



ethical controversy of their choosing. Because students were coming into this final assignment with their research skills already in place, their analytical and interpretive engagement with texts was much better, because they were not trying to juggle too many new balls at the same time.

I plan to continue using this assignment, or a version of it, in future iterations of WRTR 2306. The main thing I will do differently is explicitly encourage students to cultivate an attitude of patience and persistence with research tasks. I found that students were very quick to give up on a search if it did not yield instant results (no doubt a consequence of the instant gratification that characterizes much of modern digital culture). Some of the assignment components (in particular the historical map) are specifically intended to be difficult, in order that students can begin to develop some rudiments of resourcefulness, and start to outgrow the deep infantilism that their parents, educators, and technology have inculcated. If I make it clear up-front that certain components of the assignment will be difficult, and are deliberately intended to force them into the unfamiliar and uncomfortable mode of determined persistence, then they may be better prepared for that part of the assignment.

## Research Assignment: The Journey

“The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there.” – L. P. Hartley

Both WRTR 2305 and 2306 are courses about finding and making meaning. There exists a very old tradition of attempting to find and/or make meaning through the device of the Journey. Travel forces you to encounter unfamiliar places, and people with beliefs and values that are different from your own, and if you’re doing it right, travel always involves learning new things. Unfortunately, we cannot go on a journey in this course, but we can do the next best thing – because planning a trip is half the fun, right?

In 1961, a young Oxford undergraduate named Tim Severin, along with two fellow adventurers, launched the Marco Polo Route Project. Equipped with two motorcycles, the three young men set out to recreate Marco Polo’s 13<sup>th</sup> century journey from Venice to China, in an effort to investigate the accuracy of Polo’s much-doubted tales. Severin recorded their journey in his fascinating book *Tracking Marco Polo*, launching his multi-decade career as an author-adventurer, which he spent recreating important historical journeys.

In this assignment, you will pretend that you are going to recreate a historical journey. You will research this journey, to determine both its purpose and your plans for its execution, and you will submit a report of about 1000 words on this research. The main purpose of this assignment is to help you to become comfortable and familiar with a wide range of research resources.

So choose a journey you want to research – and don’t be afraid to be creative and ambitious! Marco Polo is only one of countless possibilities. You might consider:

- x the route taken by a historical explorer
- x a religious pilgrimage



In doing this assignment, you are planning to walk out of your life and into somebody else's.

It is just possible that your historical map might be your primary source. If so that's fine, but make sure that you explain this in the Introduction section, and make sure that you still have at least eight sources in total.

Rubric