

DOCUMENT REPORT: DESCRIBING THE “OTHER”

1. Description and Purpose

The [first] assignment of this course is a “document report” on European descriptions of Africa, the Caribbean, Brazil, and India. You will carefully and critically read through letters written by Alvise da Mosto (also known as Cadamosto) (ca. 1429–1483), Christopher Columbus (ca. 1450–1506), Pedro Vaz de Caminha (ca. 1450–1500), and Saint Francis Xavier (1506–1552). Your task is to compare and contrast how these authors both understood and described the land, peoples, and customs they encountered in their overseas travels. The purpose of this assignment is to think about the ways in which Europeans struggled with difference and described non-European peoples. This document analysis provides you with an opportunity to exercise your historical imagination and to engage with primary sources in a critical fashion. You must think about the biases of the authors and how they viewed the world they were experiencing.

2. Important Details

Due Date: To be determined (email before midnight)

Length: [XX] pages (double-spaced, 12-font, Times New Roman)

Sources:

- Alvise da Mosto. “Cadamosto Meets Budomel” [1454]. In *The Portuguese in West Africa, 1415–1670: A Documentary History*, ed. Malyn Newitt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010): 67–71.
- Christopher Columbus. “Letter of Columbus Describing the Results of His First Voyage” [1494]. In *The Journal of Christopher Columbus*, trans. Cecil Jane (New York: Bonanza Books, 1989): 191–202.
- Pedro Vaz de Caminha. “The First Letter from Brazil” [1500]. In *Colonial Latin America: A Documentary History*, eds. Kenneth Mills, William Taylor, and Sandra Lauderdale Graham (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 2002): 43–58.
- Saint Francis Xavier. “Francis Xavier among the Paravas” [1543]. In *The Life and Letters of St. Francis Xavier*, ed. Henry James Coleridge (London: Burns and Oates, 1872): 1:143–150.