The drive to explore the unknown is inherent in the human mentality. Throughout history, men and women were willing to risk their lives, careers and reputation in attempts to explore unknown lands and discover new knowledge. Their thrilling adventures were also voyages of self-discovery, leading to profound psychological change. The course surveys a selection of great geographical and intellectual voyages of discovery. In doing so, we will follow the explorers’ footsteps and discuss how their discoveries changed the world and shaped modern life.

**Prerequisite:** this is a general elective course, open to IDC students from all programs and years of study. The language of instruction is English.

**Methodology:** the course is based on a series of weekly lectures and reading assignments.

**Reading:** there will be a weekly (fascinating) reading assignment. Each week, the reading for next week will be posted in the course web site.
**The course grade** is based on quizzes (30%) and final paper (70%). There will be several quizzes, each on the last reading assignment. For each student, the quiz with the lowest grade will be dropped from the grade calculation.

**Course plan, by week** (tentative):

- Course overview: introduction to Polar exploration
- Scott and Amundsen: racing to the South Pole
- Shackleton: the story of the Endurance
- Magellan: over the edge of the world
- Darwin: the voyage that launched the modern world
- Watson and Crick: the discovery of life’s secret
- Lewis and Clark: the opening of the American west
- Lincoln: Exploring Democracy
- Geometric explorations: from Greek astronomy to modern mathematics
- Exploring the infinite: science and religion
- Abraham: the journey to the Land of Canaan and the birth of western civilization
- Personal exploration: from Thoreau to mountain biking

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**Course Goals**

See the course description.

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**Grading**

See the course description.

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**Learning Outcomes**

See the course description.

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**Lecturer Office Hours**

Wednesdays, 14:00 to 15:00, or by email appointment

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**Reading List**

See the course description.