

Imagining the Pacific  
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This module considers the ways in which American literature has represented the opening up of Pacific space from the early nineteenth century to the present. From the Gothic-infused visions of Melville and Poe, to the tourist gaze of Twain and London, to the contemporary perspectives of Pacific and Asian-American writers such as Sia Figiel and Andrew X. Pham, the texts on this course chart the ways in which the Pacific Ocean and its peoples have contributed to, created, and contested American national narratives.

The module develops students' insights into issues of U.S. national history and cultural geography, and deepens their engagement with current theories of nationalism and transnationalism as a frame for reflection on their studies abroad. The first part of the module focuses on the production of the Pacific in the nineteenth-century American imagination; the second considers ways in which recent and contemporary Pacific writers have engaged and responded to the Pacific imaginary. Alongside a focus on the various forms of American literature – from novels and travel narratives, to poetry, short stories, and memoirs – the course also encourages students to engage with non-literary Pacific texts, including visual images and material culture.

**Primary Reading List**

- Edgar Allan Poe, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (Week 3)  
HP Lovecraft, "The Call of Cthulhu" (Week 3)  
Herman Melville, *Typee* (Week 4)  
Mark Twain, *Following the Equator* (Week 5)  
Jack London, *South Sea Tales* (Week 6)  
Margaret Mead, *Coming of Age in Samoa* (Week 8)  
Sia Figiel, *Where We Once Belonged* (Week 8)  
Andrew X. Pham, *Catfish & Mandala* (Week 9)  
Kristiana Kahakauwila, *This is Paradise: Stories* (Week 10)  
Caroline Sinaiviana-Gabbard, poems from *Alchemies of Distance* (Weeks 1 & 10)  
Brandy Nalani McDougall, poems from *The Salt Wind* (Week 10)  
Craig Santos Perez, poems from *Saina* [Unincorporated Territory] (Week 10)  
Lurline Wailana McGregor, *Between the Deep Blue Sea and Me* (Week 11)

## Assessment

### **Summative Assessment:**

- A 1,500 word book review of a recent critical text in the field of Transpacific Studies. This book review is worth 20% and is due on **Week 5**.
- A 3,000 word research paper, expanding on the ideas of your oral class presentation. This paper is worth 30% and is due on **Week 12**.
- An examination consisting of one compulsory question and another drawn from a selection of questions. The exam is worth 50%.

### **Formative Assessment:**

- Class presentation on a week and text of your choice.
- Annotated bibliography and abstract for your research paper based on your presentation, due in class in **Week 8**.

## Weekly Outline with Required Reading

Below is a list of the primary and secondary reading required for each seminar, along with a brief description of the week's themes and details of any assignments due.

### **1. Introduction: Imagining the Pacific**

This week introduces the module's themes and topics through illustrative examples. Alongside some introductory critical readings, the texts this week provide an opening framework for the comparison between US and US-Pacific writing across the module. The seminar discussion will explore the contrast between white European and American representations of the Pacific and its indigenous population, and Pacific self-representations, in both poetry and visual art.

Walt Whitman, "Facing West from California's Shores"

Caroline Sinavaiana-Gabbard, "Village of Hope: By the Rivers of Babylon", from *Alchemies of Distance: A Collection of Poetry* (2001)

Steven G. Yao, "The Rising Tide of the Transpacific", *Literature Compass* 8.3 (2011): 130-141.

Margaret Cohen, "Literary Studies on the Terraqueous Globe", *PMLA* 125.3 (2010): 657-662.

### **2. Theorizing the Transpacific: John Eperjesi, Yunte Huang, & Paul Lyons**

This week's reading offers an overview of the recent field of Transpacific and American Pacific scholarship, in order to provide a theoretical grounding and framework for the weeks that follow.

John R. Eperjesi, "Introduction: The American Pacific, an Errand into Oceania", in *The Imperialist Imaginary: Visions of Asia and the Pacific in American Culture* (Hanover, HN: Dartmouth College Press, 2005): 1-22. [R]

Yunte Huang, "Introduction: The Transpacific as a Critical Space", in *Transpacific Imaginations: History, Literature, Counterpoetics* (Harvard, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008): 1-10. [R]

Paul Lyons, "Introduction: Bound-Together Stories, Varieties of Ignorance, and the Challenge of Hospitality" & "Where 'Cannibalism' Has Been Tourism Will Be", in *American Pacificism: Oceania in the U.S. Imagination* (New York: Routledge, 2005): 1-39. [R]

### 3. Poe, Lovecraft, & the Unknown Pacific: The South Sea & the Southern Ocean

This week begins our engagement with writing about the Pacific by exploring how two of American literature's most prominent gothic and horror writers – Poe and Lovecraft – imagined the Pacific, and particularly the Southern Ocean, as a space of the unknown and the monstrous.

Edgar Allan Poe, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (1838)

H.P. Lovecraft, "The Call of Cthulhu" (1928)

Lisa Gitelman, "Arthur Gordon Pym and the Novel Narrative of Edgar Allan Poe", *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 47.3 (Dec. 1992): 349-361.

James Kneale, "From beyond: H.P. Lovecraft and the Place of Horror", *Cultural Geographies* 13 (2006): 106-126.

### 4. Reading the Bromance: Herman Melville's Polynesia

This week looks at the interrelated ideas of cannibalism, tattooing, and community through the lens of Melville's first novel, *Typee*, loosely based on his own experiences living in the Marquesas Islands in the South Pacific.

Herman Melville, *Typee* (1846)

Geoffrey Sanborn, "The Terror of their Name: Reflections on *Typee*", in *The Sign of the Cannibal: Melville & the Making of a Postcolonial Reader* (Duke University Press, 1998): 75-118.

Juniper Ellis, "Locating the Sign: Visible Culture", in *Tattooing the World: Pacific Designs in Print & Skin* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008): 133-161.

### 5. Twain on Tour: Hawaii, Australia, & New Zealand

This week introduces the idea of Pacific tourism by reading the first half of Twain's travelogue and considering his encounters in Hawaii, the Pacific Ocean, Australia, and New Zealand. Particularly attention will be given to how Twain frames the Pacific through the idea of tourism, and how he draws parallels between the Pacific and the American South.

Mark Twain, *Following the Equator: A Journey Around the World* (1897) – Chapters I-XXXVI

John Carlos Rowe, "Mark Twain's Critique of Globalization (Old and New) in *Following the Equator, A Journey Around the World* (1897)", *Arizona Quarterly* 61.1 (Spring 2005): 109-135.

Jane Desmond, "Picturing Hawai'i: The 'Ideal Native' and the Origins of Tourism, 1880-1915", in *Staging Tourism: Bodies on Display from Waikiki to Sea World* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2002): 34-59.

## 6. Jack London & the "Inevitability" of Whiteness: Solomon Islands & Hawaii

This week concludes the exploration of white US perspectives in the first half of the module by focusing on how Jack London depicts the Pacific through a mixture of romanticism and naturalism, especially in his framing of "whiteness". There will be a particular focus on the stories "The Inevitable White Man", "The Heathen", and "The Terrible Solomons".

Jack London, *South Sea Tales* (1911)

John R. Eperjesi, "Becoming Hawaiian: Jack London, Cultural Tourism, and the Myth of Hawaiian Exceptionalism", in *The Imperialist Imaginary: Visions of Asia and the Pacific in American Culture* (Hanover, HN: Dartmouth College Press, 2005): 105-129.

Juniper Ellis, "A 'Wreckage of Races' in Jack London's South Pacific", *Arizona Quarterly* 57.2 (2001): 57-75.

## 7. READING WEEK

## 8. Seeing Samoans, Being Samoan: Margaret Mead & Sia Figiel

This week begins the second half of the course, in which focus turns from white American representations of the Pacific, to Pacific and Pacific-American self-representations. This shift will be examined through comparative a reading of Margaret Mead's influential 1928 anthropological study, *Coming of Age in Samoa*, and Sia Figiel's contemporary novel of Samoan youth.

Margaret Mead, excerpts from *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928)

Sia Figiel, *Where We Once Belonged* (1996)

## 9. The Art of Memoir in the Vietnamese Diaspora

This week focuses on the relationship between America and the Asian-Pacific rim, specifically Vietnam, through Andrew Pham's nonfiction memoir. This week foregrounds issues of self-representation through connection to community and heritage, and focuses particularly on the relationship between food, consumption, and identity.

Andrew X. Pham, *Catfish and Mandala: A Vietnamese Odyssey* (1999)

Andrew Lam, "Notes of a Warrior's Son", from *Perfume Dreams: Reflections on the Vietnamese Diaspora* (2005): 23-50.

Sidonie Smith & Julia Watson, "A Tool Kit: Twenty Strategies for Reading Life Narratives", in *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2010): 165-179.

Delores B. Phillips, "Quieting Noisy Bellies: Moving, Eating, and Being in the Vietnamese Diaspora", *Cultural Critique* 73 (Fall 2009): 47-87.

#### 10. America's Pacific Presence/Presents: Writing from Hawai'i, Samoa & Guam

This week focuses on contemporary Pacific writing centered on Hawai'i, but also touches on Samoa, Guam, and the larger space of the Pacific. Alongside a collection of short fiction from Kristiana Kahakauwila, the reading this week also focuses on three contemporary Pacific-American poets – Sinavaiana-Gabbard, McDougall, and Perez – and their response to Pacific history and geography.

Kristiana Kahakauwila, *This is Paradise: Stories* (2013)

Caroline Sinavaiana-Gabbard, "pilgrim's progress" and "on form & content; or slouching toward texas", from *Alchemies of Distance* (2002): 38-39 & 65-67.

Brandy Nalani McDougall, "Natives Wanted" and "On Cooking Captain Cook", from *Salt Wind* (2008): 51-52.

Craig Santos Perez, "[hanom, hanom, hanom]", "préterrain" and "oceania compositions" from *Saina [Unincorporated Territory]* (2010): 13-16, 63 & 65.

Craig Santos Perez, "Whitewashing American Hybrid Aesthetics", in *The Monkey & the Wrench: Essays into Contemporary Poetics*, ed. Mary Biddinger & John Gallagher (Akron, OH: University of Akron Press, 2011): 137-140.

Noelani Arista, "Navigating Uncharted Oceans on Meaning: *Kaona* as Historical and Interpretive Method", *PMLA* 125.3 (2010): 663-669.

#### 11. The Ethics of Preservation & Representation: Pacific Material Culture

This week continues the engagement with Pacific self-representations by placing a particular emphasis on material and visual culture. In this session, we will reflect on the politics of self-representation and preservation in relation to a novella by Hawaiian author Lurline Wailana McGregor.

Lurline Wailana McGregor, *Between the Deep Blue Sea and Me* (Kamehameha Press, 2008)

Michael Baxandall, "Exhibiting Intention: Some Preconditions of the Visual Display of Culturally Purposeful Objects", in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, ed. Ivan Karp & Steve Levine (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991): 33-41.

Devon A. Mihesuah, "American Indians, Anthropologists, Pothunters, and Repatriation: Ethical, Religious, and Political Differences", in *Repatriation Reader: Who Owns American Indian Remains*, ed. Devon Mihesuah (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000): 95-105.