ENG253
Week #2: Weekly Writing
DUE: Thursday, October 8

“The universe is made up of stories, not of atoms.”

Modern American poet Muriel Rukeyser

Tuesday Read “Christopher Columbus,” 37 - 48
“The Narrative of Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca” 49 – 53

Thursday Read “Powhatan,” 53 – 54, and “Captain John Smith,” 55 – 63

Consider our framework as you read and write
- Voices
- Genres
- Relationship with land
- Language

Class Discussion Focus and Weekly Writing choices (choose one or two in combination; either way the total should be one full page single-spaced)

1. Notice how the explorers present the Native Americans in their writings. Be sensitive to the language that they use, their attentions to color, physical characteristics, and gender. Describe their (the explorers’) perspective using examples from their writings. Then explain in what ways this “frame” has shaped our contemporary view of Native Americans.

2. Consider this statement: “Cabeza de Vaca’s narrative can be read as the first chronicle of an American immigrant’s experience.” Compare de Vaca’s experience to the American immigrant experience in the 19th and 20th centuries. If you have a family story that has been passed down through the generations, draw from your own family history.

3. A dreamer, visionary, and deeply religious man, Columbus also shared in the intolerance of his age. He saw the native peoples’ passivity not as a positive value but rather as a sign of their weakness: “for with fifty men they could all be subjected and made to do all that one wished.” Do a little research about the “intolerance of his age.” Then consider our own times. In what ways does this “intolerance” prevail in our own times?

4. Imagine that you’re an early explorer and write a brief narrative. Why and how have you come to the new world? How do you see the natives that you encounter? Will you return to your country of origin or will you stay and why? Why have you chosen to write about your exploration?

5. There are several movies – Disney’s Pocahantas (1995); 1492: The Conquest of America (1992; and Christopher Columbus (1985) which present radically rewritten versions of the selections we have by Columbus and Smith. If you can, preview sections of these films. Or think of ones that you have previously seen and been influenced by. Write about the ways in which movie-makers today represent exploration, conquest, and American Indians versus the way that the early explorers represented them.