e.g., Polynesian seafarers or the ‘Age of Sail’) but also about the nature of historical inquiry itself. Hopefully we are touching on some of the most important themes. No doubt, new themes of importance will present themselves during the course of the semester. Students should feel free to pursue these and draw the attention of the group to them—and to their historiographical significance, if possible.

Some information about the instructor and his research and pedagogical interests (and then some) may be found here and here and here and, soon, here.

Procedures:

1. Assigned readings. Students should study, not simply read, the assigned essays. The syllabus will, invariably, be updated during the course of the semester. The instructor will inform students of this in a timely manner and post the updated version.

2. Weekly 500-word statements (not including sessions 5, 9, and 13). Students will email to the instructor by 9 a.m. on each Monday morning (save for sessions 5, 9, and 13) a 500-word observation that reflects on the arguments and evidence in the readings and concludes with a question. These short statements should be clearly and concisely written and proceed in a logical manner to the question asked. The statement should bring together elements of the various essays assigned, though it may focus on one or two or three. Students must not quote passages from the readings. This is an opportunity for students to think about the issues being raised by the authors and, based on that, to pose a question for discussion. These questions will inform the trajectory of our weekly discussions. The instructor will post the questions on the course moodle site by noon on Monday so everyone may benefit from the reflections and questions ahead of class.
3. All students are expected, indeed, required to participate in the seminar discussion. The instructor will endeavor to ensure that all voices are heard.

4. On three occasions we will (it is hoped) visit nearby sites that pursue research and public scholarship on themes directly relevant to our deliberations. The logistics for this are still being ironed out, but the hope is that we leave Wesleyan at noon and return around 5 or 6 p.m.

5. Monthly reflections on site visits (sessions 5, 9, and 13). After our visits to the three sites, students will reflect on the ways in which the site illuminated a particular theme in or brought together themes from the course materials to date, whether for that particular section of the course or the semester as a whole. These are to be 1000 words (four pages). These should be submitted via email.

6. Punctuality and common courtesy. If you can’t make it to the seminar on time, don’t come. Once the seminar has begun, do not leave. If you do leave, do not expect to be readmitted. We will take a break midway through the session each week. If you have to leave at any time for personal reasons, speak to the instructor. Students departing from and returning to the room is enormously distracting and disrespectful.

7. In-class distractions. Turn off your phones and wireless devices. Absolutely no texting, i-chatting, facebooking, or surfing the internet unless it directly relates to the seminar deliberations. Failure to adhere to these rules will result in a decision to ban any computers, i-pads, etc., from the room. This would be unfortunate.

8. Late work. Late papers will be severely penalized, often at the rate of one letter grade per day.

9. Final paper (due in exam week, exact date TBA). However, by 26 October students will have developed, in consultation with the instructor, a research topic. The proposal of that topic, to be submitted on 26 Oct., should include a one-paragraph description of the subject to be investigated, a list of the source material to be consulted (and the archive, if relevant), and a one paragraph reflection on the major theoretical/historiographical issues involved. The final paper will be ten pages in length, will employ a consistent referencing style, and will include a full bibliography. It must be submitted via email.

10. Incompletes. Incompletes will not be given except for very serious cause (for instance, incapacitating illness).

11. The grade. The grade will be determined by a student’s written work and class participation, according to the following breakdown:

- the nine two-page statement/questions = 30%
- the three four-page reflections on site visits = 30%
- the final paper = 20%
- class involvement = 20%

**The Schedule topics and readings:**
Part I. Maritime History

Session 2: 12 Sep. The ‘New Maritime History’. In the first week we explore what I like to call the ‘new maritime history’. This literature consists of recent scholarly excursions into the wider social, political, and cultural meanings of the maritime past. Just as proponents of the ‘new military history’ are sometimes referred to collectively as the ‘war and society’ school, practitioners of the ‘new maritime history’ may be deemed the ‘seafaring and society’ school. Whereas ‘traditional’ maritime history focused on straightforward narratives of travel and exploration, navigation, trade, naval power, military conflict, and technological transformation, the ‘new maritime history’ delves (some would say, ‘delves more deeply’) into topics as wide ranging as gender, ecology, ideology, politics, and class formation—cultural forms that either made maritime agency possible, or were in turn transformed by seafaring. There has been quite a substantial literature produced under this rubric (a heuristic category though it may be) in the past three decades alone, so it is unlikely that we will be able to do justice to it in a single week’s reading. Nevertheless, we’ll make some headway. Students will note that most of the essays focus on the social and cultural history of New England in the ‘Age of Sail’. This is partly by design, so as to contextualize our visit to Mystic Seaport in three weeks, but also because much new work comes out of what is sometimes referred to as the ‘Atlantic World’ (see session 7, below, for more on that field). We also read, however, two provocative essays focused on historical memory and identity in Polynesia (Dening) and in Asia and Europe (Findlay). One might ask, why not begin with ‘traditional’ maritime history and then turn to the ‘new’? My answer is that by beginning with the ‘new maritime history’, we also provide ourselves an opportunity to reflect in a more self-conscious way on what, precisely, history is—as a discipline, a craft, and as a way of approaching the life in the present. In any case, chronology is not destiny. Since a principal aim of this seminar is to chart a course for a possible ‘new maritime world history’, by definition a historiographical-cum-theoretical agenda, reflecting on the nature of history is a useful—indeed, necessary—exercise at the outset. In addition, as we will examine ‘traditional’ maritime history in week 2, it is hoped that the initial theoretical reflection in week 1 will serve us well in assessing some of the less obvious nuance of, as well as the unspoken assumptions that drove, the earlier historiography.

A representative selection of titles in the ‘new maritime history’:

Greg Dening, “Performing on the Beaches of the Mind: An Essay,” History and Theory 41, 1 (2002): 1-24. [In this essay on the Pacific and Herman Melville, and much else besides, Dening does a nice job expressing what it means to research and write history. He was on the forefront of the productive cross-fertilization of anthropology and history (the offspring of which was sometimes referred to as ‘ethnohistory’, though that term has largely been abandoned in recent years) in the 1970s and ‘80s. For an assessment of Dening’s career, see: Richard T. Vann, ‘Mr. Dening’s Good Language,’ History and Theory 39, 1 (Feb 2000): 77-87.]


Session 3: 19 Sep. ‘Traditional Maritime History’. This week, as noted above, we will explore a representative sampling of authors in what I am calling ‘traditional’ maritime history. It is likely that some of these authors would object to being lumped into this category. Suffice it to say that ‘traditional’ has no pejorative connotations—at least, none are intended. As we shall see, there is much of value in the earlier generation of maritime historical scholarship, and we may even perceive areas of overlap with the ‘new’ maritime history, not to mention world history and environmental history. The selection of essays below emphasizes the history of naval power. This is a conscious decision of the instructor, in large part because we deal with nautical architecture and technology issues in the third week, and we take up questions of trade, navigation, and exploration in parts II and III of the seminar. Included in the essays given here are several pieces dealing with the work of Alfred Thayer Mahan, president of the Naval War College in the late nineteenth century and author of the celebrated series of lectures, *The Influence of Sea Power on History*. (You can consult his written work here.) Mahan foreshadowed and, in many ways, predicted the rise of the US Navy as the basis for the nation’s emergence as a global superpower in the mid twentieth century; as a result he is regarded with near religious devotion in American naval- and naval-history circles and casts a long shadow over maritime history in general.


Maritime history is meaningless without boats, a point that is often forgotten, so in this week we situate longstanding arguments about ship design in the context of a more recent literature on underwater archeology. Again, these are vast subjects, but the hope is that the following essays offer a glimpse of the richness and volatility of these evolving fields.


George F. Bass, ‘New Techniques of Archaeology and Greek Shipwrecks of the Sixth and Fifth Centuries BC,’ Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society 150, 1 (Mar 2006): 1-14. Bass was the pioneer in going underwater for archeology. See also Casson’s essay below for just one result of his work.


Ben R. Finney, 'Voyaging Canoes and the Settlement of Polynesia,' *Science*, n.s., 196, 4296 (Jun 17, 1977): 1277-1285. The study of the long history of human settlement in the Pacific has combined traditional ‘above-ground’ archeology with innovative approaches to maritime history. Finney has been a leader here. Kirch, whom we read next week, is another important contributor to a new and broader understanding of the Polynesian world.


Also visit: Institute of Nautical Archeology, Texas A&M, set up by George Bass and colleagues in the 1960s.

Session 5: 3 Oct. Mystic Seaport.


**Part II. World History: Oceanic Frameworks**

Session 6: 10 Oct. The rise of World History. World history is often regarded as a new field in the discipline, but in fact it is as old as the craft of history itself. (Today, Herodotus would be regarded as a world historian.) For many years historians in the field of ‘world history’ labored in obscurity, marginalized by the increasing obsession with ‘area studies’ specializations that shaped the wider discipline in the decades after World War II. More recently, since about 1990 and the remembered collapse of communism and the end of the Cold War, world history has emerged as one of the most exciting fields in history. In large part (I would argue) this is because a global or ‘total’ perspective forces historians to constantly question the very nature of their disciplinary practices and deeper theoretical commitments. The readings for this week serve to
offer an introduction to the major figures and questions that have shaped world history. The first three essays come from a conference that was held here at Wesleyan in 1994.


Charles W. Hendrick Jr., ‘The Ethics of World History,’ Journal of World History 16, 1 (Mar 2005): 33-49 [Jerry Bentley and Arif Dirlik also offer useful discussions of ethical and moral issues in the study and teaching of world history]

Session 7: 17 Oct. The Rise of Oceanic Frameworks: Large bodies of water were taken for granted by historians until the work of Fernand Braudel, particularly his magnum opus on the Mediterranean, which you will see (and have seen already) referenced throughout our readings. You can learn more about Braudel and the ‘Annales school’ here, read a reflection on the world (both geographical and theoretical) according to Braudel here, a review essay on Braudel by William McNeill here, and a ‘personal testimony’ (prompted by William McNeill) here. Roughly at the same time, Bernard Bailyn began developing his notion of Atlantic History. Whereas Braudel’s understanding of the significance of geography (and large bodies of water in particular) relied on very long time frames (la longue durée) and ecological and geographical ‘structures’, Bailyn’s historical project was less self-consciously theoretical and emphasized a fairly limited time frame (the early modern world, roughly 1500-1800), that is, European colonialism in North America and the rise of the British Empire and the early American republic. As a result, Braudel’s conceptualization found a ready reception in world-historical circles, whereas Bailyn’s work remained largely within the ambit of American and British imperial history.


Martin W. Lewis and Karen Wigen, ‘A Maritime Response to the Crisis in Area Studies,’ *Geographical Review* 89, 2, (Apr 1999): 161-168 [see also the introductory statement to the collection of essays of which this and Bentley’s piece are included, describing Duke University’s ‘Oceans Connect’ program; and read all about the (now defunct?) program [here.](#) This essay summarizes key points in Lewis and Wigen’s co-authored book, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* (Berkeley 1997). The book engendered some vigorous critiques, including:


Martin W. Lewis and Kären E. Wigen, ‘Third Worldism or Globalism? Reply to James M. Blaut’s Review of *The Myth of Continents,*’ *Journal of World History* 11, 1 (Spring 2000): 81-92. To which Blaut offered the following rejoinder:

James M. Blaut, ‘On Myths and Maps: A Rejoinder to Lewis and Wigen,’ *Journal of World History*, 11, 1 (Spring 2000): 93-100


Ben Finney, ‘The Other One-Third of the Globe,’ *Journal of World History* 5, 2 (Fall 1994): 273-297 [this essay revisits much of what is in his earlier essays, above, listed for week 3, but updated to reflect an argument for understanding the Pacific Ocean as a world region]


André Wink, ‘From the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean: Medieval History in Geographic Perspective,’ *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44, 3 (Jul 2002): 416-445

And a review of two recent attempts to bring World History and Maritime History together: Rainer F. Buschmann, ‘Review of *Maritime History as World History* by Daniel

NOTE: 24 Oct is Fall Break


Dan Smail, ‘In the Grip of Sacred History,’ The American Historical Review 110, 5 (December 2005): 1337-1361


Session 9: 7 Nov. The Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center


Erlandson, of the Natural History Museum in Washington, D.C., is the senior editor of a recent volume entitled, *Human Impacts on Ancient Marine Ecosystems: A Global Perspective*, a review of which may be read [here](#). That his views have made it into the mainstream is indicated by a recent article in *Science*: Torben C. Rick and Jon M. Erlandson, *Coastal Exploitation*, *Science* n. s., 325, 5943 (Aug. 21, 2009): 952-953


In addition: The following essays on Foxwoods and the Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center should be read while keeping in mind the ethical questions raised by Hendrick, Bentley, and Dirlik in week 5.


**Part III. Marine History?**

Session 10: 14 Nov. Environmental History and Coastal/Marine Habitats


W. Jeffrey Bolster, ‘Opportunities in Marine Environmental History,’ *Environmental History* 11, 3 (Jul 2006): 567-597


Session 11: 21 Nov. Oceanography


Helen M. Rozwadowski, ‘Small World: Forging a Scientific Maritime Culture for Oceanography,’ *Isis* 87, 3 (Sep 1996): 409-429 [this essay is an early excerpt of portions of Rozwadowski’s book, *Fathoming the Ocean*, which was widely reviewed, including in *Science* magazine!]


Then there is the Robert Ballard phenomenon!


Ballard’s TED talk, mostly about US undersea exploration, or the lack thereof

Also: Institute for Archeological Oceanography, URI, founded by Robert Ballard. And the Institute for Exploration, Mystic Aquarium

Ballard is also National Geographic’s ‘Explorer in Residence’. I’m not sure what that entails, but it’s a pretty nice title.


John Temple Swing, ‘What Future for the Oceans?’ *Foreign Affairs* 82, 5 (Sep-Oct 2003): 139-152


Seasteading? Colonizing the oceans. And also see the Seasteading Institute’s view on the Details article.

Too little oxygen in the world’s oceans? Carl Zimmer thinks so. He points to Daniel Pauly’s recent work among others.

Fisheries and biodiversity? Previously, Daniel Pauly was concerned with fisheries and the threat to Oceanic Biodiversity. And here.

The new superpowers and the future of global conflict? Robert Kaplan has some ideas about that, centering on the Indian Ocean. See also his essay in the Mar-Apr issue of Foreign Affairs [via Olin].

Rising Sea Levels and the new refugees? Should we call this ‘De-Seasteading’?

Piracy?

Session 13: 5 Dec. UConn’s Marine Science Center at Avery Point

Readings? [checking with H. Rozwadowski on this.]