



**Course Title:** Hidden Secrets: Exploring Maps from the Early Modern Era

**Course Code:** HIS 86

**Instructor:** Chet Van Duzer

## Course Remarks

In this course we will learn in detail about the three principal types of medieval maps— *mappaemundi* (circular world maps), the maps in the *Geography* of Claudius Ptolemy, and nautical charts. Particular focus will be placed on how early modern maps were made, not only on how the maps were commissioned, but also the sources that cartographers used, both textual and pictorial. Featured maps include a series of fifteenth-century *mappaemundi* that show what was supposed to happen to the world during the Apocalypse, Henricus Martellus’s world map of c. 1491, and Martin Waldseemüller’s famous world maps of 1507 and 1516. The segment on the decoration of maps will include discussions of sea monsters, ships, and cartouches. The course will end with an examination of some of the insights about maps that we can only achieve by looking at them slowly and carefully.

The course is very visual—I will show many images of maps. It is important to see many of maps, both the whole maps and detail images, in order to appreciate their characteristics and diversity, and even heavily illustrated books do not have enough images to accomplish this goal. Out of consideration for the institutions that hold the rights for the images, I cannot share the PowerPoint files, but if you want to know more about a particular map, please take note of its details in the moment and either ask me about it during the times for questions or write to me about it later.

All of the recommended readings will be freely available on the course’s Canvas page, and I also include below links to them on the internet, in Open Access. At the end of the syllabus you will find suggestions for further exploration of historical maps in the form of additional readings and useful websites. I hope these prove enticing!

## Grade Option

No Grade Requested (NGR): This is the default option. No work will be required; no credit shall be received; no proof of attendance can be provided.

*Due to its short format, this course may not be taken for Credit or a Letter Grade. If you require proof of participation, your instructor will provide Certificates of Attendance. Please contact the instructor after completing the class. The Continuing Studies office does not issue these certificates.*

## Note About Recording

This course will be recorded.

## Tentative Course Schedule

### Week 1

- Lecture: In today's class I will give an introduction to the three main types of early modern maps (*mappaemundi*, nautical charts, and maps in Ptolemy's *Geography*), and will also discuss how a buyer went about ordering the creation of a medieval map.
- Recommended Reading:
  - Christoph Mauntel, "The T-O Diagram and its Religious Connotations: A Circumstantial Case," in Christoph Mauntel, ed., *Geography and Religious Knowledge in the Medieval World* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), pp. 57-84  
<https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/9783110686159-003/html>

### Week 2

- Lecture: In today's class I will discuss some very innovative fifteenth-century experiments with *mappaemundi* and the reception of Ptolemy's *Geography*.
- Recommended Reading:
  - Explore the maps in a fifteenth-century manuscript of Ptolemy's *Geography* in the University of Valencia (Spain), manuscript 693. A PDF of these maps is downloadable on the course's Canvas site; if you wish to see the whole manuscript (including the text in addition to the maps), go to this address, where the maps (26 of them) begin at p. 227 of the 252 pages on the site:  
[https://webliblioteca.uv.es/cgi/view.pl?source=uv\\_ms\\_0693](https://webliblioteca.uv.es/cgi/view.pl?source=uv_ms_0693)

### Week 3

- Lecture: In today's class I will discuss the results of a digital humanities project to recover information from a damaged world map by Henricus Martellus that was an important source for Martin Waldseemüller in making his world map of 1507, and will also discuss the relationship between Waldseemüller's *Carta marina* of 1516, on the one hand, and both Ptolemaic maps and nautical charts on the other.
- Recommended Reading:
  - Chet Van Duzer, *Martin Waldseemüller's Carta marina of 1516: Study and Transcription of the*
  - *Long Legends* (New York: Springer, 2020)  
<https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-030-22703-6>

### Week 4

- Lecture: In today's class I will discuss the decoration of maps, in particular the images of sea monsters, ships, and cartouches, and then I will demonstrate how we can discover information hidden in early modern maps by looking at them slowly and carefully.

- Recommended Reading:
  - Jennifer L. Roberts, “The Power of Patience: Teaching Students the Value of Deceleration and Immersive Attention,” *Harvard Magazine* Nov.-Dec. 2013, pp. 40-43  
<https://harvardmagazine.com/2013/11/the-power-of-patience>

### Optional Readings for Further Exploration

Matthew Edney, “History of Cartography,” in *Oxford Bibliographies in Geography*, edited by Barney Warf. Revised edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 26 July 2017 <https://www.dropbox.com/s/m0gls8ciltoyd8z/edney2017obg.pdf>

Tony Campbell, “Portolan Charts from the Late Thirteenth Century to 1500,” in J. B. Harley and David Woodward, eds., *The History of Cartography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987-), vol. 1, pp. 371-463  
[https://press.uchicago.edu/books/HOC/HOC\\_V1/HOC\\_VOLUME1\\_chapter19.pdf](https://press.uchicago.edu/books/HOC/HOC_V1/HOC_VOLUME1_chapter19.pdf)

Corradino Astengo, “The Renaissance Chart Tradition in the Mediterranean,” in David Woodward, ed., *The History of Cartography*, vol. 3.1: *Cartography in the European Renaissance* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), pp. 174-262  
[https://press.uchicago.edu/books/HOC/HOC\\_V3\\_Pt1/HOC\\_VOLUME3\\_Part1\\_chapter7.pdf](https://press.uchicago.edu/books/HOC/HOC_V3_Pt1/HOC_VOLUME3_Part1_chapter7.pdf)

Patrick Gautier Dalché, “The Reception of Ptolemy’s *Geography* (End of the Fourteenth to Beginning of the Sixteenth Century),” in David Woodward, ed., *The History of Cartography*, vol. 3, *Cartography in the European Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), part 1, pp. 285-364  
[https://press.uchicago.edu/books/HOC/HOC\\_V3\\_Pt1/HOC\\_VOLUME3\\_Part1\\_chapter9.pdf](https://press.uchicago.edu/books/HOC/HOC_V3_Pt1/HOC_VOLUME3_Part1_chapter9.pdf)

Victoria Morse, “The Role of Maps in Later Medieval Society: Twelfth to Fourteenth Century,” in David Woodward, ed., *The History of Cartography*, vol. 3, *Cartography in the European Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), part 1, pp. 25-54  
[https://press.uchicago.edu/books/HOC/HOC\\_V3\\_Pt1/HOC\\_VOLUME3\\_Part1\\_chapter2.pdf](https://press.uchicago.edu/books/HOC/HOC_V3_Pt1/HOC_VOLUME3_Part1_chapter2.pdf)

J. B. Harley, “Maps, Knowledge and Power,” in Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels, eds., *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 277-312

Chet Van Duzer, “Urbano Monte’s World Maps: Sources and Development,” *Imago temporis* 14 (2020), pp. 415-435  
<https://www.raco.cat/index.php/ImagoTemporis/article/view/372377/465871>

Chet Van Duzer, “Nautical Charts, Texts, and Transmission: The Case of Conte di Ottomano Freducci and Fra Mauro,” *Electronic British Library Journal*, article 6 (2017), pp. 1-65 <http://www.bl.uk/eblj/2017articles/article6.html>

Chet Van Duzer, *Sea Monsters on Medieval and Renaissance Maps* (London: British Library, 2013)

Chet Van Duzer, *Henricus Martellus’s World Map at Yale (c. 1491): Multispectral Imaging, Sources, Influence* (New York: Springer, 2019)

### Websites Useful for Further Exploration

The Luna site of the John Carter Brown Library - images of many historic maps available in high resolution, including descriptions:

<https://jcb.lunaimaging.com/luna/servlet>

*The History of Cartography*, published by the University of Chicago Press - the standard reference work in the field, all chapters from volumes 1, 2, 3, and 6 are freely available in PDF:

<http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/HOC/index.html>

Library of Congress - images of many historic maps available in high resolution:

<https://loc.gov>

Website of the digital collections of the Boston Public Library - high-resolution images of many historical maps: <https://www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search>

Website of the David Rumsey Map Collection at Stanford- high-resolution images of many historical maps: <https://www.davidrumsey.com/>

Gallica - images of many *mappaemundi* and nautical charts in the National Library of France: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/>

Map History - The Gateway to the Subject

<http://www.maphistory.info/index.html>

Robert W. Karrow, Jr., “A Selected, Annotated List of Works on Old Maps and Their Makers, and on their Collection, Cataloging, Care, and Use”

<https://www.newberry.org/cartography-concise-bibliography-history-cartography>