

THE ENDS OF EXPLORATION



ENGL 460, Spring 2017
Rhode Island College
Tuesday/Thursday, 10-11:50 a.m., Craig-Lee 265

Dr. Russell A. Potter

*We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.*

-- T.S. Eliot

In this senior seminar we'll explore the literature of exploration itself, from the early modern era to the present. What has driven human beings to explore? What's the relationship between exploration and risk? Where do we draw the line between exploration and exploitation? Can explorers be both heroes and villains? What function, beyond the obvious practical ones, has exploration served in human history? These and other questions will guide us through our readings – historical, poetical, historical-poetical, tragical-historical, poetical-comical, and many other literary avatars of the urge to look around our corners, to be “the first that ever burst / into that silent sea.” Students will each choose a specific moment or mode of exploration, follow and represent it throughout our discussions, and weave it in to a final seminar paper.

Books (Available at the RIC Campus Bookstore)

Poe, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*
McGhee, *The Last Imaginary Place*
Krakauer, *Into the Wild*
Loomis, *Weird and Tragic Shores*
Grann, *The Lost City of Z*
Ritter, *A Woman in the Polar Night*
Weibe, *A Discovery of Strangers*
deGrasse Tyson, *Space Chronicles: Facing the Ultimate Frontier*

COURSE STRUCTURE AND POLICIES

This course will run as a seminar, with students responsible for coming to class having done the reading, and prepared for discussion. In addition, each student will choose, in consultation with me, a figure, theme, era, or other focal point, one that they'll represent in our discussions throughout the semester, present as a seminar paper in the final weeks, and which will form the core of a final research essay. Lively and engaged discussion are vital to our undertaking.

As with all other English courses, students are strongly advised to familiarize themselves with the college's policies on academic honesty (see the RIC student handbook for these). Use of the work of others without proper attribution constitutes a serious violation of these policies; such plagiarized papers will receive not credit and may result in course failure.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week I (Jan. 17, 19) Tuesday: Introduction to Class. For Thursday, read "A Brief History of Arctic Exploration" (blog link), along with McGhee, *The Last Imaginary Place*, chapters 1-2.

Week II (Jan. 24, 26) For Tuesday: McGhee, *The Last Imaginary Place*, chapters 3, 5-6.
Thursday: McGhee, chapters 7-8, 11.

Week III (Jan. 31, Feb. 2) For Tuesday, Wiebe, *A Discovery of Strangers*, chapters 1-6.
Thursday: Wiebe, chapters 7-10.

Week IV (Feb. 7, 9) For Tuesday, finish Wiebe, *A Discovery of Strangers*. For Thursday, Loomis, *Weird and Tragic Shores*, Prologue and chapters 1-3.

Week V (Feb. 14, 16) For Tuesday: *Weird and Tragic Shores*, chapters 4-5. Thursday: *Finish Weird and Tragic Shores*; Epilogue, "Motive for Murder" (blog link).

Week VI (Feb. 21, 23) For Tuesday: Poe, Poe, "Manuscript Found in a Bottle," "Descent into the Maelstrom," and Hauss and Potter, "Geographical Incognita" (blog link). Thursday: *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, chapters 1-9.

Week VII (Feb. 28, March 2) For Tuesday: *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, chapter 10-17.
Thursday: Finish *Arthur Gordon Pym*.

SPRING BREAK

Week VIII (March 14, 16) For Tuesday: *The Lost City of Z*, chapters 1-9. Thursday, *The Lost City of Z*, chapters 10-17.

Week IX (March 21, 23) For Tuesday: Finish *The Lost City of Z*. Thursday: Start *A Woman in the Polar Night*.

Week X (March 28, 30) For Tuesday: Finish *A Woman in the Polar Night*. Thursday: Start *Into the Wild*.

Week XI (April 4, 6) For Tuesday: Potter, "Exploration and Sacrifice: The Cultural Logic of Discovery." Thursday: Continue *Into the Wild*.

Week XII (April 11, 13) For Tuesday: Finish *Into The Wild*. Thursday: Start *Space Chronicles*.

Week XIII (April 18, 20) Tuesday: Finish *Space Chronicles*. Thursday: First student presentations.

Week XIV (April 25, 27) Tuesday and Thursday: Student presentations.