

**Cultures of Nature:
The Science of Empire in the Early Modern Atlantic World**

Dr. Emily Berquist

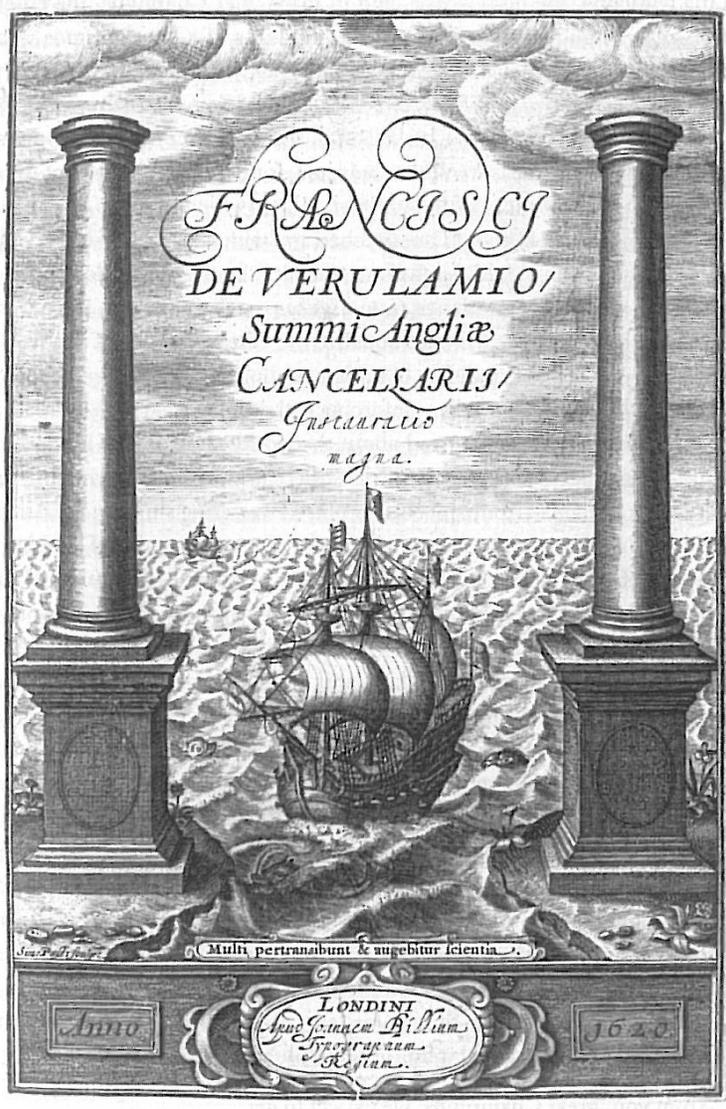


Figure 10. Frontispiece to Francis Bacon, *Instauratio Magna* (London, 1620).
Courtesy, Special Collections Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

Course Description: This graduate seminar explores the political uses and cultural meanings of scientific investigation in the Early Modern Atlantic world. Students will work with various themes related to the history of the natural sciences (as opposed to the “hard” sciences such as physics and chemistry) in Europe and its American territories. We will consider how scientific knowledge was accumulated, the channels by which it was conveyed, and how it was employed in the struggle for imperial supremacy. We will discuss science as a key component of the commercial expansion of the period, and also examine how scientific advances were conceived as social improvements integral to the early modern state. Throughout the course, we will also focus on the uses of scientific art, considering how scientific illustrations and collections were packaged and promoted in order to display the prowess of their empires. This course has a heavy workload which students must be prepared to meet. There are weekly short critical analysis writing assignments, as well as a final research paper. Active class participation is a must.

Required Books:

Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*

Alix Cooper, *Inventing the Indigenous: Local Knowledge and Natural History in Early Modern Europe*

Antonio Barrera, *Experiencing Nature: The Spanish American Empire and the Early Scientific Revolution*

Harold J. Cook, *Matters of Exchange: Commerce, Medicine, and Science in the Dutch Golden Age*

Paula Findlen, *Possessing Nature: Museums, Collecting, and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy*

Lisbet Koerner, *Linnaeus: Nature and Nation*

Richard Drayton, *Nature's Government: Science, Imperial Britain, and the 'Improvement' of the World*

Susan Scott Parrish, *American Curiosity: Cultures of Natural History in the Colonial British Atlantic*

* All required books for this course are available on 3-hour reserve at the library, listed under History 592.

READINGS & CLASS SCHEDULE

Monday August 31: Welcome & Introductions

Monday, September 7: Labor Day – No Class

Monday, September 14:

Nicholas DelBourgo and James Dew, "The Far Side of the Ocean," from *Science and Empire in the Atlantic World*

Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, "Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda"

Alison Games, "Atlantic History: Definitions, Challenges, and Opportunities." *American Historical Review* 111

(all on beachboard)

**Note: There will be no student discussion leaders this week, discussion leading will begin with the week of September 21. You are advised to consider which weeks you are interested in *before* arriving to class on Monday September 14, as we will decide on that day.

Monday, September 21:

Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*

**Note: In order to foster open and active classroom participation, we will adjourn our classroom meeting early on this night and continue our discussion elsewhere on campus. Attendance at this secondary meeting is encouraged but not required.

Monday, September 28:

Alix Cooper, *Inventing the Indigenous: Local Knowledge and Natural History in Early Modern Europe*

Monday, October 5:

Antonio Barrera-Osorio, *Experiencing Nature: The Spanish American Empire and the Early Scientific Revolution*

Monday, October 12:

Harold J. Cook, *Matters of Exchange: Commerce, Medicine, and Science in the Dutch Golden Age*

Monday, October 19:

Paula Findlen, *Possessing Nature: Museums, Collecting, and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy*

Monday, October 26:

Graduate Students: One-on-one meetings to discuss paper topics with Dr. Berquist

Undergraduates: No class, reading day

November 2 & November 9: Furlough Days No Class Meeting

Monday, November 16:

Lisbet Koerner, *Linnaeus: Nature and Nation*

Monday, November 23:

Richard Drayton, *Nature's Government: Science, Imperial Britain, and the 'Improvement' of the World*

note:

if you would like me to review a draft of your final paper, please turn it in before break

Monday, November 30:

Susan Scott Parrish, *American Curiosity: Cultures of Natural History in the Colonial British Atlantic*

Monday, December 7:

special workshop: reading T.B.A. (no response paper due, no student discussion leaders)

GRADING RUBRIC

Attendance

possible negative points

Attendance in class is mandatory. Absences are not excused unless they meet university regulations (see below.) Arrival in class more than 5 minutes after class begins counts as an absence, even if you remain in class for the entire session. Leaving early also counts as an unexcused absence.

Each unexcused absence counts for one point off your total final grade in the course. This can have a seriously negative impact on your grade. If you are the type of person who misses classes or is late frequently, this is probably not the best class for you.

Participation

10% final grade

As this is a seminar course, your participation in every class meeting is essential and required. In addition to arriving in class each day and on time, your participation grade is also based on your contributions to class discussion. Each student must contribute to each discussion at least once. Do not worry that your ideas will be criticized or held against you; our classroom is a supportive environment where we welcome all ideas, including challenges to our pre-existing notions. Everyone will be called on at least once in each class meeting.

6 Weekly Response Papers

10% final grade each

Throughout the semester, you are responsible for 6 response papers to the week's readings. These are 2 pages, double spaced, 12-point font. If your response papers go over two pages, I will not read the rest of the pages and whatever you write will not count towards your grade. Response papers are due at the beginning of each class meeting.

Late response papers will lose one entire letter grade each day they are late. This means that a paper that was due at the start of class at 12:30 on Monday but was turned in at 2 on Monday will lose one letter grade from what it would have earned originally. If turned in after 12:30 on Tuesday, it will lose two letter grades, so on and so forth. Remember it is always better to turn in a very late assignment and receive an "F" than it is to turn in nothing in at all and get zero points. *If you do not attend class the day an assignment is due, please email your work to me.*

Students may choose when during the semester to write their response papers. There are 9 weeks of reading in the syllabus, and students must turn in a paper for 6 of those weeks. On one of those weeks they may use their free passes. However, please be aware that choosing to use your free pass does not mean that you are exempted from doing the readings. If it seems that students are not doing the reading on the days they choose to use their free pass, this privilege will be revoked for the entire class. If students choose not to use a free pass,

they will have their lowest response paper grade dropped. (You may choose to do this with all of your free passes.)

Leading Discussion

10% final grade

Each week, a student or a group of students (depending on enrollment) will be responsible for leading seminar with an introductory 10-minute presentation. During this time, presenters will briefly summarize the authors' approach, argument, and evidence. They will also share their own questions about the work, so as to facilitate discussion.

Final Paper

20% final grade

More information on this will be given a few weeks after class begins. It will be due during the regularly scheduled final exam period for this course. *Note that you cannot pass this class without turning in the final paper.*