

**Islands: Missionaries, Migration,
and Labor in the Atlantic World
and on the Pacific Rim**

**Newberry Library Undergraduate Seminar
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Jules Tavernier
“Sunrise over Diamond Head”
1888

The flow of goods, labor and travelers across the oceans has a rich and troubled history. In both the Atlantic and Pacific Worlds, the global exchange of natural resources and labor, the movement of travelers, explorers, missionaries and tourists, and the displacement of indigenous peoples are complex processes which historians, economists, and anthropologists typically approach within traditional disciplinary frameworks. But traditional disciplinary approaches give us little opportunity or cause to think comparatively about the relationship between these developments as they emerged in the Atlantic and Pacific.

Islands: Missionaries, Migration, and Labor will approach the comparative study of global development in the modern world from the perspective of islands. Greg Denning has argued that islands and beaches are unique, liminal spaces of cultural exchange; in the era of colonial expansion and imperial control of the Atlantic and Pacific regions of the western hemisphere, islands became geographical spaces where nations sought to determine the social, political and economic contours of the new world. Europeans approached islands as weigh stations, spaces of economic exchange and as host communities for colonizers who established outposts of their civilization between Europe, America and native islanders of the Atlantic and Pacific.

The goal of this course is to understand how islands, especially colonized islands like Hawai'i, Haiti, Puerto Rico and the Philippines became central to the economic and political development of the Americas. We will approach islands as microcosm of the global contact zones which provide us with the opportunity to compare culture, capital, and labor across the hemispheres. We will examine slavery, indenture and other forms of labor; how race and class functioned among and between laborers, natives, settlers; ethnic diversity and cultural exchange which resulted in creoleization and other forms of cultural hybridity; the study of islands and islanders by missionaries, scientists and settlers who acted as folk ethnographers and whose work ultimately promoted travel and tourism. Student analysis will focus on primary source material from the collection such as ethnographic and scientific reports, letters and diaries, images and drawings, poetry and fiction.