



Weekend Courses 2024-25

Pirates!: the golden age of piracy, 1680-1730

Start date: 28 March 2025

End date: 30 March 2025

Venue: Madingley Hall
Madingley
Cambridge
CB23 8AQ

Tutor: Dr Ian Chambers

Course Code: 2425NRX036

Tutor biography

Ian Chambers is currently a lecturer in History at the University of Cambridge, a lecturer in Adult Education at Cambridge Regional College, and a Member of Robinson College. He has previously taught at the University of Nottingham and the University of Idaho in the USA.

Ian taught at the Lifelong Learning division of the Institute of Continuing Education of the University of California as well as supervising students in the History department of the University of Cambridge. He has published several academic articles in a number of historic fields.

In the classroom Ian uses a wide array of media including audio and visual sources and likes to make his class a combination of providing information and discussing that information; in other words he prefers being a "guide from the side" and not a "sage on the stage".

He strongly believes that we never stop learning, that we benefit greatly from pursuing new knowledge and awareness and, for that reason, he is committed to teaching people of all ages and all skill levels and frequently finds himself learning a great deal from those in his classes.

Summary of content:

We begin the course by focusing on England and the “Pirate Queen”, Queen Elizabeth I. We will look at the role of Sir John Hawkins in developing a predatory trade between the West African coast and the West Indies before we look at the activities of the ‘master pirate of the whole world’ Sir Francis Drake. Heralded in England as a national hero, views of him elsewhere differ significantly.

We will then move forward to look at the rise of legal pirates, privateers. Although once again the legality is in the eye of the beholder rather than any agreed international definition. Looking at people such as Henry Morgan rose quickly through the ranks before attaining the position of “Leader of the Brethren” and leading one of the biggest parties of seaboard raiders in the late 17th century.

As we enter the early 18th century, we move from the veneer of respectability to outright villainy. At this time, we are introduced to many of the names that have resonated through the ages, such as Blackbeard, Black Bart Roberts, and Black Sam Bellamy pirates who were plying their trade in the Caribbean and beyond. We will end our examination of this era by examining the lives and activities of Anne Bonny and Mary Read and the improbable but true story of their meeting on board a ship in the West Indies.

We will also examine what drove sailors to become pirates and what drove their activities once in the brotherhood. Before turning our attention to life on board an 18th-century sailing ship. What was lifelike in this wooden world? Where did they sleep? How did they survive the cramped conditions? What technology did they utilise to capture their prey?

In the final class, we will move away from history and look at how pirates have invaded our minds through literature and popular culture. Examining works ranging from J M Barrie, through Arthur Conan Doyle to the Muppets

Aims:

This course aims to:

- provide knowledge of the “golden age” of piracy and the people involved
- give an understanding of the linkage between Piracy and empire
- provide an understanding of the financial and other motives for piracy

Course sessions

Friday

Please plan to arrive between 16:30 and 18:30. You can meet other course members in the Terrace Bar which opens at 18:15. Tea and coffee making facilities are available in the study bedrooms.

19:00	Dinner
20:30 – 22:00	Welcome, getting to know each other and introduction to the class
22:00	Terrace Bar open for informal discussion

Saturday

07:30	Breakfast (for residents only)
09:00 – 10:30	Pirate Queen: Elizabeth I and Sir Francis Drake
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Buccaneers: investigating Edward Morgan and friends
13:00	Lunch
14:00 – 16:00	Free time
16:00	Tea
16:30 – 18:00	<i>hostis humani generis</i> (enemies of mankind)
18:00 – 18:30	Free time
18:30	Dinner
20:00 – 21:30	Movie night
21:30	Terrace Bar open for informal discussion

Sunday

07:30	Breakfast (for residents only)
09:00 – 10:30	Life on Board: 18th century sailing ships and pirate weapons
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Literature popular culture: we love pirates but why?
12:45	Lunch

The course will disperse after lunch

Presentation of the course:

The course will be taught by PowerPoint presentation, including a wide range of audio-visual sources with time for discussion and debate.

Learning outcomes:

As a result of the course, you will gain a greater understanding of the subject and you should be able to:

- gain a knowledge of the “golden age” of piracy and the people involved
- gain an understanding of the linkage between piracy and empire
- gain an understanding of the financial and other motivations for piracy

Reading and resources list

There are no compulsory readings for the course.

However, you may find the below recommended reading list of interest to supplement your course.

Cordingly, David, *Under the Black Flag: The Romance and the Reality of Life Among the Pirate* (Random House 2006)

Defoe, Daniel, *A General History of the Pyrates: Pirate Captains, Crews, Ships, and Laws* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform 18 April 2014)

You may also find the author of this book listed as Captain Johnson. This book was originally published in the 18th century and has been reprinted by many different publishers.

Pennell, C, R, *Bandits at Sea a Pirate Reader* (New York University Press 2001)

Rediker, Marcus, *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age* (Verso Books 2004)

Reynolds, Susan, *The Pirate Queen: Queen Elizabeth I, Her Pirate Adventurers, and the Dawn of Empire* (Harper Collins 2007)

Richie, Robert, *Captain Kidd and the War Against Pirates* (Harvard University Press 1998)

Stevenson, Robert Louis, *Treasure Island* (Wordsworth Edition 2018) – or any unabridged printing

<https://www.rmg.co.uk/stories/topics/golden-age-piracy>

<https://www.qaronline.org/history/blackbeard-history-dreaded-pirate>

<http://www.cindyvallar.com/pirates.html>

<https://www.thepiratesrealm.com/>

Note: Institute of Continuing Education (ICE) students are entitled to 20% discount on books published by Cambridge University Press (CUP) which are purchased at the Press bookshop, 1 Trinity Street, Cambridge (Mon-Sat 9am – 5:30pm, Sun 11am – 5pm). A letter or email confirming acceptance on to a current ICE course should be taken as evidence of enrolment.

(Information correct as of April 2024)