

Hello! This is the syllabus from the last time I taught this class. I will be updating some things over the summer but the basic structure and expectations will be similar in fall 2025 (including the “read for Monday, do stuff in class on Wednesday” rhythm). Send me an email if you have any questions.

MW 3:30-5pm
Van Pelt 124 (Class of 1968 Seminar)

Dr. Ian Petrie

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Office: Van Pelt 147 (Center for Teaching and Learning)
(the suite adjacent to our classroom)

Communicating With Me

I'm leading with this because I think it is important. I try to stay on top of email and will always endeavor to reply to you within a day. If I don't, ping me -- I will be grateful for the reminder (and I apologize in advance should it come to this). I would also encourage you to be proactive and open with me: if there are obstacles you foresee or that you encounter, let me know and we'll figure out a plan. The sooner I know about something, the sooner I can try to be of help. Just ask. (See also below re: late days for projects.)

I am on campus most every day. In theory, I may be working from home one day each week, but even then I would be available for a Zoom chat (and heck, I'd bike over to meet in person if you prefer). Because I'm available most of the time, I don't have set office hours. But I want to emphasize that I can meet with you **in any of my available hours** during the week, as visible via my Calendly. And if my Calendly hours don't work for you, we can do an evening or weekend Zoom or meeting on campus. (I am not seeking to insert myself into your weekend or evening, but I know that your lives are complicated and busy and I genuinely want to be available to you.)

The process for your projects will include mandatory meetings with me. This is meant to be helpful not burdensome.

Schedule & Readings

Readings listed under a given date are to be read for that day's class. All readings are available on Canvas. Most of the time, we read for Monday and do things on Wednesday that won't require you to do any preparation (e.g. we will examine primary sources, work on research for your projects, etc.). I will be adding more details about our Wednesday tasks. *The plans for Wednesdays may shift depending on our progress or interests but no change will ever involve additional work or an earlier deadline.*

Week 1: Introductions

W Aug. 31

Week 2: Ancient Connections

M Sept. 5 - Labor Day, no class

W Sept. 7

Response Paper Option 1 due by class (click on link to see guidelines for the paper)

- Edward Alpers, *The Indian Ocean in World History* (Oxford, 2017), [Ch. 1](#) and [Ch. 2](#)
- E.H. Seland, "[Networks and Social Cohesion in Ancient Indian Ocean Trade: Geography, Ethnicity, Religion.](#)" *Journal of Global History* 8, 3 (2013): 373–390.

Key concepts to define: networks; trade diasporas; cohesion

Look carefully at the geography of the three networks - where are they active?

Describe in your own words the "logic" of each of the three networks.

- Grant Parker, "[Ex Oriente Luxuria: Indian Commodities and Roman Experience.](#)" *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 45, 1 (2002): 40–95.

What is Parker's overall argument?

What "Indian" commodities appear to have been significant in Roman life?

How (and by whom) were they used? Where did they come from?

On what points do literary sources and archaeological evidence agree/disagree?

How did Roman authors perceive India? How did they perceive trade?

Week 3: Buddhist Networks

M Sept 12

[Response Paper Option 2 due by class](#) (click on link to see guidelines for the paper)

- Tansen Sen, "[The Travel Records of Chinese Pilgrims Faxian, Xuanzang, and Yijing.](#)" *Education About Asia* 11 (2006): 24-33

How were religion & trade intertwined in connections between China and India?

How did Chinese Buddhists perceive India?

How did Indian Buddhists perceive China?

- Tilman Frasch, "[A Buddhist Network in the Bay of Bengal: Relations Between Bodhgaya, Burma and Sri Lanka, c. 300-1300.](#)" in C. Guillot et al., eds., *From the Mediterranean to the China Sea* (Wiesbaden, 1998), pp. 69-92.

I've added a map with some of the key locations mentioned.

Don't be deterred by the density of this chapter; I know there are a lot of

unfamiliar names of rulers, places, schools of thought, etc.

Connected to the Sen piece, what do we learn about how various places in the Buddhist world perceived themselves and each other?

Who (and what) were on the move across the Bay of Bengal? For what purposes?

- Andrea Acri, ["Maritime Buddhism,"](#) *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion* (2018).

This survey broadens and deepens our understanding of the movements of monks and others in the Buddhist world from Sen's short introduction. Where and why were monks and other Buddhists traveling?

What does Acri see as the key factors in the spread of Buddhism?

Why does he see the study of "maritime Buddhism" as important?

Are there maritime elements to religious practices?

W Sept 14

- introduction to research & presentation tools we'll be using

Week 4: Material Traces

M Sept 19

Response Paper Option 3 due by class (click on link to see guidelines for the paper)

- [Neil MacGregor, *A History of the World in 100 Objects* \(New York, 2011\), pp. xv-xxvi, 379-90](#)
- [Michael Flecker, "A Ninth-Century AD Arab or Indian Shipwreck in Indonesia: First Evidence for Direct Trade with China," *World Archaeology* 32 \(2001\): 335-54.](#)
- [Adria LaViolette, "Swahili Cosmopolitanism in Africa & the Indian Ocean World, A.D. 600-1500," *Archaeologies* 4 \(2008\): 24-49.](#)
- These readings are intended to broaden our sense of what constitutes evidence and how we might think about objects. Try to put these readings in dialogue with other readings we've had thus far.
- What is Neil MacGregor's thesis or goal as he introduces the British Museum's *History or the World in 100 Objects*? Do you find it credible or useful? What does he see as the potential gains in studying world history through objects? What does he concede might be weaknesses of such an approach?
- What is the significance of the wreck excavated by Flecker? What questions are raised by the ship and its contents? How does Flecker attempt to answer them?

- LaViolette presents a very different sort of archaeological paper. What is her argument? (Try to get a sense for what interpretations she's arguing against or seeking to modify.) How does archaeological research alter our understanding of coastal East African history? Do you find her attempt to reconstruct Swahili culture and identity from the material remains persuasive? Why or why not?

W Sept 21

- Online sources for objects & images
Preliminary port research

Week 5: Jewish Networks

M Sept 26

Response Paper Option 4 due by class (click on link to see guidelines for the paper)

- Stewart Gordon, ["Pepper and Partnerships: Abraham bin Yiju, 1120-1160 CE"](#) in *When Asia Was the World* (Boston, 2008), pp. 75-96.
- S.D. Goitein, ["Portrait of a Medieval India Trader: Three Letters from the Cairo Geniza,"](#) *Bull. School of Oriental & African Studies* 50 (1987): 449-64.
- Elizabeth Lambourn and Philip Ackerman-Lieberman, ["Chinese Porcelain and the Material Taxonomies of Medieval Rabbinic Law: Encounters With Disruptive Substances in Twelfth-Century Yemen,"](#) in Lambourn, ed., *Legal Encounters on the Medieval Globe* (Kalamazoo, 2017), pp. 199-229.

These readings are all derived from the Cairo Geniza - do come prepared to explain the origin and nature of this "archive"! Gordon's chapter gives a nice, concise account of this mercantile network. Keep track of the important places (or nodes?). What were the important commodities? How were business relationships made and maintained? To what extent do we see "cross-cultural" relationships forming? Compare the nature of this network with the previous examples we have studied (be prepared to make explicit reference to Seland's paper in this regard).

The Goitein paper presents some samples of the sources in the Geniza document. Try to read them closely - what do they reveal about life and relationships at this time?

Lastly, Lambourn and Ackerman's paper takes a fragmentary inquiry (the Geniza is an archive of fragments!) and tries to unpack the context in which it was made, so as to give us one way of imagining what specific trade goods were being imported and, more interestingly, what their cultural significance was. This is a detailed paper, but I think they do a good job of explaining

things. Try to give it a careful read and come prepared to explain the key arguments and reconstructions/hypotheses.

W Sept. 28

- Aparna Kapadia, "Centuries Before the Europeans Landed, Gujarat's Cambay was a Melting Pot of Trade and Culture," *Scroll.in* (August 14, 2022)
- work on port research in class and sign up to meet with me on Thursday or Friday.
This is a required meeting! Sign up here.

RF: Meet with Petrie

Week 6: An Islamic Sea?

M Oct 3

- Alpers, [Ch. 3](#) [Download Ch. 3](#)
- [Michael Pearson](#) "Islamic trade, shipping, port-states and merchant communities in the Indian Ocean, seventh to sixteenth centuries" in *The New Cambridge History of Islam* (Cambridge, 2010), 3: 317-65. See the [map](#) to accompany this chapter.
- [Russell Jones](#) , "Ten Conversion Myths from Indonesia," in N. Levtzion, ed., *Conversion to Islam* (New York, 1979), pp. 129-58.
- Consult the [map](#) which accompanies Pearson as you do your readings. Try to keep track, across the two pieces, of key locations. Also make an effort to have a basic timeline in your mind. Some of the ports referred to will undoubtedly be present in the port-folio assignment, so do make note if one or more seems especially interesting to you.

What networks -- discrete or overlapping -- are of importance in understanding the spread of Islam across the Indian Ocean world? Who are the key actors? (Or is this subject to debate?) How does today's material compare to the thoughts about networks in the Seland article we read in week 2?

What do the "conversion myths" presented by Jones and the "origin narratives" related by Pearson, tell us about the fashioning of Islamic identities on "the periphery" of the Muslim world? (Here, we might see some connections to Tansen Sen's piece from Week 3.)

W Oct 5

work on projects in class

Week 7: Early Modern Empires - The Ming

M Oct 10

Listen to the BBC or read Sen's paper - your choice!

- Listen to "The Ming Voyages" from the BBC Radio 4 program *In Our Time*: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b015p8c2>
- [Tansen Sen](#) "The impact of Zheng He's expeditions on Indian Ocean interactions," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 79 (2016): 609-36.
- Drawing on the radio show (which features scholars Craig Clunas, Rana Mitter and Julia Lovell) or Sen's article, what were the motivations behind the Zheng He voyages? (Here you might think about imperial China's view of itself in the world and its conventions for dealing with other places, and also consider the particular circumstances of the Yongle emperor.)
 - What do we know about Zheng He and the crews in his fleet?
 - Why did the voyages come to an end?
 - What types of evidence do we have for the voyages? What are their strengths or limitations?
 - How does Sen ultimately characterize the voyages?

W Oct 12

- **NO CLASS** - work on projects; please schedule a check-in with Petrie on W, R or F

Week 8: The Portuguese Empire / Port Projects Due!

M Oct 17

- Alpers, [Ch. 4](#)
- Zoltan Biedermann, "[The Portuguese Estado da India \(Empire in Asia\)](#)," ad "[The Portuguese Estado da India \(Empire in Asia\)](#)," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia* (2020).
- Chandra Richard de Silva, "[Beyond the Cape: The Portuguese encounter with the peoples of South Asia](#)" in S. Schwartz, ed., *Implicit Understandings* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 295-322.

W Oct 19

work on projects

**** Port-olio projects due Friday Oct. 21 @ 5pm ****

Week 9: Early Modern Merchants

M Oct 24

- [Sebough Aslanian](#) "The Salt in a Merchant's Letter: The Culture of Julfan Correspondence in the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean," *Journal of World History* 19 (2008): 127-88. **Pages 174-87 are optional!**
- [Nancy Um](#) "Aromatics, Stimulants, and their Vessels: The Material Culture and Rites of Merchant Interaction in Eighteenth-Century Mocha" in S. Babaie & M. Gibson, eds., *The Mercantile Effect: Art and Exchange in the Islamicate World during the 17th and 18th Centuries* (London, 2017), pp. 63-73.

If you prefer, you can listen to this podcast with Nancy Um - it's fun! Do note the images included on the page.

Recall the discussion of networks in Seland and the ways in which relationships were made and maintained among the Jewish merchants we read about. How does the Armenian network reconstructed by Aslanian compare?

W Oct 26

Putting projects into Scalar (getting started at least)

<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/guide2/index> [Links to an external site.](#)

Week 10: "Professor, what's another word for pirate treasure?"

M Oct 31

No class - Happy Halloween!

W Nov. 2

- [Sebastian Prange](#) "A Trade of No Dishonor: Piracy, Commerce, and Community in the Western Indian Ocean, Twelfth to Sixteenth Century," *American Historical Review* 116 (2011): 1269-93.
- Mark Hanna, ["The Rise of the Red Sea Pirates, 1688-1696."](#) *Pirate Nests and the Rise of the British Empire, 1570-1640* (Chapel Hill, 2015), pp. 183-221.
- [Patricia Risso](#) "Cross-Cultural Perceptions of Piracy: Maritime Violence in the Western Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf Region during a Long Eighteenth Century," *Journal of World History* 12 (2001): 293-319.

Across the readings:

Who is a "pirate"?

Who gets to define that role?

What does piracy entail?

Where does piracy fit in amongst other forms of maritime violence?

Where does piracy fit in amongst maritime (or maritime-adjacent) ways of life?

Week 11: Slavery / Special Collections

M Nov. 7

- [Gwyn Campbell](#), "Slavery and the Trans-Indian Ocean World Slave Trade: A Historical Outline," in H.P. Ray and E. Alpers, eds., *Cross Currents and Community Networks* (New Delhi, 2007), pp. 286-305.
- [Alexander Geelen et al.](#) "On the Run: Runaway Slaves and Their Social Networks in Eighteenth-Century Cochin," *Journal of Social History*, 54 (2020): 66-87.
- [Edward Alpers](#) "The Other Middle Passage: The African Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean," in E. Christopher et al., eds., *Many Middle Passages: Forced Migration and the Making of the Modern World* (Berkeley, 2007), pp. 20-38.

W Nov. 9

- we meet on the 6th floor of Van Pelt

Week 12: Slavery, Emancipation & Indenture: Subaltern Lives in Mauritius

M Nov 14

- Megan Vaughan, "[Slavery and Colonial Identity in Eighteenth-Century Mauritius.](#)" *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 8 (1998): 189–214.
- Richard B. Allen, "[Marie Rozette & Her World: Class, Ethnicity, Gender, and Race in Late 18th- and Early 19-Century Mauritius.](#)" *Journal of Social History* 45(2011): 345–365.
- Vishwanadan Govinden, "[Subjects of History: Gokoola and Jhumun Giri Gosye, Indentured Migrants to Mauritius,](#)" *Man in India* 92 (2012): 333-52 + [photos](#) accompanying the article

These readings build off last week's reading with some case studies of unfree labor in 18th and 19th century Mauritius.

Megan Vaughan's article surveys 18th century Mauritius, and particularly its capital, Port Louis. How does she characterize this place? What various people or populations were found there? What hierarchies structured this society? In what ways were identifying characteristics such as race ambiguous or subject to change? Pick one or two examples that you think are important for us to

consider. (Formerly a professor at Cambridge, Megan Vaughan is now at the Institute for Advanced Study at the University of London.)

Richard Allen presents a case study of one woman, Marie Rozette. Come prepared to sketch out the 'arc' of her life story. How does this one life illustrate larger patterns or changes in the history of Mauritius and its place within the Indian Ocean world and the world economy? (Professor Allen is at Framingham State University in Massachusetts.)

Vishwanaden Govinden gives us two more case studies of Indian indentured laborers. Again, try to connect the "microhistory" of the individual lives with the "big picture" historical changes on the island. What was the arc of Gokoola's life? What made his advances possible? How is Govinden able to reconstruct this, and what does that tell us about the workings of the indentured labor system? What is noteworthy about the life and work of Jhumun Giri Gosye? The photos included with the published article do not exactly match the references in the text, alas. (Vishwanaden Govinden is a lecturer at the Mahatma Gandhi Institute in Mauritius.)

W Nov 16

work on Mobile People projects

- please schedule an appointment with me to discuss your project!

Week 13: Empire & Diaspora / Thanksgiving

M Nov 21

- Alpers, [ch. 5](#)
 - Sunil Amrith, ["Tamil Diasporas across the Bay of Bengal,"](#) *American Historical Review* 114 (2009): 547-72.
 - How did Tamil migration across the Bay of Bengal change over time? (e.g. who was on the move and where did they end up?)
 - What forms of culture did migrants bring with them?
 - What is the distinction between 'sojourning' and diaspora?
 - How did the rise of nationalism change circumstances for Tamils in Malaya?
 -
- Nile Green, ["Africa in Indian Ink: Urdu Articulations of Indian Settlement in East Africa,"](#) *Journal of African History* 53 (2012): 131-50.

- What argument does Green make about Indian migrants' perception of East Africa and their role there? (Do you see any connections to Amrith?)
- How does Green see this piece of travel literature as relating to the longer history of travel narratives in the Islamic world?
- Does this case study complicate our understanding of colonialism/the British Empire?

W Nov 23

- no class - Happy Thanksgiving!

Week 14: Empire & Religion

M Nov 28

These two papers both examine religious movements in the Indian Ocean in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and there are considerable commonalities in how Frost and Green frame the cultural contexts in which their historical actors lived and worked. (For example, both invoked the political scientist Benedict Anderson's notion of "imagined communities".)

Mark Ravinder Frost, ["Wider Opportunities': Religious Revival, Nationalist Awakening and the Global Dimension in Colombo, 1870-1920,"](#) *Modern Asian Studies* 36 (2002): 937-67.

What major trends does Frost associate with the late 19th century across the Indian Ocean world?

What technologies (broadly speaking) were used by Buddhist revivalists? Who are the major cultural activists described by Frost? In what ways was this an international movement?

Nile Green, ["Islam for the Indentured Indian: A Muslim Missionary in Colonial South Africa,"](#) *Bull. School of Oriental & African Studies* 71 (2008): 529-53.

I find this to be a super interesting life story and I hope you agree! If ever an article needed a map, it's this one. We'll look at one in class.

How does Green characterize the religious context of the Indian Ocean world in the late nineteenth century?

How did Ghulam Muhammad build his authority as a religious leader?

What institutions did Ghulam Muhammad build in South Africa and how did he do so?

How does Green see Ghulam Muhammad creating "a diasporic sacred geography"?

W Nov 30

- Work on projects in class

Week 15: The Indian Ocean After Empire

M Dec 5

- [Alpers, ch. 6](#)
- Willem van Schendel, "[Spatial Moments: Chittagong in Four Scenes](#)" in E. Tagliacozzo et al., eds., *Asia Inside Out: Connected Places* (Cambridge, MA, 2015), pp. 98-127.
- Robert Kaplan, "[Center Stage for the Twenty-first Century: Power Plays in the Indian Ocean,](#)" *Foreign Affairs* 88 (2009): 16-29.
- After reading Kaplan, please also take a look at this map from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (especially re: chokepoints & disputes)

W Dec 7

Work on projects

Week 16:

M Dec 12

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Grading Scheme

Participation (weeks 2-8) - 15%

Participation (weeks 9-15) - 15%

Response Paper 1 - 5%

Response Paper 2 - 5%

Port-folio Project (due 10/21) - 30%

Mobile People Project (due 12/22) - 30%

Grading Policies

Deadlines are firm for the two response papers (i.e. to be submitted by 3:30pm on the day they are due).

For the projects, everyone gets five "life happens" days that you can apply, no explanation needed, to get an extension (e.g., you use two for your port-folio project and two for your mobile people project).

The Port-folio Project

For this project, you'll pick a medieval or early modern (ca. 1000-1800) port in the Indian Ocean and assemble a "port-folio" of information pertaining to the history of that place. Imagine you're presenting a mixture of text and visuals for a (digital) museum audience. While you will be using scholarly works, the tone is for a general audience. How you decide to combine words and images is up to you (e.g. you could write relatively more in image captions, if you really lean into the visual element. We will build the projects on a platform called Scalar -- a collaborative class project in which everyone retains "ownership" of their own project.

For possible ports, peruse the maps in Alpers or in Pearson. A list of possibilities is at the bottom of this page.

The particular array you'll assemble will depend on your interests and what is available for your port. Elements could include:

- An historical map of the city
- An historical illustration of the city
- A contemporary photo of a historical site
- A diagram from archaeological excavations
- A map you make using [StoryMap](#). or another tool (e.g. illustrating trade to and from the port)
- An annotated excerpt from a historical source (e.g. a traveler's account)

Each port may suggest a different story, but we'll hope to answer these sorts of questions:

- What was the significance of this port in the commerce, politics or culture of the Indian Ocean?
- When was it most significant? What accounted for its rise (or fall)?
- What were the most important goods shipped in and out?
- Who lived (or passed through) there?
- What can we learn from the layout and architecture of the port?

You should aim to find 6-10 secondary sources. (We'll spend time in class doing this.) In some cases you may be able to find translated primary sources in our library. In others, you can pull primary source quotes from the scholarship.

Steps in the process:

- pick a port (or look for a port in a region that interests you) and start with a Franklin catalog search for relevant books and the databases Historical Abstracts and Bibliography of Asian Studies (as relevant) for scholarly articles. Such sources can provide basic information, apt primary source quotations to highlight or relevant images. Follow their citations to find more sources.
- for images search in the Digital Public Library of America ([DPLALinks to an external site.](#)) and the database ArtStor (via the library website)
- you could also search the digital collections of places like the [British MuseumLinks to an external site.](#) for things like coins or other aspects of material culture
- yes, you can of course use Google Image search (I certainly do)...but you will want to track down what you find there (this is why I prefer a portal like DPLA which links to the actual collections)
- for primary sources, Penn has a **lot** of digital resources for which we pay vast sums: using the **Databases** tab, search for "Adam Matthew" and use the AM Explorer to see a wide range of collected primary sources; see also Gale Eighteenth Century Collections Online, and EEBO (Early English Books Online).
- Try to gather material first and then think about how you wish to present it. I'd like to try to avoid last-minute searching for information (esp. if it requires an inter-library loan request).
- Sometimes you might need to search more broadly, to find sources on your region which will have useful information even if it is not in a work specifically about your port.
- Talk to me at any point - I genuinely love trying to find material!
- We will devote several class periods to the process and I hope you can use each of them to make real progress.

Projects are due **Friday, Oct. 21 at 5pm.**

Final Project: Mobile People (or Things) Project

This assignment asks you to do a modest amount of research on a post-1800 topic involving the movement of people (or things) around the Indian Ocean World, broadly conceived (e.g. you could range over to China or down to Australia). I've identified some [possible topics and bibliographies](#), but am also open to your ideas and happy to help you find materials.

The "deliverable" will be a [StoryMap](#) (or, if you prefer, a StoryMap embedded in a Scalar page) and a **two-page paper** (double-spaced; 11 or 12 point font; 1 inch margins) describing what you learned in doing this project (so: not a thesis-driven essay but an account of your process and the "key takeaways" gleaned about your mobile people/things).

The goal is to tell a compelling story digitally, with text and images. You can simply use the default StoryMap settings (but if you have the skills and motivation to tinker, go for it!). Familiarize yourself with, and make use of the tool's features (e.g. background images & foreground images) to enrich the slide deck. Some projects will be more globetrotting than others -- your grade is not based on total mileage! But, that said, mobility is the theme here. You should aim for 10-15 slides in your StoryMap.

Key elements of the project:

Use of scholarly sources: Your StoryMap should be grounded in five good academic sources. If you are relying heavily on a single book (which may be apt for some topics), try to bring in some complementary articles. Come talk to me about this! As always, finding a recent book/article and then consulting its citations is a good search strategy. See also the [research resources page](#).

Use of images: As with the port-folio project, I want you to demonstrate initiative and discernment in locating and selecting images for your StoryMap that add to the story and are informative and compelling for the reader. A mixture of historical images and recent photographs of sites is fine. See also the [research resources page](#).

The project is due by midnight on **December 22**. "Life happens" days may also be used. I think it's a good goal for you to complete the class and have a proper winter break, but I am happy to be flexible depending on what's going on for you. Just keep me in the loop.