Nebraska Wesleyan University

HIST 4100 Pirates, Corsairs, And Buccaneers

Catalog

2025-2026

Course Description

Ah, Piracy, where "Every Man has a Vote in Affairs of Moment; has equal title to the fresh Provisions, or strong Liquors, at any Time seized, and use of them at Pleasure, unless a Scarcity make it necessary, for the good of all, to Vote a Retrenchment." While depicted as bloodthirsty, murdering outlaws-the bane of the open seas-pirates had a stronger more equitable system of laws, justice, shared power, multiethnic and multicultural crews (many crews included freed African slaves, Indigenous individuals, north Africans, eastern Mediterranean, captured/converted mariners from all nations in the Red Sea, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean, and Atlantic), and even a voice in determining activities and choose their leaders. Some say they were sea-based Robin Hoods, while others argue they were bloodthirsty devils. Who were these men and women and why did they become pirates? This class will explore the role that pirates, corsairs, buccaneers,and privateers played in the golden ages (more than one) of pirates. Looking at both the Mediterranean and Trans-Atlantic, student will explore the lives and adventures of historical piracy-famous men and women such as Captains Blackbeard, Morgan, Kidd, Ann Bonny, Grace O'Malley, as well as lesser-known men and women whose names we will never know. The class will explore the impact that piracy had on expansion/globalization, international law/commerce, gender (and vice versa), political sovereignty, power/privilege, race/ethnicity (and vice versa), religion-broadly conceived (including conflict), and settler- colonialism, equal title to the fresh Provisions, or strong Liquors, at any Time seized, and use of them at Pleasure, unless a Scarcity make it necessary, for the good of all, to Vote a Retrenchment." While depicted as bloodthirsty, murdering outlaws-the bane of the open seas-pirates had a stronger more equitable system of laws, justice, shared power, multiethnic and multicultural crews (many crews included freed African slaves, Indigenous individuals, north Africans, eastern Mediterranean, aptured/converted mariners from all nations in the Red Sea, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean, and Atlantic), and even a voice in determining activities and choose their leaders. Some say they were sea-based Robin Hoods, while others argue they were bloodthirsty devils. Who were these men and women and why did they become pirates? This class will explore the role that pirates, corsairs, buccaneers, and privateers played in the golden ages (more than one) of pirates. Looking at both the Mediterranean and Trans-Atlantic, student will explore the lives and adventures of historical piracy-famous men and women such as Captains Blackbeard, Morgan, Kidd, Ann Bonny, Grace O'Malley, as well as lesser-known men and women whose names we will never know. The class will explore the impact that piracy had on expansion/globalization, international law/commerce, gender (and vice versa), political sovereignty, power/privilege, race/ethnicity (and vice versa), religion-broadly conceived (including conflict), and settler-colonialism.

Prerequisite(s): HIST 1110 World Civilizations, or permission of instructor.

Archway Curriculum: Essential Connections: Writing Instructive
Archway Curriculum: Foundational Literacies: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion – Global
Archway Curriculum: Integrative Core: Going Global Thread

Course Hours

4 hours

Departments

1. History