



## MA (DLB) 0706 – Indian Ocean

### JSIA Cross-Elective – Fall 2026

#### **Course Information**

Course Duration: 8 weeks  
Credits: 2  
Credit Hours: 3 hours per week  
Prerequisites: None  
Equivalent Courses: None  
Exclusive Courses: None

#### **Instructor Information**

Instructor: Renu Elizabeth Abraham  
Biography: Dr. Abraham is a historian who specializes in the early modern period, Indian Ocean, and historiography.  
Email: [reabraham@jgu.edu.in](mailto:reabraham@jgu.edu.in)  
Homepage: <https://jgu.edu.in/jsia/faculty/dr-renu-elizabeth-abraham>

#### **1. Course Description**

This course offers an overview of the field of Indian Ocean studies. It investigates the political engagement of Indian Ocean states with the sea by studying their oceanic policies between the tenth and twentieth centuries. The course will assess the impact of European maritime policies on the existing trade networks and merchant-king relations. It will discuss factors that historically connected the ocean and debate whether the Indian Ocean ceased to be a unit following the colonization of the region in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

#### **2. Course Intended Learning Objectives(Aim)**

Course Intended Learning Outcomes	Teaching and Learning Activities	Assessments/ Activities
-----------------------------------	----------------------------------	-------------------------

A foundation in Indian Ocean studies	Lecture	Class presentation
Training in the use of Indian Ocean as method	In class activities	Essay writing

### 3. Scheme of Evaluation and Grading

#### Continuous assessment

Weekly assignments (4x10 marks=40%)

Class presentation 30%

Written essay 30%

#### Grade Definition

The final course grade will be based on the sum of the actual points received for each of the components and will be given as follows:

Grading and Comments			
Letter Grade	Percentage of Marks	Grade Points	Comments
O	80 and above	8	Outstanding: Exceptional knowledge of the subject matter, thorough understanding of issues; ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles and extraordinary critical and analytical ability.
A+	75 – 79	7.5	Excellent: Sound knowledge of the subject matter, thorough understanding of issues; ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles and critical and analytical ability.
A	70 – 74	7	Very Good: Sound knowledge of the subject matter, excellent organizational capacity, ability to synthesize ideas, rules, and principles, critically analyze existing material and originality in thinking and presentation.
A-	65 -69	6	Good: Good understanding of the subject matter, ability to identify issues and provide balanced solutions to problems and good critical and analytical skills.
B+	60 – 64	5	Fair: Average understanding of the subject matter, limited ability to identify issues and provide solutions to problems and reasonable critical and analytical skills.
B	55 – 59	4	Acceptable: Adequate knowledge of the subject matter to go to the next level of the study and reasonable critical and analytical skills.
B-	50 – 54	3	Marginal: Limited knowledge of the subject matter and irrelevant use of materials, and poor critical and analytical skills.
P1	45 – 49	2	Pass 1: Pass with Basic understanding of the subject matter.
P2	40 – 44	1	Pass 2: Pass with Rudimentary understanding of the subject matter.

F	Below 40	0	Fail: Poor comprehension of the subject matter; poor critical and analytical skills and marginal use of the relevant materials. Will require repeating the course.
---	----------	---	--

#### 4. Academic Integrity

Your work is expected to be your own. Copying of any kind without proper acknowledgement of the source will be penalized.

**5. Keyword Syllabus:** Indian Ocean; early modern period; colonialism; islands; littoral society

#### 6. Course Material

Readings for this course will be made available on UMS. Please note that the reading list might be subject to change.

This course requires active participation from the class, which means reading the assigned course material before each class and submitting the weekly assignments on time.

Use of phone will not be permitted in class. Photography and videography are strictly prohibited.

#### 7. Session Plan

Session	General Topic	Readings
Week 1	Indian Ocean studies	Alpers, Edward, 'Indian Ocean studies: How did we get here and where are we going? A historian's perspective,' <i>Journal of Indian Ocean World Studies</i> , 5:2 (2021), 314–336.  Pearson, Michael N., 'Introduction I: The State of the Subject,' in <i>India and the Indian Ocean, 1500–1800</i> , ed. by Ashin Das Gupta and Michael N. Pearson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 1–24.
Week 2	Littoral society  Islands	Schnepel, Burkhard, "'Islandness': The World of Indian Ocean Islands,' in <i>Small Island, Large Ocean: Mauritius and the Indian Ocean World</i> (Routledge, 2023), pp. 38–69.  Pearson, Michael, 'Littoral Society: The Case for the Coast,' <i>The Great Circle</i> , 7:1 (1985), 1–8.  Pearson, Michael, 'Littoral Society: The Concept and the Problems,' <i>Journal of World History</i> , 17:4 (2004), 353–373.

<p>Week 3</p>	<p>Maritime policies</p> <p>Cholas, Rasulids, Sri Vijaya</p>	<p>Prange, Sebastian, 'The Contested Sea: Regimes of Maritime Violence in the Pre-Modern Indian Ocean,' <i>Journal of Early Modern History</i>, 17 (2013), 9–33.</p> <p>Prange, Sebastian, 'A Trade of No Dishonor: Piracy, Commerce, and Community in the Western Indian Ocean, Twelfth to Sixteenth Century,' <i>The American Historical Review</i>, 116:5 (2011), 1269–1293.</p>
<p>Week 4</p>	<p>Maritime policies</p> <p>Yemen and the western Indian Ocean states</p>	<p>Vallet, Eric, 'Yemeni 'Oceanic Policy' at the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Jul 2005, United Kingdom, pp. 289–296. [<a href="https://paris1.hal.science/hal-00289581v1/document">https://paris1.hal.science/hal-00289581v1/document</a>]</p> <p>Subrahmanyam, Sanjay, 'Of Imarat and Tijarat: Asian Merchants and State Power in the Western Indian Ocean,' <i>Comparative Studies in Society and History</i>, 37:4 (1995), 750–780.</p>
<p>Week 5</p>	<p>Maritime policies</p> <p>China</p>	<p>Wade, Geoff, 'Chinese Engagement with the Indian Ocean during the Song, Yuan, and Ming Dynasties (Tenth to Sixteenth Centuries),' in <i>Trade, Circulation, and Flow in the Indian Ocean World</i> (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 55–82.</p> <p>Wade, Geoff, 'The Zheng He Voyages: A Reassessment,' <i>Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>, 78:1 (2005), 37–58.</p>
<p>Week 6</p>	<p>Maritime policies</p> <p>The Portuguese and the Dutch</p>	<p>Maloni, Ruby, 'Control of the Seas: The Historical Exegesis of the Portuguese Cartaz,' <i>Proceedings of the Indian History Congress</i>, 72 (2011), 476–484.</p> <p>Weststeijn, Arthur, 'Love Alone Is Not Enough': Treaties in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Colonial Expansion,' in <i>Empire by Treaty: Negotiating European Expansion, 1600–1900</i>, ed. by Saliha Belmessous (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 19–44.</p>

		Prakash, Om, 'The Dutch East India Company in the Trade of the Indian Ocean', in <i>India and the Indian Ocean, 1500-1800</i> , ed. by Michael Pearson and Ashin Das Gupta (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 185–200.
Week 7	Maritime policies  Ottomans and the Mughals	Malekandathil, Pius, 'The Ottoman Expansion and the Portuguese Response in the Indian Ocean, 1500-1560,' in <i>Maritime India: Trade, Religion and Polity in the Indian Ocean</i> (New Delhi: Primus Books, 2010), pp. 110–130.  Malekandathil, Pius, 'Shifting from Inland to the Frontiers of Coastal Societies: A Study on the Integration of Coastal Northern Konkan with the Mughal World, 1650–1720,' in <i>The Mughals, the Portuguese and the Indian Ocean: Changing Imageries of Maritime India</i> (New Delhi: Primus Books, 2015), pp. 140–159.
Week 8	The modern period  The British Empire	Alpers, Edward, 'The Long Nineteenth Century,' in <i>The Indian Ocean in World History</i> (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 98–127.  Alpers, Edward, 'The Last Century,' in <i>The Indian Ocean in World History</i> (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 128–146.