

# ***Des Cannibales: seminar 1***

**Reading** : Read the essay through carefully. Use the recommended edition (Montaigne, *Essais*, ed. by Marie-Madeleine Fragonard (Pocket Classiques) if possible.

An English translation is also available here:

<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/library/main/electronicresources/extracts/fr/fr118/>

## **PART I**

### **1. First impressions**

*Montaigne is a writer who freely admits that his mind is apt to wander. Have a go at following his trains of thought...*

Make a list of the main ideas that you believe Montaigne broaches in this essay and be prepared to discuss the imagery he uses to present these.

What do you think about the order in which the ideas are presented?

Does this essay frustrate your expectations as a reader? If so, how?

### **2. Authorities and Experts**

*Montaigne tests out the opinions of various authorities as he seeks to understand the impact of the New World on his own society. Which textual voices from the past does he call upon and how effective does he find them?*

What do you think of the use of anecdotes / quotations in the text? How does this affect your reading of it?

Who does Montaigne go to for *up-to-date information* about New World tribal societies and why?

Does Montaigne present *himself* as an expert on New World tribal societies? What does Montaigne think about experts in general?

In your view, how interested is Montaigne in creating an accurate picture of New World tribal societies?

### **3. The Idea of the Other**

What does Montaigne tell us about the lifestyle of the New World tribal societies?  
How is this information presented?

How does Montaigne depict the act of cannibalism? Think about how he presents the ritual, moral and ethical aspects of this act.

Is Montaigne interested in presenting New World tribal societies as different from, or similar to, his own? Give examples.