

University of Utah
ENGL 3850-003
T/TH 9:10-10:30, LNCO 3865
Fall 2024

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**Seminar in Literary Study:
Lost At Sea**



Course Description and Goals:

This course introduces new and prospective English majors to the practice of literary study at the university level. We will focus on a small constellation of books – Defoe’s sublimely weird proto-novel *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), followed by some of the later, even weirder satellite novels it inspired – in order to explore how scholars interpret, and writers revise, literary texts. Students will acquire a foundation in the skills necessary to succeed in the major: close reading, research methods, and the ability to construct evidence-driven critical arguments. The themes of our texts – isolation, despair, madness, ingenuity, improvisation, the dizzying complexity of even the simplest things – will parallel the very journey into scholarship on which we are embarking: a process of learning to see; of self-discovery and self-deception; a hallucinatory conversation with ourselves, with the past, with language, and with ideas that is at once estranging and exhilarating, at once deeply psychotic and the basis of human society.

Required Texts (these editions only, please purchase independently in advance):

—Daniel Defoe, ed. Michael Shinagel, *Robinson Crusoe*, Revised Edition (Norton Critical) ISBN 978-0393964523

—Johann Wyss, ed. John Seelye, trans. William Godwin, *The Swiss Family Robinson* (Penguin Classics), ISBN 978-0143104995

—M.P. Shiel, ed. John Sutherland, *The Purple Cloud* (Penguin Classics) ISBN 978-0141196428

—J.M. Coetzee, *Foe* (Penguin) ISBN 978-8420424965

On reserve at Marriott Library Reserve Desk (or to be streamed however you prefer):

—*Cast Away* (1999, Tom Hanks, dir. Robert Zemeckis)

—All other primary and secondary readings to be posted on Canvas as needed; see below.