**The Development of the Novel: Fiction and the Sea**

Fall Semester, 2023

Instructor: Andrew Kincaid, Associate Professor

Monday and Wednesday: 8.15 AM-9.30 AM. In Person.

Curtin 109

Email: [akincaid@uwm.edu](mailto:akincaid@uwm.edu)

From Homer’s *Odyssey* to Melville’s *Moby Dick*, from *The Love Boat* to *Star Trek*, the ocean voyage has long served as a laboratory of social relations. Disparate populations (“the motley crew”) are thrown together at sea and forced into self-reliance and co-existence: nations and economies writ small.

Unlike members of a crew, however, single characters at sea – Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe, Hemingway’s Santiago in *The Old Man and the Sea* – must battle not only overwhelming natural forces, but also loneliness. Existentialism and isolation, therefore, along with condensed social relations (the rigid hierarchy of a ship’s command), mark the poles of maritime fiction.

One thesis we will explore in this course is why modernism and modernity depend on maritime tropes, from “drift “and “currents” through exploration and adventure, to reflective meditation and streams of consciousness, the latter best represented by the work of Virginia Woolf in *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves*, and by James Joyce’s *Ulysses*.

Modern literature plays with the idea that landed identities – gender, nationality, individualism— are often best illuminated at sea. Melville’s *Billy Budd*, for example, with its background of hierarchy and mutiny, individualism and cruelty, exposes the emerging order of modern America. Conrad’s *The Secret Sharer*, with a ship’s captain and a stowaway mirroring each other, illustrates the doubts of many in Britain about aggressive imperialist behavior. Later, in the twentieth century, when the ship becomes a space ship, literature sought out the edges of known world and imagination in *Star Trek, Star Wars, Alien,* and a thousand other novels, movies, and tv shows. And the Internet, from surfing through Yahoo to Internet Explorer and the term “navigation,” employs oceanic language to chart this vast new territory.

Philosophy and critical theory, too, have long employed imagery of the ocean to represent new ideas, from Edmund Burke’s concept of the “sublime” (the wild, unknowable ocean) through Freud’s “oceanic feeling” (a desire to retreat from this world) to Eve Sedgwick’s “eddies of queer time” (an image developed to depict arrested, troubling temporalities).

In this class, we will read a number of classic maritime novels in order to trace the themes and styles of both modern fiction and literary theory.

**Themes to be explored:**

* Isolation, existentialism and the self (alone at sea)
* Society and labor (the crew)
* Piracy and legality (from buccaneers to hackers)
* Mutiny and social hierarchies. Revolution.
* Adventure (individual overcoming danger)
* Exploration and imperialism (from Homer’s *Odyssey* to interstellar travel)
* The language and insights of critical theory (from “the sublime” to “streams of consciousness”)

**Required Texts:**

**Novels**

1. Robinson Crusoe, by Daniel Defoe:  ISBN [9780486404271](https://nam02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fuwm.ecampus.com%2Fcourse-list%3Fs%3D138682%26p%3D%26c%3D%257C2926616%26c1%3DENGLISH%26c2%3D326%26c3%3D001%26c4%3D%26ll%3D3%26pv%3D&data=04%7C01%7CAKINCAID%40UWM.EDU%7C2b427ec327af4b0dad5008d96d97e03c%7C0bca7ac3fcb64efd89eb6de97603cf21%7C0%7C0%7C637661321372348725%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=LlkT8MpUnSL%2B%2BiDxMI45hf3X7ngxmTo8cPLrEP1FScM%3D&reserved=0)
2. To the Lighthouse, by Virginia Woolf:  9780156907392
3. Dawn, by Octavia Butler:  978-1538753712
4. The Old Man and the Sea, by Ernest Hemingway:  [9780684801223](https://nam02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fuwm.ecampus.com%2Fadoptions%23&data=04%7C01%7CAKINCAID%40UWM.EDU%7C2b427ec327af4b0dad5008d96d97e03c%7C0bca7ac3fcb64efd89eb6de97603cf21%7C0%7C0%7C637661321372348725%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=pJPDFdDvUOAcbGPbpR9QfdKkDwa4rF9TMibXtTjC1DQ%3D&reserved=0)
5. Whale Rider, by Witi Ihimaera:  [9780435131081](https://nam02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fuwm.ecampus.com%2Fadoptions%23&data=04%7C01%7CAKINCAID%40UWM.EDU%7C2b427ec327af4b0dad5008d96d97e03c%7C0bca7ac3fcb64efd89eb6de97603cf21%7C0%7C0%7C637661321372358684%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=NEEPfHPuq6AwkvU7xq7scpnBCAY20P1ypNUge7SbAR8%3D&reserved=0)
6. Feeding the Ghosts, by Fred d’Aguiar:  [9781478631941](https://nam02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fuwm.ecampus.com%2Fadoptions%23&data=04%7C01%7CAKINCAID%40UWM.EDU%7C2b427ec327af4b0dad5008d96d97e03c%7C0bca7ac3fcb64efd89eb6de97603cf21%7C0%7C0%7C637661321372358684%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=NEEPfHPuq6AwkvU7xq7scpnBCAY20P1ypNUge7SbAR8%3D&reserved=0)