

CULTURE & EXPRESSION
Spring 2015: HUHC 13 & HUHC 02

Social Sciences Professors: Baehr, Cox, Eliot, Frisina, Goodman, Niedt, Terazawa
Humanities Professors: Carter, Donahue, Kozol, Krapp, Lorsch, Pasupathi, Sills

RISK AND REWARD: TAKING CHANCES AND MAKING CHANGES

At the end of the fall term, with Boccaccio's *The Decameron* (1352), we saw the world emerging from The Middle Ages with a devastating plague (The Black Death) that destabilized traditional social hierarchies and called into question religious beliefs, but Boccaccio also introduced a rich diversity of psychological responses and narrative structures to suggest the life-affirming wealth of human experience in propitious or adverse circumstances that can turn around, either way, very quickly. The topic this spring engages that emerging world of instability and change, risk and reward: our new theme ranges from physical risk and danger in various exploits and adventures (from exploration to investments to gambling, from affairs with money, politics or personal relations), along with the attendant psychological senses of fear, hope, worry or exhilaration. Such risk-taking might serve to explore new places, new ideas, new types of behavior in order to gain friends, fame, money, property, territory, or other types of satisfaction or gratification; or, conversely, risk-taking might derive from the need to escape from circumstances of captivity (as defined by physical confinement or less visible constraints based on constraints that are primarily economic, ethnic, racial, gender-related, etc.). In any case, such risks and rewards (or failure) of all kinds might lead to profound reflections on chance and change, or even to a revolution in circumstances, in behavior, in society overall or to fundamentally new questions about the status quo. This semester will cover the emergence of the self-conscious individual in the Renaissance along with the emergence of new polities, new ways of thinking and new patterns of growth, development, cooperation and conflict in personal, political, philosophical, social and religious terms, and much, much more, including the trajectory across cultural bounds or within a non-western culture. In each case, the degree of risk and reward (or the perception thereof) stands in relation to the cultural, aesthetic and historical norms and traditions that define that moment. Of course, all aspects of risk-taking become the object of analysis in different disciplines and find reflection in various modes of artistic representation from art to literature, drama and music, as we will see.

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& by appt.

HUHC 014 (T/R 11:10-12:05- Lecture)
H13 T/R 12:15-1:10 Brower 103
H 2 T/R 1:15-2:10 Brower 103

Syllabus: Spring 2015

Week 1: Tues. Jan. 27 – HUM LECTURE: Prof. Donahue
on Lazarillo de Tormes (1554)

SECTION: syllabus review and Lazarillo

Thurs. Jan. 29 – (SS LECTURE: Prof. Goodman on Xheng He)

SECTION: Lazarillo de Tormes

Week 2: Tues. Feb. 3 – HUM LECTURE: Prof. Pasupathi
On The Merchant of Venice (1596)

SECTION: The Merchant of Venice

Thurs. Feb. 5 – (SS LECTURE: Prof. Niedt on Maritime Insurance/Risk in
Early Modern Society)

SECTION: The Merchant of Venice

Week 3: Tues. Feb. 10 – HUM LECTURE: Prof. Sills on Mary Rowlandson's
Captivity narrative (1682)

SECTION: The Merchant of Venice / Rowlandson

*****PAPER #1 DUE (in class)**

Thurs. Feb. 12 – (SS LECTURE: Prof. Eliot on Hume's Enquiry Concerning
on
Human Understanding [1748])

***** SECTION: In-Class Exam I**

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