

## COURSE PROSPECTUS

### HIST 3315

#### *Maritime Encounters: Merchants, Captives, and Corsairs in the Mediterranean World, 1500-1800*

##### *Course Description*

- Spanning the waters between Europe, Africa, and Asia, the Mediterranean was a hub of commerce, a battleground for state-sanctioned sea raiders known as corsairs, and a space where captives were exchanged and empires clashed. In this seminar, we will explore how interactions in the early modern period shaped the Mediterranean's political, economic, and social landscapes from diverse perspectives, with special attention to the often-overlooked histories of the North African and eastern Mediterranean coasts. Throughout the course, we will examine the expansion of maritime empires, the ebb and flow of corsairing activities, and the conflicts over trade routes that connected distant shores. We will also analyze personal narratives of merchants, captives, and corsairs to uncover how these encounters sparked cultural exchange. Through these stories, we will trace how themes of identity, belonging, mobility, and power emerge and assess their significance in the broader transformation of the Mediterranean world.
- HIST 3315 is open to all first-year students regardless of their academic background.

##### *Course Structure and Materials*

- **Format:** HIST 3315 will be entirely conducted in-person, with classes meeting on Mondays and Wednesdays from 10:15 to 11:44 am.
- **Class sessions:** Most sessions will center on group discussions of the assigned readings, with minimal lecturing. Weekly readings will range from 60 to 80 pages and will be accessible in electronic format. Select classes will be held at the Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts.
- **Reading Materials:** The readings will be a mix of scholarly articles, book chapters, and primary historical documents, providing a range of perspectives and source types. In addition to these texts, we will also analyze selected films to complement our discussions.

##### *Course Assignments and Grading Distribution*

- **Class Participation (15%):** Students should prepare thoroughly for each class and plan to participate actively in oral discussion.
- **Weekly Reflections (20%):** At the end of each week, students will submit a one-paragraph reflection on the week's readings and discussions. These informal reflections allow students to articulate their thoughts, highlight key takeaways, and prepare for the following week.
- **Midterm Primary Source Essay (25%):** Each student will select at least one primary source relevant to the course topics and analyze it in an 8-10-pages critical essay. The essay will contextualize the source and explore its potential historical uses, incorporating ideas developed in the seminar.
- **Research Paper (40%):** For the final research paper, students will write a 15-page analysis, including a bibliography, on a topic chosen in consultation with me. This paper may expand on the Midterm Essay or explore an entirely new topic. We will work on this project in stages throughout the semester. At the end, we will wrap up with a workshop where students will give a 10-minute presentation of their work and exchange feedback with classmates.

If you have any questions or concerns about this course, please do not hesitate to contact me at: [elsharif@sas.upenn.edu](mailto:elsharif@sas.upenn.edu)