

[Professor Richard Burt](#)

LIT 4930

Shipwreck: Drown Before Reading

Fall 2013

Tu 2-3 and R 2

Course Description: "We were like men walled up in a roomy grave," Joseph Conrad, *Lord Jim* (Oxford World Classics), p. 88. This is a course about reading at sea, reading from the surface, in the wake of disaster. We will sink and swim as we engage a number of themes that recur in stories about shipwrecks, themes such as hospitality to strangers, friends (and enemies); revenge; sacrificial violence; survivors; and ghosts / phantasms; home; homelessness; loss; wandering; destiny; chance; fate; slaves; self-defense; piracy; savages; cannibalism; animals; solitude; recognition scenes; returning home and crossing the point of no return; the return of the dead. We will touch on these themes as they bear on a central hypothesis we will test out: Shipwreck narratives and abandon ship narratives are surprisingly about burial, not of the dead, but of the living; that is, the survivors of shipwrecks fear being buried alive, possibly cremated, possibly eaten, but do not fear burial at sea (marination?); these narratives, moreover, evince a correlary concern with the eco-specific destruction of writing instruments and storage media--books, journals, pens, ink, posts, captains' logs, and so on). This fear of premature burial (and a correlary anxiety about not protecting and not honoring the dead--no funerals, corpses being mutilated, left unburied, eaten, and otherwise indisposed) plays out in encrypted narratives as well, narratives-within-narratives, repeated narratives, that are often highly resistant to reading; sometimes, one does know whether to read by fathoming the depths or trusting the surface. Writing, weaving, marking; footprints; journals, writing materials, lost manuscripts, coffins, tombs, urns, burial mounds, and various kinds of crypts, are at the center of a disaster genre in which fear of drowning almost never plays a part. We will read more or less chronologically--stories in different genres--epic, romance, spiritual autobiography, novel--and in different media--song (and its transcription), theater, print, and film-- that I have culled but not necessarily rescued from a variety of literary historical periods. We will also read--These texts are Homer, *The Odyssey*; Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*; Edgar Allen Poe, "A Premature Burial"; Jacques Derrida, *Beast and the Sovereign Vol. 2*; Jacques Derrida, *Hospitality*; William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*; Edgar Allen Poe, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*; Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*; and Joseph Conrad, *Lord Jim*. We will also see these films: Alfred Hitchcock, [Lifeboat](#) (1944); [Julie Taymor, The Tempest](#) (2010); [Peter](#)

[Greenaway, *The Tempest*](#) (1991); [A Night to Remember](#) (dir. Roy Ward Baker, 1958); and [LIVING SKELETON \(1968, Japan, originally titled *Kyuketsu Dokuro Sen*\)](#). Three papers, 1k each; short writing assignments and quizzes for each class; co-lead class discussion once on a Tuesday.

Required Books: Homer, [The Odyssey](#) (Stanley Lombardo's or [Charles Stein's](#) translation recommended); Hans Blumenberg, [Shipwreck with Spectator: Paradigm of a Metaphor for Existence](#); Daniel Defoe, [Robinson Crusoe](#) (Oxford World's Classics recommended); [Jacques Derrida, *Beast and the Sovereign Vol. 2*](#); William Shakespeare, [The Tempest](#) (Arden 3 edition recommended); Jacques Derrida, [Of Hospitality](#); [Edgar Allan Poe, A Premature Burial, Ms. Found in a Bottle, Descent into the Maeslstorm, A Cask of Amontillado, and The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket](#); Julian Barnes, [The History of the World in 101/2 Chapters](#); Peter Szendy, [Prophecies of Leviathan: Reading Past Melville \(Fordham University Press, 2010\)](#); and [Joseph Conrad, Lord Jim](#) (Oxford World's Classics recommended). In addition, there will be pdfs (free, available online) of essays, including Derrida's "Hostipality."

Recommended: Virgil, *The Aeneid*; chapter one of Stefan Helmreich's [Alien Ocean: Anthropological Voyages in Microbial Seas](#); Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Reveries of a Solitary Walker*; [Johann Gottfried Schnabel, Insel Felsenburg \(transliterated: Rock Castle Island\)](#) (1731); Herman Melville, *Redburn*; Mat Johnson, *Pym*; Jorge Luis Borges, "Book of Imaginary Beings"; Stephen Crane, *The Open Boat*; Franz Kafka, "The Hunter Gracchus"; Primo Levi, "The Canto of Ulysses" in *The Survival of Auschwitz*, 109-115; Jack London, *The Sea Wolf*; and William Golding, *Pincher Martin: The Two Deaths of Christopher Martin*.

Requirements: Co-lead class discussion twice, once on a Tuesday and once on a Thursday; two discussion questions and three or more "BIG WORDS" for each class; student formulated quizzes each class; and three 1,000 word papers; willingness to reflect, think, respond, by paying very, VERY, VERY close formal attention to texts and films.

All readings listed below are required unless otherwise indicated (as "recommended reading" or as "(not) recommended reading").

DUE August 26: **Two [discussion questions](#)** (DQs) on Alfred Hitchcock, [Lifeboat](#) (1944), numbered 1 and 2 and with your name at the bottom of the document, due by 5 p.m. Email your questions in one word document (as an attachment) to me at richardburt33@gmail.com.

August 27 Reading at Sea: Surfacing and Survival in Alfred Hitchcock, [Lifeboat](#) (1944) Screening to be arranged, if possible. Otherwise, watch the film online (streaming or download).

DUE August 28: **Two [discussion questions](#)** (DQs) and BIG WORDS (three or more) on Hans Blumenberg, [Shipwreck with Spectator: Paradigm of a Metaphor for Existence](#), pp. 7-79, numbered 1 and 2 and with your name at the bottom of the document, due by 5 p.m. Email your questions in one word document (as an attachment) to me at richardburt33@gmail.com.

August 29: Hans Blumenberg, [Shipwreck with Spectator: Paradigm of a Metaphor for Existence](#), 7-79.

Discussion of Théodore Géricault, "[The Raft of the Medusa](#)."

Recommended Viewing: Théodore Géricault, "[The Raft of the Medusa](#)." The video is in French, without subtitles, but even if you don't know French, you can see certain details of the painting in successive close-ups and, at 3:12, you can get a sense of the relatively huge scale of the painting when you see a woman standing in front of it looking up at it.

Recommended Reading: [Thomas Pfau, "The Philosophy of Shipwreck: Gnosticism, Skepticism, and Coleridge's Catastrophic Modernity,"](#) *MLN* 122 (2007): 949–1004; E.R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, pp. [128-30](#); Stéphane Mallarmé, "Un Coup de Dés Jamais N'abolira le Hasard" ([in French and in English](#)); Horace, selected [Odes](#)

C'ÉTAIT
un arbre

CE SERAIT
un

un

dessiné si min

différemment sans avoir

LE NOMBRE

EXISTÂT-IL

accusant qu'éclaircissait après l'après

COMMENÇÂT-IL ET CESSÂT-IL

nombre qui est et qui prend après

mais

par lequel certains s'échappent en sort

SE CHIFFRÂT-IL

dépassé de la somme par son être

ILLUMINÂT-IL

LE HASARD

Clair

la plume

rythmique suspendu du sinistre

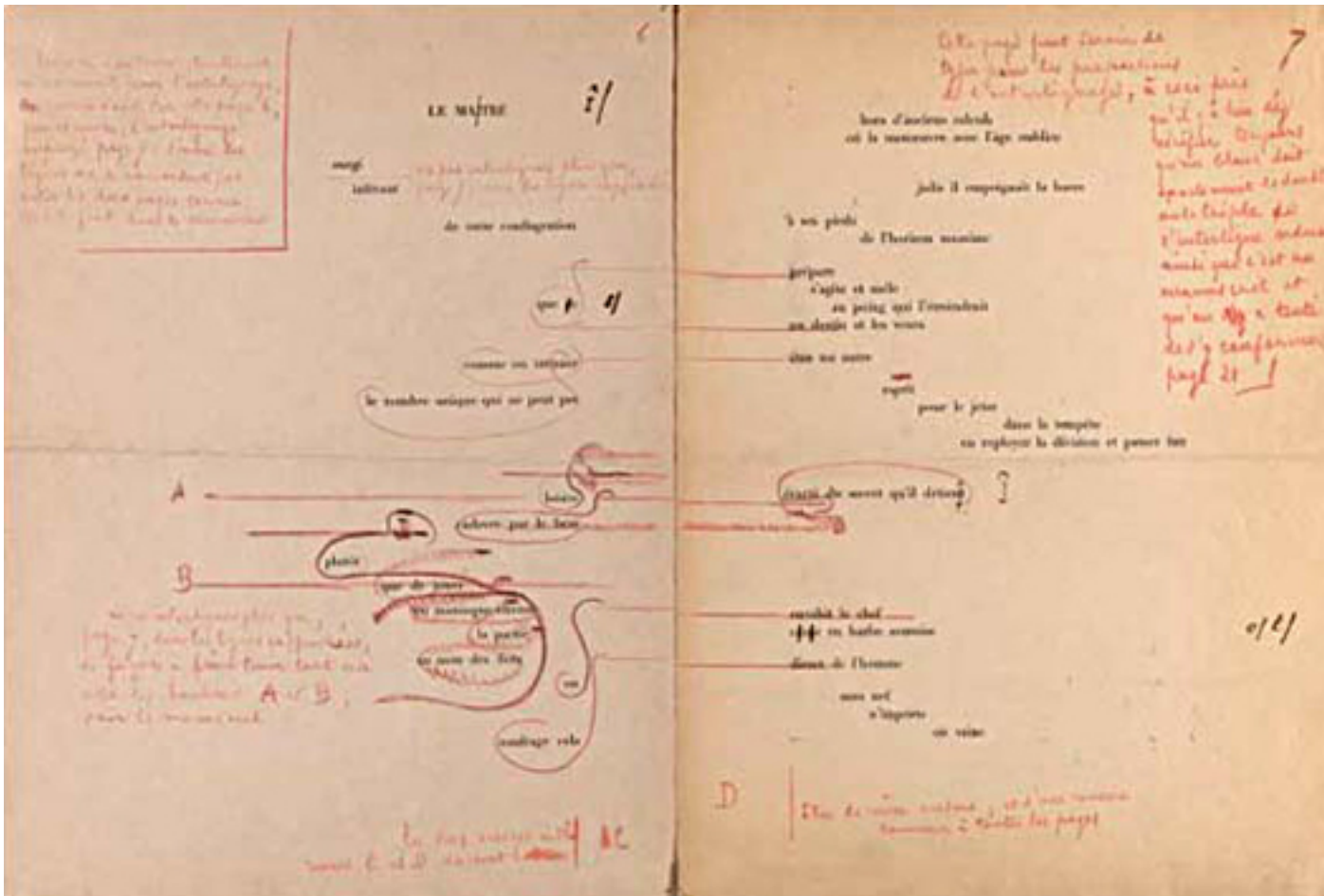
l'ensemble

une trame originelle

magistres d'un versant au delà jusqu'à une cime

févrie

par la neutralité idéologique du goufre



(Not) Recommended Reading: Deep Sea Reading, Dead in the Water: Stefan Helmreich, "The Message from the Mud," in [Alien Ocean: Anthropological Voyages in Microbial Seas](#) pp. 31-67; 289-99.

DUE September 2: **Two discussion questions** (DQs) and **BIG WORDS** (three or more) on [Homer, The Odyssey](#) (Stanley Lombardo translation recommended). Email your questions in one word document (as an attachment) to me at atrichardburt33@gmail.com.

September 3 Sink and Swim: [Homer, The Odyssey](#), Books 1-9

Recommended: Clips of [Alfred B. Lord on The Odyssey](#) as a poem sung and performed.

Two discussion questions (DQs) and **BIG WORDS** (three or more) on [Homer, The Odyssey](#). Email your questions in one word document (as an attachment) to me at richardburt33@gmail.com.

September 5: [Homer, The Odyssey](#), Books 10-12

Recommended: [Homer and Repetition](#); [Scylla's "jaws"](#)

DUE September 9: **Two [discussion questions](#)** (DQs) and BIG WORDS (three of more) on [Homer, *The Odyssey*](#), Books 17-24, numbered 1 and 2 and with your name at the bottom of the document, due by 5 p.m. Email your questions in one word document (as an attachment) to me at richardburt33@gmail.com.

September 10: [Homer, *The Odyssey*](#), Books 13-21

Recommended: ["The Death of Argos" Stephen Mitchell](#)

DUE: Now that you know that two DQs on each assigned reading or film are due by 5 p.m. the day before each class, I will no longer list the due dates.

September 12: [Homer, *The Odyssey*](#), Books 22-24

Recommended Reading: Jacques Derrida, "Hospitality," in *Acts of Religion* (2002) (Part [one](#); part [two](#); part [three](#)); BBC ["Should Shipwrecks Be Left Alone?"](#); Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, "Excursus 1: Odysseus or Myth and Enlightenment," in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Get [on course reserves](#)); Erich Auerbach, ["Odysseus' Scar" in *Mimesis*, pp. 3-23](#)

September 17: Buried Alive? Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* pp. 3-152 in the Oxford World's Classics edition (up to the page where you read "I was now in my twenty third Year of Residence in this Island" in other editions); journal, sometimes missing entries; the foot-print; the post; the wheel and cross (as a circle).

September 19: Jacques Derrida, *Beast and the Sovereign Vol. 2* (pp. 46-50; 54-56; 62-64; 74-78; 80-88 on *Robinson Crusoe*)

September 24: Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (Read to the end of whichever edition you are reading.)

Recommended Reading: [Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile* \(1762\)](#) (In *Emile*, Rousseau mentions *The Odyssey*, *Robinson Crusoe*, and [Fénelon's *Telemachus*](#) many times; see also Louis Aragon, ["The Adventures Of Telemachus"](#)); Rousseau, ["Reveries of a Solitary Walker"](#) (the [whole book is here](#).) (pdfs [here](#) and [here](#)); Daniel Defoe, ["Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe"](#) (pdf [here](#)); Daniel Defoe, ["Serious reflections during the life and surprising adventures of Robinson Crusoe : with his vision of the angelick world. Written by himself"](#) (pdf [here](#)); ["Alexander Selkirk - the Real Robinson Crusoe adventure story"](#); ["Charles Gildon, *The life and strange surprising adventures of Mr. D--- de F--*, of London, hosier, who has liv'd above fifty years by himself, in the Kingdoms of ..."](#) (pdf [here](#)); ["SELKIRK, the real Robinson Crusoe Feature"](#)

Four DQs due Wednesday September 25 ,by 5 p.m. Two on Derrida, Two on Poe (one of each short story).

September 26: Jacques Derrida, *Beast and the Sovereign Vol. 2* (pp.127-49; 160-72, on *Robinson Crusoe*); Edgar Allan Poe, *A Premature Burial* and *Ms. Found in a Bottle*

Recommended Reading: Edgar Allan Poe, *Descent into the Maeslstorm*; Edgar Allan Poe, *A Cask of Amontillado*

FIRST PAPER DUE SEPTEMBER 27, 1k words. Email your paper with your last name in the subject header--like "Burt.doc," for example--(as an attachment) to me at richardburt33@gmail.com.

October 1: Drowning the Book: William Shakespeare, *The Tempest* (Prospero's drowned book; his library; burial at sea) Prospero and Robinson Crusoe

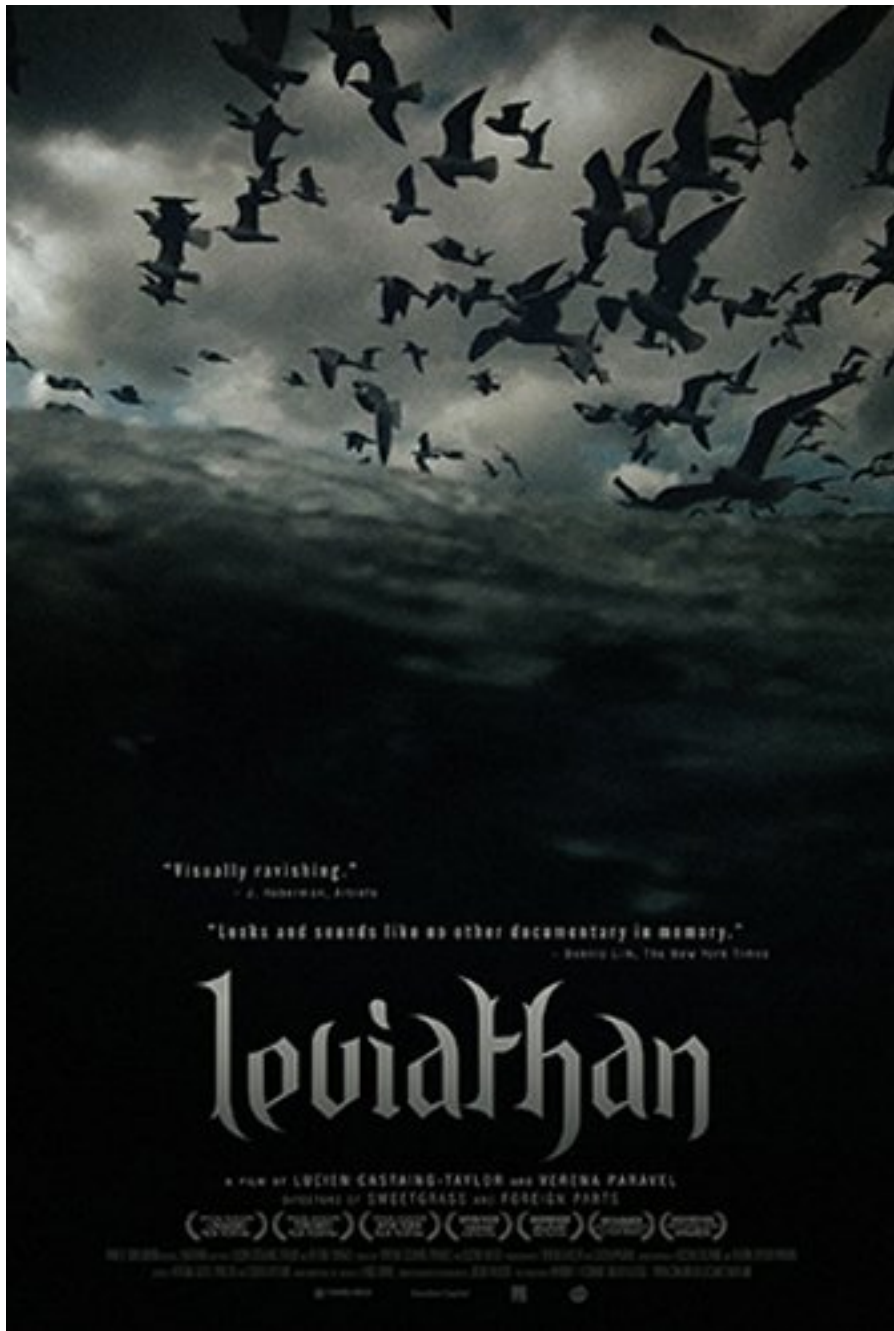
Screening of [Julie Taymor, *The Tempest*](#) Tuesday, October 1, Periods E-1-E3 / 7:20pm-10:10pm, in Turlington B310

October 3: [Julie Taymor, *The Tempest*](#) (2010)

Possibly Recommended Viewing:

[Peter Greenaway, *The Tempest*](#) (1991)

[Vox Piscus](#)



Moby-Dick American Edition New York: Harper & Brothers, 1851

Moby-Dick British Edition (entitled *The Whale*) published in three volumes 1851 by Richard Bentley, London.

[Moby-Dick or The Whale, Northwestern-Newberry edition](#) (Northwestern University Press, 1988)

[Moby-Dick: A Longman Critical Edition](#) (2009)

October 8: Host / Hostage / Circles: Herman Melville, *Moby Dick* "Extracts" to chapters 19

October 10: Surf(ac)ing Reading: Herman Melville, *Moby Dick* chapters 20-40

October 15: *Moby Dick* chapters 41-62; [Peter Szendy, *Prophecies of Leviathan: Reading Past Melville* \(Fordham University Press, 2010\), pp. ix; 3-22.](#)

Recommended Reading: [Maurice Blanchot, "Prophetic Speech,"](#) in *The Book to Come*

October 17: Whirlpools of Reading: Herman Melville, *Moby Dick* chapters 63-84; [Szendy endnote, p. 129.pdf](#)

Film of possible interest (not required): Robert Redford stars in [All Is Lost](#) (opens October 18th)

October 22: Close/d Reading: Herman Melville, *Moby Dick* chapters 85-100; [Peter Szendy, *Prophecies of Leviathan: Reading Past Melville* \(Fordham University Press, 2010\), pp. 22-40. **Two discussion questions** \(DQs\) and BIG WORDS \(three or more\) on *Moby Dick* chapters 85-100; and **two discussion questions** \(DQs\) and BIG WORDS \(three or more\) on \[Peter Szendy, *Prophecies of Leviathan: Reading Past Melville* \\(Fordham University Press, 2010\\), pp. 22-40.\]\(#\)](#)

October 24: Herman Melville, *Moby Dick* chapters 101-18

Recommended Reading: Maurice [Blanchot, "Prophetic Speech,"](#) in *The Book to Come*

". . . or that sea-beast
Leviathan, which God of all his works
Created hugest that swim th' ocean-stream.
Him, haply slumbering on the Norway foam,
The pilot of some small night-foundered skiff,
Deeming some island, oft, as seamen tell,
With fixed anchor in his scaly rind,
Moors by his side under the lee, while night
Invests the sea, and wished morn delays"

[John Milton, *Paradise Lost* Book One](#)

sunt quedam genera piscium dicta quod ambulandi in terra ha-
 bent. et natandi in aquis officium habent. Simpliciter enim graecus
 utrumque dicitur. id est quia in aquis et in terra vivunt. Unde
 phocae. Comodissimi. pyrotami. hoc est. equi fluctuales.



Est belua in mari que graece aspidochelone dicitur
 latine vero aspidochelone. Tere etiam dicta ob
 immunitatem corporis est ei ingens sicut ille qui accipit
 ionam cuiusdam tantae magnitudinis fuit ut putaret
 infernus. Dicente ipse iona. Exanduit me de ventre
 inferni. In medio pelagi eleuat dorsum suum super undas
 maris. tantumque stat in uno loco quousque de subulo
 maris vento agitata pluviae sunt. virgultusque cres-
 cant ibi. quae navigantis insulam esse putantes. appli-

[Press](#), 2010), pp. 41-74. **Two discussion questions** (DQs) and BIG WORDS (three or more) on *Moby Dick* chapters 118-26; and **two discussion questions** (DQs) and BIG WORDS (three or more) on [Peter Szendy, *Prophecies of Leviathan: Reading Past Melville* \(Fordham University Press, 2010\)](#), pp. 41-74.

October 31: Herman Melville, *Moby Dick* chapters 127-Epilogue (coffin as book); [Peter Szendy, *Prophecies of Leviathan: Reading Past Melville* \(Fordham University Press, 2010\)](#), pp. 75-93. **Two discussion questions** (DQs) and BIG WORDS (three or more) on *Moby Dick* chapters 127-Epilogue; and **two discussion questions** (DQs) and BIG WORDS (three or more) on [Peter Szendy, *Prophecies of Leviathan: Reading Past Melville* \(Fordham University Press, 2010\)](#), pp. 75-93.

SECOND PAPER DUE November 1, 1k words. Email your your paper (as an attachment) to me at richardburt33@gmail.com.

[Saint Augustine, *The Confessions* reading by chance](#)

November 5 Jump! (Ship) / No Return: Joseph Conrad, *Lord Jim* ; Chapters 1-VI (up to page 56 in the Oxford World's Classics Edition). (The ship that doesn't shipwreck as expected; tales-within-a-tale narrative frame structure; introduction as alternate epilogue; telling the disaster as testimony inside and outside the law.)

November 7 Joseph Conrad, *Lord Jim*, chapters 7-17, up to page 134 in the Oxford World's Classics Edition

November 12: Joseph Conrad, *Lord Jim*, chapter 18 to chapter 31 (pages 135-213 in the Oxford World's Classics Edition)

November 14: **Required Reading:** Joseph Conrad, *Lord Jim*, chapter 31 to the end of the novel (pages 214-302 in the Oxford World's Classics Edition)

In class, you will divide into two groups and debate whether the ending of Lord Jim is good or bad. One half of the class will argue that the ending is good, and hither haf will argue that it is bad. Textual support is necessary to win a point. The co-leaders will moderate and assign points.

Due Novemeber 14: Email your report on the class--200-300 words--with your last name in the subject header--like "Burt.doc," for example--(as an attachment) to me at richardburt33@gmail.com.

Recommended: [Maurice Blanchot, "Encountering the Imaginary,"](#) (on Ulysses, Homer, Ahab, and Melville) in *The Book to Come*; [Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality*](#)



[Caspar David Friedrich, "Wreck in the Sea of Ice"](#) (Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* [1818 edition] begins with a prologue in which Victor Frankenstein is found dead with his journal in a ship frozen in ice.)

Due November 18: **Two [discussion questions](#)** (DQs) and BIG WORDS (three or more) on [Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*](#) (1798 edition) and [The Rime of the Ancient Mariner](#) (1817 edition, with glosses) (**Read Both Versions, but you need only ask two questions about them.**)

November 19: **Required Reading (Read Both Versions):** [Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*](#) (1798 edition) and [The Rime of the Ancient Mariner](#) (1817 edition, with glosses)

Read the 1798 and the 1817 editions of Coleridge's Rime of the Ancient Mariner. Coleridge compulsively revised the poem after its first publication. In addition to having a narrative within a narrative within narrative the poem has some notoriously difficult passages. In 1817, Coleridge added glosses to the margins of the poem. Glosses are annotations to the text that are supposed to clarify difficult passages.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gloss_\(annotation\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gloss_(annotation))

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bible_gloss

Glosses appear in the margin of texts, unlike footnotes.

You may start class discussion by debating this question:

Do Coleridge's addition of glosses to the 1817 edition of Rime elucidate his poem or make it more obscure? Focus on specific glosses on specific passages to make your point.

Due November 19: Email your report on the class--200-300 words--with your last name in the subject header--like "Burt.doc," for example--(as an attachment) to me at richardburt33@gmail.com.

Recommended: [The Rime of the Ancient Mariner](#) (1800) and [The Rime of the Ancient Mariner](#) (text of 1834); Coleridge's [Christabel](#); Running Aground: Edgar Allan Poe, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*, preface to chapter 19 (pp. 1007-1141 in the [Library of America edition](#))

(no journal kept by the narrator, yet Poe casts the narrative in journal form; pocketbook with memos and drawings kept)

Due November 20: **Two [discussion questions](#)** (DQs) and BIG WORDS (three or more) on [Thomas Pfau, "The Philosophy of Shipreck: Gnosticism, Skepticism, and Coleridge's Catastrophic Modernity,"](#)

November 21: Required: [Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*](#) (1798 edition) and [The Rime of the Ancient Mariner](#) (1817 edition, with

glosses) and [Thomas Pfau, "The Philosophy of Shipreck: Gnosticism, Skepticism, and Coleridge's Catastrophic Modernity,"](#) *MLN*, Volume 122, Number 5, December 2007), pp. 949-1004.

You may skip the first 20 odd pages and begin reading at the subheading on page 973 entitled "Modernity and the Shipwreck of the Vita Activa : Skeptical Self-Creation in Coleridge"

Due November 21: Email your report on the class--200-300 words--with your last name in the subject header--like "Burt.doc," for example, only with your last name, not mine--(as an attachment) to me at richardburt33@gmail.com.

Recommended: Edgar Allan Poe, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*, chapter 19 to the end (pp. 1141-1179 in the [Library of America edition](#))

November 26: **Required:** [A Night to Remember](#) (dir. Roy Ward Baker, 1958) [Criterion blu-ray](#) (See the films online or see them onDVD on reserve in Library West)

Recommended: [The Living Skeleton \(1968, Japan; originally titled Kyuketsu Dokuro Sen\)](#) and Julian Barnes, *The History of the World in 10 1/2 Chapters*

November 28: Thanksgiving

December 2: Conferences with me in my office, 4314 Turlington Hall

December 3: **T.B.A.**