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Utopia/Dystopia: Who do the Seas belong to?

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Course Description

This crash course introduces students to the basic debates surrounding the seas from a historical point of view. It encapsulates three approaches: 1) histories of capitalism and histories of science and technology studies, 2) the colonial encounter in the Mediterranean and 3) how space has come to shift and change as a result of man's endeavour to tame the Seas in the anthropomorphic age. It surveys the major claims and originary tales that the conquerors of the seas have produced about themselves. Doing so allows for the problematization of the promise of Utopia at sea as an area free and accessible to all. It inverts this picture by looking at the Dystopian history of the seas as a space that was controlled by European colonialism and capitalism through colonial mercantile corporations. In so doing it also broaches socio-cultural histories of the seas that include the depiction and production of the 'Other' as a 'pirate', 'barbar' or 'corsair' that was to be chased in order to protect this 'Utopia'. Lastly, it reflects on the meaning of a Utopia of the Seas by considering the present predicament that capitalism in the 20th century has produced in reordering space and the life of communities of fishermen and sailors in the face of containerization. It concludes by raising questions about the viability of a communitarian future centered around the seas away from corporations, imperialism and capitalism.

Module I: Originary Tales of the Sea: Utopias

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Module II Materializing Utopia: From Land to Sea

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Module III: Rethinking Originary Tales

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Odegard E. 2014. "The Sixth Admiralty: The Dutch East India Company and the military revolution at sea, c. 1639-1667". *International Journal of Maritime History*. 26 (4): 669-684.

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Module IV: Encountering Dystopias

Adler, Anthony. 2014. "The ship as laboratory: making space for field science at sea". *Journal of the History of Biology*. 47 (3): 333-362.

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Law, John. 1984. "On the Methods of Long-Distance Control: Vessels, Navigation and the Portuguese Route to India". *The Sociological Review*. 32 (1_suppl): 234-263.

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Module V: Confronting Dystopias Today

Kosmatopoulos, Nikolas. 2019. "On the shores of politics: Sea, solidarity and the Ships to Gaza". *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, pp. 1-18.

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