



# Royal Holloway Geography for Schools Lecture Series

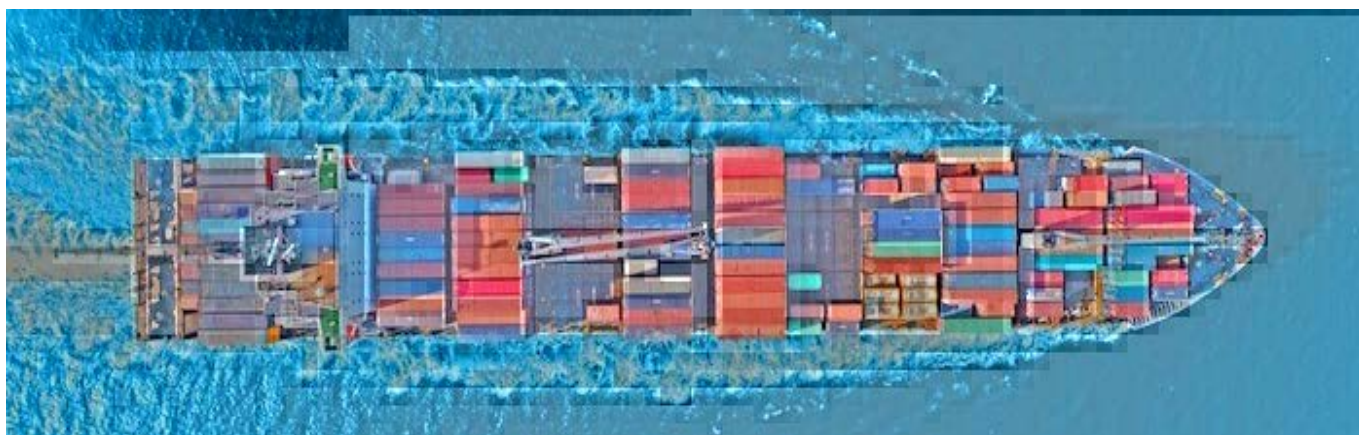
## Exploring Oceans activity

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Exploring Oceans: The human geographies of seafaring amidst Covid 19

### A-Level Syllabus:

- AQA: Global systems and flows.
- OCR: Exploring oceans (political factors, human influences), trade, human rights (seafarers).



### Introduction

The sea has often been neglected in Western geography. In the past it has been understood as a blank space that simply connects A-B, a space without geography, or a space to be crossed as quickly as possible to facilitate trade and the movement of goods. As explored in the Monday Night Lecture series, however, the sea is a space that is inherently geographical, filled with social, cultural, and political considerations and processes. To explore this further, we can turn to those who live and work at sea.

Seafarers are a vital workforce. Their labour is fundamental in keeping the global economy moving and in transporting goods that we take for granted in our everyday lives. Yet, because they are often out of sight and mind, their experiences and the geographies of seafaring are often overlooked. The exercise below seeks to address this, with a particular focus on how the covid 19 pandemic has highlighted and exacerbated pre-existing issues and inequalities at sea.

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## Exercise

The following exercises seek to shed light on the experiences of seafarers and to think of them as key geographical actors.

### 1: Watch



Watch [this video](#) produced by the [International Maritime Organisation](#) about being a seafarer. Make brief notes on the following:

- What does being a seafarer look like according to this video?
- Who is the work force and what activities are undertaken?
- Having watched the lecture, do you think it's an accurate and realistic representation?
- What are the positives of being a seafarer? Are any negatives presented?

### 2. Read

The video presents a particular view of Seafaring. Yet, the Covid 19 pandemic has shone a light on the industry, and often this is far from the reality of living at sea. In groups, pick two articles from the selection below to read and then discuss the questions below:

[Coronavirus: Seafarers stuck at sea 'a humanitarian crisis'](#)

['One seafarer almost cried': the last chaplain visiting quarantined boats](#)

[Ever Given crew fear joining ranks of seafarers stranded on ships for years](#)

[Shopping on Black Friday? Remember the stranded seafarers who make it possible](#)

[Seafarers' mental health studied by Cardiff University](#)

- What are some of the challenges facing seafarers?
- How might the Covid-19 pandemic have highlighted and exacerbated existing challenges?
- How have seafarers become, quite literally, stuck at sea?
- Would this be accepted of other workforces?
- How do these accounts differ from the representations in the video?

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### 3. Research

A number of charities exist to champion seafarer welfare and to highlight the challenges faced by those working at sea. Take ten minutes to research organisations and charities working to assist seafarers and champion their rights.

- What key challenges do they identify?
- How has the Covid-19 pandemic affected their work?
- What calls to action do these organisations make to improve the lives of seafarers in pandemic and non-pandemic conditions?



### 4. Write

Reflect on your answers to the previous three tasks. Combine them to write a short statement (one paragraph) on your understanding of the role of seafarers in the global economy and the challenges they face. To take this further, add suggestions about any changes you think need to be made. Should seafarers have key worker status? How might further awareness be raised about seafaring?

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