

FREN 4120/6120
France and North Africa before Colonization: Archives and Adventures
France et le Maghreb avant la colonisation : Archives et Aventures



Focusing on the period from the 1600s to 1830, this class ushers to center stage the stories of renegades, pirates, aristocrats, and scholars sailing across the Mediterranean and engaging in complex, cross-cultural encounters. France's relationship to North Africa is largely portrayed through the lens of recent history, recounting the aftershocks of colonization, the post-war call for migrant laborers, and the difficult integration of second-generation immigrants. This course explores, rather, what Jocelyne Dakhlija calls a "blind spot of history," an historical moment when the Kingdom of Morocco, the Ottoman Regency in Algeria, and the Tunisian Dey rivaled with France in their power and cultural patronage. As we follow a narrative of an upheaval in the balance of power, we will study methodologies for examining the different types of French-language documents available to tell this story, including captivity narratives, gazettes and other periodicals, and travel accounts. We will also discuss the usefulness of different theoretical perspectives such as Mediterranean Studies, Orientalism, and Decolonial history.

