

# IP226-15 The Liquid Continent

**23/24**

**Department**

Liberal Arts

**Level**

Undergraduate Level 2

**Module leader**

William Rupp

**Credit value**

15

**Module duration**

10 weeks

**Assessment**

100% coursework

**Study location**

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

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## Description

### Introductory description

The Mediterranean occupies a complex and critical place in the development of human culture and society, and of its psyche. Plato described the inhabitants of its shores as 'liv[ing] around the sea like ants and frogs around a pond.' Herodotus and al-Idrisi wrote of its coasts and wondered at and mapped its islands and inlets. Poets from Homer to Cavafy have mythologised its dangers and wonders. Traders from the Phoenicians on its eastern shores to the Nasrid Kingdom of the Iberian Peninsula at its western end have grown rich (and poor again) on its resources and, in the process, created a dense web of intercultural connections. Empires spanning continents have used it as both superhighway and defensive wall. It is easy to get lost in the alluring grand narratives of the Mediterranean world. Few of us, however, have stopped to consider the Mediterranean as an entity in and of itself. This module, through an interactive and transdisciplinary design, seeks to contextualise the Mediterranean as Jean Cocteau envisaged it: as a liquid continent.

Taking an interdisciplinary intellectual lead from scholars such as Braudel and via the lens of a series of micro case studies centred on important ports (such as: Alexandria, Tyre, Smyrna, and Venice), this module will use a Liberal Arts lens to explore how the Mediterranean has been a key factor in the development of political systems, global exchange, three major world religions, and social movements from the earliest records of human activity to the modern day. Participants will be able to chart their own personal and intellectual journeys across one of the most visible -- and

invisible -- global geographic features. Students will be encouraged to focus on specific aspects of interest and relevancy to them, including but not limited to archaeology, trade and commerce, conservation and sustainability, blue humanities, migration and refugees, tourism, religion and belief, and politics. Collaborative learning will be a key aspect of the collective experience, with the final assessment offering a wider sharing of ideas and debates.

[Module web page](#)

## Module aims

This module provides unique epistemological perspectives on the Mediterranean using a problem-based, interdisciplinary, Liberal Arts approach. It will do so by looking at the Mediterranean region from a variety of perspectives, allowing students to focus on topics and elements that are meaningful to them. This can range from historical and cultural approaches, through to religion and philosophy, to geopolitics and sustainability issues, and beyond. The assessments are designed to give students the opportunity respond authentically to the content prompts. Students will be able to readily transfer skills and concepts from this module to other modules and vice versa.

## Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

As this module uses problem-based and active student learning pedagogies, content covered may change from year to year based on student specialisms and interests. The syllabus below is provided as an indicative guide, but is flexible and subject to change.

Indicative syllabus:

Week 1: Defining the liquid continent: the Mediterranean in human consciousness.

Week 2: 'Our one and only tent... and our one and only star' (Darwish): Beirut and the linkages between 'east' and 'west'.

Week 3: Second part of Beirut case study.

Week 4: 'Only the city is real' (Durrell): Alexandria and the linkages between 'north' and 'south'.

Week 5: Second part of Alexandria case study.

Week 6: 'If the earth were a single state, Istanbul would be its capital' (Bonaparte): Istanbul as a global crossroads

Week 7: Second part of Istanbul case study.

Week 8: 'What news on the Rialto?': Venice and the problems of empire(s).

Week 9: Second part of Venice case study.

Week 10: Voyages of the mind made manifest (presentations/poster session). Students will present their itineraries in poster form. Each student will be asked to give a brief presentation of their work and view, and ask questions, of what their peers have produced.

## Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Describe key aspects of the Mediterranean world's history, geopolitics, culture, religion, and environment.
- Demonstrate the application of problem-based learning skills.
- Examine key critical issues relating to the Mediterranean world with the goal of identifying appropriate solutions and responses.
- Critique theoretical positions drawn from a number of disciplines relating various aspects of the Mediterranean.
- Design and construct responses that articulate their own investigations in topics presented in or inspired by topics included.

## **Indicative reading list**

See Talis Reading List.

## **Research element**

Students will conduct independent research for weekly seminars and activities (which will be based on problem-based learning approaches) and will produce original research outputs in their assessments.

## **Interdisciplinary**

This module draws upon a range of disciplinary methodologies and offers the participants the opportunity to identify specific areas of focus meaningful to them and their backgrounds. This module is open to students from any department, and the rich mix of backgrounds will enhance the overall range and experience of discussions and debates.

## **International**

This module is built around a multi-national approach to understanding the modern and historical Mediterranean world as well as its political, social, and environmental geographies.

## **Subject specific skills**

Ability to generate relevant multidisciplinary problems through individual and small group research; Individual and group research skills through multidisciplinary examinations of specific case studies.

Oral and written communication

Digital literacy

Professional communication

Working with others

Problem solving

Information technology

Research across various disciplines and using a variety of methods

Peer review

## Transferable skills

Through this module, you will develop different skills that are sought by employers which will support your professional development. We have highlighted this to enable you to identify and reflect on the skills you have acquired and apply them throughout your professional journey including during the recruitment process whether this is in a CV/application form or at an interview.

Critical and independent thinking — developed through: Weekly tasks, readings, and homework; encounters with and employment of complex theories and Problem-Based Learning activities and in-class discussion.

Written communication – developed through: Research Essay; poster presentation; and weekly collaborative interactive map/travelogue; with ongoing weekly feedback for each student.

Oral communication – developed through: Poster presentation at the end of term where students create their own physical and/or metaphysical Mediterranean itinerary and explain why/how they created it in line with texts and theories seen in the module; and weekly seminar tasks and presentations.

Research and evaluation – developed through: Weekly problems and tasks that require the students to research and evaluate issues concerning the origin, function, purpose, and power of earthly paradise narratives; and the final research paper involves the formulation of their own research question and conducting their own in-depth reviews and analysis of theories, archival materials, case studies, or interpretations of expressive works (fiction, non-fiction, and many works that defy and question this binary).

Time and self-management — developed through: Weekly groupwork and problems; weekly map/travelogue entries; poster preparation; and writing of research paper.

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## Study

### Study time

| Type          | Required                     |
|---------------|------------------------------|
| Seminars      | 10 sessions of 2 hours (13%) |
| Private study | 60 hours (40%)               |
| Assessment    | 70 hours (47%)               |
| Total         | 150 hours                    |

### Private study description

Reading, preparation for seminars, completion of weekly pre-session tasks estimated at an average of 6 hrs per week throughout ten week term.

## Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

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## Assessment

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

### Assessment group A

|  | Weighting | Study time | Eligible for self-certification |
|--|-----------|------------|---------------------------------|
| Personal Odyssey   | 50%       | 30 hours   | Yes (extension)                 |
| The main written assessment for this module will be a written itinerary informed by independent research. Students will be asked to further and critically expand upon the topic selected for their poster presentation, demonstrating good written academic skills, clear engagement with sources, and the ability to craft a creative argument.  |           |            |                                 |
| Personal Odyssey Poster  | 35%       | 20 hours   | No                              |
| The first step of the Connected to the DIY odyssey, students will be asked to produce a visual representation of their itinerary. As a basic form, students will be asked to create an academic poster but they can choose to use any visual medium they feel is appropriate. This analysis will be offered in the form of an itinerary, asking the reader to move through space and time with them in a manner appropriate to the subject chosen. This could, for example, follow refugees from Syria trying to reach central Europe. Or, the itinerary could chart how a specific cultural influence or movement has crossed physical or intellectual space. Students will also be expected to give a 5 minute oral summary of their itinerary and answer questions about their work. The topic of this poster will form the basis of the Do-It-Yourself Odyssey Analysis. |           |            |                                 |
| Collaborative and interactive map/travelogue   | 15%       | 20 hours   | No                              |
| Weekly contributions made on seven of the eight weeks between weeks 2 and 9 to a collective and collaborative map. Students will be asked to put a digital 'pin' each week (can include imagery, video content, etc., as well as up to 250 words of reflective text) that relates to the topics under discussion that week and their independent reading/research. Contributions must be put on the map before the next seminar or they will be counted as non-submissions.  |           |            |                                 |

### Feedback on assessment

Students will receive regular, formative verbal feedback on their in-class work/weekly problems. They will receive written or verbal feedback on their collaborative/interactive map contributions. They will receive written and verbal summative feedback on their poster presentation that they can use to further develop their final written component. The final component will have written

summative feedback.

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## **Availability**

## **Courses**

This module is Unusual option for:

- UVCA-LA99 Undergraduate Liberal Arts
  - Year 2 of LA99 Liberal Arts
  - Year 3 of LA99 Liberal Arts
- Year 4 of UVCA-LA98 Undergraduate Liberal Arts with Intercalated Year