

University of North Texas
Department of History

HIST 4261: Pirates, Smugglers, and States in the Atlantic World, 1600-1856

INTERNET CLASS

Dr. Chet

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When emailing, please type "HIST 4261" in the subject line.

Piracy has garnered renewed interest in both popular culture and academic circles over the course of the last generation. The sudden visibility of modern pirates and spectacular terrorist attacks by non-state malefactors has likely sparked curiosity about "enemies of all mankind" of generations past. But the questioning of the legitimacy of the nation state and of state sovereignty doubtless explains this interest in pirates as well. Pirates have always represented a challenge to states – specifically, states' claim to exclusive legitimate authority. In *City of God*, St. Augustine tells of a confrontation between Alexander the Great and a captured pirate captain. Asked to justify his infestation of the sea, the pirate charged that he and Alexander were in the same line of work – "But because I do it with a small craft, I am called a pirate; because you have a mighty navy, you are called an emperor."

St. Augustine addresses the pirate's philosophical and ethical challenge to the king by insisting that kings and pirates were not similar; that one wields force justly and the other unjustly; that one possesses legitimate authority and the other does not. Western societies seem more uncertain than St. Augustine. Within academia, this discomfort with the construct of the state is reflected in the rise of Atlantic history, global history, transnational history, and borderlands history. These methodologies encourage scholars and students to approach their topics with new frameworks as alternatives to the established framework of national histories, focused on national cultures bounded by national boundaries.

Piracy is usually understood as a gauge of state authority at sea and port. Atlantic piracy's "golden age," therefore, is seen as a symptom of weak states that could not project power at a distance. By contrast, many of the major economic, cultural and political developments that mark the transition of the Atlantic World into the modern era – a commercial revolution, industrialization, the demise of Atlantic piracy, the outlawing of the Atlantic slave trade, republican awakening in Latin America, and the ascent of Britain and United States to a position of global preeminence – are attributed to the increased ability of the British and United States navies to occupy, pacify and police the Atlantic Ocean. Taming and civilizing this wild maritime frontier was a monumental undertaking. Failures of modern navies – equipped with radar, aircraft and satellites – to exert control over oceanic activity speaks to the difficulties that such an enterprise would have entailed in the age of sail. Yet some historians argue that Britain's Royal Navy did achieve mastery over the Atlantic Ocean's vast expanses. These scholars of Atlantic piracy depict the Royal Navy as an effective police force that, in the course

of a single generation (1697-1730), transformed the Atlantic from a violent frontier into a locus of orderly commerce.

This course introduces students to two competing narratives about the rise and fall of Atlantic piracy. Students will be asked to assess these competing narratives on the strength of evidence.

There are no prerequisites for this course.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. Recognize historical narratives as arguments which can be evaluated based on evidence.
2. Know the general history of Atlantic piracy.
3. Analytical skills – compare and evaluate competing analyses of the rise and fall of Atlantic piracy.
4. Construct an independent interpretation of Atlantic piracy and state formation.
5. Writing skills – learn how to compose an argumentative essay, in which one formulates an analytical argument, lists relevant evidence, and then explains how the evidence supports the argument.

COMMUNICATION: Internet courses are reading- and writing-intensive – all learning content will be delivered through the textbooks and materials posted online. Because of how important communication is in an online class, students are expected to log onto the course at least three evenly spaced times a week. Please check the Announcements area first for updates and other important information. This course is delivered via Canvas Learn. Students must use their UNT accounts to log into the course from the UNT Canvas Learn page. The course is delivered in a Unit format. Each Unit folder contains the necessary directions for students to navigate and complete that Unit's assignments. Students are expected to work through Unit folders according to a schedule, but may advance at a faster pace. However, exams can be submitted **ONLY** during their availability period. To correspond with me, please use email (guy.chet@unt.edu), rather than Canvas. It is too easy for me to miss Canvas messages; please use email. When emailing, please type "HIST 4260" in the subject line.

GRADING: Students are expected to perform the reading assignments, post four discussion responses on the readings, comment on other students' posts, and complete two exams. Assignments are graded on a scale of 0 to 100, with the final course grade assigned according to the following scale: A (90-100), B (80-89), C (70-79), D (60-69), F (0-59). In grading the exams, I pay close attention to both substance and form (grammar, spelling, and clarity). In evaluating substance, I examine whether the author has demonstrated a critical, historical understanding of the material by presenting and substantiating a thesis (a historical argument). In order to compute the final course grade, I will add the relative values of each student's number grades for the 4 online discussions (10% each), mid-term (20%), and the final examination (40%). Assignments will be graded within 7-10 days of the assignment deadline. Grades will be posted on Canvas for students.

LATE SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN WORK: Assignments must be completed by the due date for full credit. Due to the nature of online discussions, late submissions are not possible and will

not be accepted for any reason. Exams submitted after the deadline will incur a 5-point late-penalty for the first hour, and 5 additional points for every hour thereafter.

TIME COMMITMENT: Online courses are often more time intensive than traditional courses. Students should anticipate at least 8 hours per week for studying materials and completing discussions and exams as applicable. Falling behind schedule in this course will be detrimental to a student's final grade, since the concepts covered are cumulative – not becoming proficient with information in a particular Unit folder will lead to low scores for that Unit's assignment and also in subsequent weeks.

INTERACTION AND NETIQUETTE: Communication online is different from face-to-face communication in class. Be sure to use proper "netiquette" when communicating with classmates. Remember that your fellow students cannot see your gestures and facial expression, nor hear the tone of your voice. All these elements figure prominently in our face-to-face communications without us really noticing them. Please keep this in mind when commenting on others' work or just interacting with classmates. Students are expected to treat others in this class with courtesy and respect, as they themselves would like to be treated. Remember that although you may never meet many of your classmates, you can still create lasting friendships in the online environment. Moreover, some classmates might live nearby. During your introductions, take a minute to let others know what town you live in. You may find that you can meet classmates at a local coffee shop for ongoing conversation on your coursework. To learn more about online etiquette, visit the following Website:
<http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html>

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND PLAGIARISM: As a student-centered public research university, the University of North Texas promotes the integrity of the learning process by establishing and enforcing academic standards. Academic dishonesty breaches the mutual trust necessary in an academic environment and undermines all scholarship. Students are held accountable for understanding UNT's policy on academic integrity. Any violations of this policy may result in a 0 or F on the particular assignment or an F in the course.

STUDENT SUCCESS AT UNT: Students who have trouble keeping up with assignments should inform the professor as early as possible. "Succeed at UNT" provides students support services and resources for success. Moreover, the History Department's Help Center (WH #220, 940-565-4772) and the History Department Library (WH #267, 940-369-7681) are staffed by graduate students who can assist students with tutoring and essay writing advice.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: Students with special circumstances covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act should register with the Office of Disability Accommodation, and also inform the instructor of the class. Reasonable adjustments will be made to accommodate the special needs of students with disabilities where such adjustments are necessary to provide equality of educational access.

NOTICE FOR F-1 STUDENTS: If an F-1 student is unsure about his or her need to participate in an on-campus experiential component for this course, s/he should contact the UNT

International Student and Scholar Services Office (telephone 940-565-2195 or email internationaladvising@unt.edu) to get clarification before the one-week deadline.

REQUIRED TEXTS (3 BOOKS & 4 ARTICLES):

William Langewiesche, *The Outlaw Sea: A World of Freedom, Chaos, and Crime* (North Point Press, 2004). ISBN 978-0865477223. Any edition of this textbook is good and acceptable for this class. **[Available at bookstore or online.]**

Read Chapters 1,2, and 3 (pp.3-99): “An Ocean World,” “The Wave Makers,” “To the Ramparts.” [I strongly recommend also Chapter 6, “On the Beach,” about ship breaking. It is wholly unrelated to this class, so you don’t need to read it, but it’s fascinating. If you read it, I promise you won’t regret it.]

Marcus Rediker, *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age* (Beacon Press, 2005). ISBN 978-0807050255. Any edition of this textbook is good and acceptable for this class. **[Available at bookstore or online.]**

David Starkey, “Introduction.” In Starkey, van Eyck van Heslinga, and de Moor, *Pirates and Privateers: New Perspectives on the War on Trade in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (University of Exeter Press, 1997), 1-4. **[Uploaded as pdf on Canvas.]**

Robert Ritchie, “Government Measures against Piracy and Privateering in the Atlantic Area, 1750–1850.” In Starkey, van Eyck van Heslinga, and de Moor, *Pirates and Privateers: New Perspectives on the War on Trade in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (University of Exeter Press, 1997), 10–28. **[Uploaded as pdf on Canvas.]**

Richard Harding, “*Hostis Humani Generis*: The Pirate as Outlaw in the Early Modern Law of the Sea.” In Claire Jowitt, *Pirates? The Politics of Plunder, 1550-1650* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 20-38. **[Uploaded as pdf on Canvas.]**

Douglas Burgess, “Trial and Error: Piracy Trials in England and Its Colonies, 1696-1726.” In David Head, *The Golden Age of Piracy: The Rise, Fall, and Enduring Popularity of Pirates* (University of Georgia Press, 2018), 75-88. **[Uploaded as pdf on Canvas.]**

OPTIONAL:

David Wilson, “Protecting Trade by Suppressing Pirates: British Colonial and Metropolitan Responses.” In David Head, *The Golden Age of Piracy: The Rise, Fall, and Enduring Popularity of Pirates* (University of Georgia Press, 2018), 89-110. **[Uploaded as pdf on Canvas.]**

Guy Chet, *The Ocean Is a Wilderness: Atlantic Piracy and the Limits of State Authority, 1688-1856* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2014).¹ ISBN 978-1-62534-085-6. Any edition of this textbook is good and acceptable for this class. **[Available at bookstore or online.]**

¹ Royalties from copies of this book sold at the UNT bookstore will be donated to charity.