Week 2 – Through 1700

Early Indigenous & Commercial Whaling

Japan Begins Whaling
Last Week

Summarized Plans for Upcoming Weeks of the Course
Last Week

Considered ATTITUDES OF HUMANS TOWARD WHALES through the millennia – focusing on the pre-Christian era

Awe, wonder, confusion & and fear
Last Week

Considered ATTITUDES OF HUMANS TOWARD WHALES through the millennia – focusing on the pre-Christian era

Awe, wonder, confusion & and fear

Looked at the story of Jonah
Last Week

Looked at the reality of whales
Including the differences between toothed and baleen whales
Among other species, highlighted two baleen whales, 
The first whales aggressively hunted by Commercial Whalers

BOWHEAD WHALES – Up to 60 feet long and 100 tons

RIGHT WHALES – Up to 65 feet long; and 100+ tons
Last Week

Looked at the resources employed by humans that came from whales

- Blubber – for whale oil, food, fuel, illumination etc.
- Flesh/muscle – for food and oil, etc.
- Baleen (whalebone) – for structural material
- Teeth and whale skeletal bone – for oil, structure supports, tools
- Other – for oil, illumination, lubricants, medicinal, food, etc.
Last Week

Considered the earliest source of whales for human exploitation – the gift from the sea of a beached or stranded whale.
Last Week

Looked at what we know of the earliest active hunting for whales
Today's Class

- Early North American Indigenous Subsistence Whaling
- The Beginnings of European Whaling
- The Basques Inaugurate Commercial Whaling
- Commercial Whaling Crosses the Atlantic, Expands to the Arctic
  - Other Countries, esp. Dutch and British, Join the Basques
- Early Story of Japanese Whaling
Across the Bering Strait

Whales were an essential part of the diet and culture of early populations along the Northwest and Arctic coasts of North America.
In The Arctic
A challenging land with little vegetation
Here, what whales provided was critical
Around 800 AD

Peoples of the Thule Culture expanded their hunt for whales into open seas
The Main Target of the Arctic Peoples of the Thule Culture

The Bowhead
Other Targets

Beluga

North Pacific Right

Gray Whale

Killer Whale
Spiritual Belief Accompanied the Hunt

Plaque with image of whale, attached to an umiak to charm a whale to approach
Following the Bowhead, The Thule peoples expanded eastward and populated the extreme north.
Living Inside the Whale

Skeletal whale bone as structural material
Living Inside the Whale
Skeletal Whale Bone as Structural Material

Grave of an Inuit whaler, framed by whale mandibles
The Aleuts lived farther south, typically pursued the smaller whales, but for them too, whales were critical.
Hunting a whale from a kayak
As the Aleuts did
North American whaling extended all the way down the west Coast.
But the whales hunted and role of whales in culture were different. As were some aspects of hunting methods.
Hunting at sea in large wooden canoes

Tlingit whaling hat
Whales a frequent image in Pacific NW native peoples’ art and culture
Farther South, in Jan 1806 on the Oregon Coast,

Local natives offer to sell oil and blubber from a beached whale to visitors who are camped a few miles up the coast for the winter.
Exploiting Whales in Europe Before the Basques Begin Whaling

Peoples Living in Coastal Areas

Celts . . .
Vikings
Greeks
Romans
For All –
A beached or stranded whale was a welcome and valuable gift from the sea
8\(^{th}\) - 9\(^{th}\) Century English casket cover carved from whale bone

Viking ships, better adapted for raiding than whaling
Crude Hunting Began Early

Greece:
100-200 AD
Even Commercial Hunting

Rome: Early Centuries of Christian Era

Active hunting of fish at sea
Bones found in fish-salting tank ruins suggest Romans hunted whales as well as fish.
1000-1100 AD, The Basques Introduce Commercial Whaling, For Profit, to the World
An Opportune Location

From ~1050 through 1370, whaling establishments sprouted along the coasts of the Bay of Biscay.

By 1370, were 49 ports from which whaling had been or was being done.
During their first centuries – the Basques whaled from the shores of the Bay of Biscay

Lookouts in watch-towers or on high bluffs watched for whale spouts
When waiting whalers received an alert from the lookout, they set out in small rowing boats to hunt the whale.
Once a whale was killed, men in larger boats towed the carcass ashore, where it was flensed.
By the 14th Century
The Basques were extending their hunting ground
Making seasonal trips to the British Isles
Mid 1500s – Across the Atlantic

Fewer whales available in European waters and increasing demand for whale products led to expansion of whaling grounds to the “New World.”
From about 1540 through 1600

The Basques establish multiple shore whaling stations on the coasts of Labrador, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland.
Established relationships with local tribes and employed them to help in the whaling.
Processing Whales at Red Bay, Labrador

Today, a Canadian National Historic Site, and as of 2013, a UNESCO World Heritage Site
But Labrador was thousands of miles from the market.
1596

Dutch Explorer Willem Barentsz discovers Svalbard (Spitsbergen)

Reports having seen large numbers of right whales
Svalbard
A mountainous Arctic archipelago alive with polar bears on land
Bowhead whales in the surrounding waters
1611 – A new country enters commercial whaling

Two English ships sail to Svalbard to hunt bowheads
1612 – The Dutch and Basques Join the English in the Svalbard Hunt
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At first, whales were processed on shore where the blubber was tried out. Whale bones on Spitsbergen shores today testify to the fact that much of the whale carcass was abandoned.
1650s – Arctic Whalers expand westward to Greenland waters
Arctic Whaling

Both dangerous & wasteful

But critical to the development of modern society
Early Japanese Whaling

A valued food source from local waters in prehistoric times
Japanese Whaling

Limited for centuries to hunting in nearby waters of the Japanese homeland
Net Whaling – A Uniquely Japanese Technique
Net Whaling – A Uniquely Japanese Technique
Target Whales
Pacific Rights, Humpbacks, Grays, . . .
But Female Right Whales with Calves were Off-Limits
Japanese Whale Oil Factory at Work
A Hunt Deeply Rooted in Japanese Culture

“A Traveler Viewing the Capture of a Whale”

Japanese Woodblock Print, 1852
Next Week (April 25)

1700 to early 1800s:
Whaling Expands to the American Colonies – and Beyond
Women and Whaling