

Empire: Past and Present

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Course Description

A great deal of human history is the history of empires. This course examines historical and contemporary empires within a comparative context wider than modern European imperialism. With a regional focus on Eurasia, the class explores key aspects of empire building: military expansion, indirect rule, unequal exchange, environmental impact, ideological hegemony, colonial policies, and ruling strategies towards heterogeneous regions, religions, races, and ethnic groups. Though most empires perished in the twentieth century, we will discuss how, where, and why their political, economic, and cultural legacies persist in the post-colonial period. This course also proposes empire as an important lens for understanding contemporary global powers—which inherit, incorporate, and invent imperial institutions, identities, and strategies.

Empire is not a historical relic; it is alive somewhere or about to revive elsewhere. Throughout the course, we will track three contemporary powers that still exert enormous influence on global politics, security, and economy: America, Russia, and China. By revealing the logic behind their decisions and behaviors, and by situating them in comparison to their precedents, counterparts, or competitors—Britain, Japan, and Rome—this course offers students the analytic tools to engage in pressing debates in domestic and international politics.

The contemporary relevance of empire compels us to reconsider some conventional narratives in the social sciences, such as the empire-nation transition and the dominance of nation-states since the late eighteenth century. Empire and nation-state are not discontinuous dichotomies nor is the transition from empire to nation-state a linear, irreversible process. Instead, this class emphasizes how empire and state intertwine to form hybrid complexes and how powerful empires can shape broader contexts and political possibilities of other states. Finally, this course hopes to inform political imagination in an age of interconnected world and imminent global challenges.

Designed for graduate students with diverse background, this seminar includes readings from comparative historical sociology, imperial and global history, historical international relations, critical geography, historical anthropology, post-colonial studies, and comparative politics. Through such combination of readings, the course will facilitate inter-disciplinary conversations and familiar students with different perspectives on empire and imperialism.

Assignment and Assessment

1. Class Attendance (10%)
2. Class Participation (10%)
3. Five Response Memos (10%)
4. Writing Assignments: Three Essays (70%)
 - a) Essay I (15%): 4-page *Topic Overview*.
 - b) Essay II (20%): 6-page *Comparative Review*.
 - c) Essay III (35%): 10-page *Research Paper*.

Textbook

Burbank, Jane, and Frederick Cooper. 2011. *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton University Press.

Course Schedule

Introduction

8/31 Week 1—Introduction: Is Empire Still Alive? Why Study Empire?

- Emanuele Saccarelli and Latha Varadarajan. 2015. "Empire Strikes Back: Imperialism, Past and Present." *Foreign Affairs*.
- Charles Clover and Lucy Hornby. 2015. "China's Great Game: Road to a New Empire." *Financial Times*.
- Adam Tooze. 2020. "Whose Century?" *London Review of Books* 42(15).
- Jane Burbank. 2022. "The Grand Theory Driving Putin to War." *New York Times*, March 22.

9/7 Week 2—Conceptualizing Empire and Imperialism

- Burbank and Cooper. Chapter 1, "Imperial Trajectories," pp. 1-22.
- Doyle, Michael. 1986. *Empires*. Cornell University Press. Chapter 1, "Imperialism and Empire," pp.19-47.
- Osterhammel, Jürgen. 1997. *Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*. Trans by Shelley L. Frisch. Princeton, NJ: Marcus Wiener. Chapter 2, "'Colonialism' and 'Colonial Empires,'" pp. 13-22.
- Lieven, Dominic. 2001. *Empire: The Russian Empire and its Rivals*. Yale University Press. Chapter 1, "Empire: A Word and its Meanings," pp. 3-26.

Supplementary readings:

- Porter, Andrew. 1994. *European Imperialism, 1860-1914*. Houndmills: Macmillan. Chapter 1, "Definitions and Theories," pp. 1-13.
- Pitts, Jennifer. 2010. "Political Theory of Empire and Imperialism." *Annual Review of Political Science* 13: 211–235.
- Steinmetz, George. 2013. *Sociology and Empire*. Duke University Press. "Introduction."

- Cooper, Frederick. 2005. *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Münkler, Herfried. 2007. *Empires: The Logic of World Domination from Ancient Rome to the United States*. Polity. Chapter 1, “What is an Empire?”

Part I Pre-Modern Empires in Eurasia

9/14 Week 3—Classical Empires: Rome and China

- Burbank and Cooper. Chapter 2, “Imperial Rule in Rome and China,” Pp. 23-60.
- Mann, Michael. 1986. *The Sources of Social Power*, Vol. 1: *A History of Power from the Beginning to A.D. 1760*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 9, “The Roman Territorial Empire.”
- Kang, David C. 2010. *East Asia before the West: Five Centuries of Trade and Tribute*. Columbia University Press. Chapter 4, “Diplomacy: The Tribute System,” pp. 54-81.
- Blockmans, Wim, and Hilde De Weerd. 2016. “The Diverging Legacies of Classical Empires in China and Europe.” *European Review* 24(2): 306-324.

Supplementary readings:

- Burbank and Cooper. Chapter 3, “After Rome: Empire, Christianity, and Islam.”
- Scheidel, Walter. 2019. *Escape from Rome: The Failure of Empire and the Road to Prosperity*. Princeton University Press.
- Eisenstadt, Shmuel N. 1969. *The Political Systems of Empires*. Transaction Publishers.
- Kautsky, John H. 1982. *The Politics of Aristocratic Empires*. Transaction Publishers.
- Zhao, Dingxin. 2015. *The Confucian-Legalist State: A New Theory of Chinese History*. Oxford University Press.

9/21 Week 4—Central Eurasian Empires and the Mongols

- Burbank and Cooper. Chapter 4, “Eurasian Connections: The Mongol Empires,” Pp.93-116.
- Abu-Lughod, Janet L. 1989. *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250-1350*. Oxford University Press. Chapter 5, “The Mongols and the Northeast Passage,” pp. 153-184.
- Zarakol, Ayşe. 2022. *Before the West: The Rise and Fall of Eastern World Orders*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 2, “Making the East: Chinggisid World Orders,” pp. 73-88.
- Di Cosmo, Nicola. 1999. “State Formation and Periodization in Inner Asian History.” *Journal of World History* 10: 1-40.

Supplementary readings:

- Lattimore, Owen. 1951/1962. *Inner Asian Frontiers of China*. Beacon Press.
- Fletcher, Joseph. 1986. “The Mongols: Ecological and Social Perspectives.” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 46: 11-50.
- Barfield, Thomas J. 1989. *The Perilous Frontier: Nomadic Empires and China*. Blackwell. Chapter 1, “Introduction: The Steppe Nomadic World,” pp. 1-31.
- McNeill, William H. 1976. *Plagues and Peoples*. Anchor Books. Chapter 4, “The Impact of the Mongol Empire on Shifting Disease Balances, 1200-1500,” pp. 161-207.

Darwin, John. 2008. *After Tamerlane: The Rise and Fall of Global Empires, 1400-2000*. London: Bloomsbury Press.

9/28 Week 5—Early Modern Territorial Empires

Subrahmanyam, Sanjay. 2006. “A Tale of Three Empires: Mughals, Ottomans, and Habsburgs in a Comparative Context.” *Common Knowledge* 12: 66-92.

Burbank and Cooper. Chapter 7, “Beyond the Steppe: Empire-Building in Russia and China,” pp. 185-218.

Phillips, Andrew. 2021. *How the East Was Won: Barbarian Conquerors, Universal Conquest and the Making of Modern Asia*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 5, “The Great Asian Divergence: Mughal Decline and Manchu Expansion in the Eighteenth Century,” pp. 158-206.

Barkey, Karen. 2008. *Empire of Difference: The Ottoman in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 3, “Becoming an Empire: Imperial Institutions and Control from Conquest to Imperial Domains,” pp. 67-108.

Supplementary readings:

Burbank and Cooper. Chapter 5, “Beyond the Mediterranean: Ottoman and Spanish Empires,” pp.117-148.

Hosking, Geoffrey A. 1997. *Russia: People and Empire, 1552-1917*. Harvard University Press.

Perdue, Peter C. 2005. *China Marches West: The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia*. Harvard University Press.

Duindam, Jeroen. 2016. *Dynasties: A Global History of Power, 1300–1800*. Cambridge University Press.

Neumann, Iver B., and Einar Wigen. 2018. *The Steppe Tradition in International Relations: Russians, Turks and European State Building 4000 BCE–2017 CE*. Cambridge University Press.

Spruyt, Hendrik. 2020. *The World Imagined: Collective Beliefs and Political Order in the Sinocentric, Islamic and Southeast Asian International Societies*. Cambridge University Press.

Essay I is due via e-mail by 9/30 (Friday).

Part II Modern Empires and Imperialism

10/5 Week 6—European Imperialism

Burbank and Cooper. Chapter 6, “Oceanic Economics and Colonial Societies: Europe, Asia, and the America,” pp. 149-184.

Abernethy, David B. 2000. *The Dynamics of Global Dominance: European Overseas Empires 1415-1980*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Chapters 2, “Why Did the Overseas Empires Rise, Persist, and Fall?” Pp. 18-42.

Porter, Andrew. 1994. *European Imperialism, 1860-1914*. Houndmills: Macmillan. Chapter 3, “‘Metropolitan’ Explanations: Social and Economic,” pp. 30-49.

Steinmetz, George. 2008. “The Colonial State as a Social Field: Ethnographic Capital and Native Policy in the German Overseas Empire before 1914.” *American Sociological Review* 73: 589-612.

Supplementary readings:

- Wolf, Eric. 1982. *Europe and the People Without History*. University of California Press.
- Anghie, Antony. 2007. *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law*. Cambridge University Press.
- Steinmetz, George. 2007. *The Devil's Handwriting: Precoloniality and the German Colonial State in Qingdao, Samoa, and Southwest Africa*. University of Chicago Press.
- Benton, Lauren. 2009. *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400–1900*. Cambridge University Press.
- Beckert, Sven. 2015. *Empire of Cotton: A Global History*. Vintage.
- Adams, Julia and Steve Pincus. 2017. “Imperial States in the Age of Discovery,” in *The Many Hands of the State*, edited by Kimberly Morgan George and Ann Shola Orloff. Cambridge University Press.
- Phillips, Andrew, and J. C. Sharman. 2020. *Outsourcing Empire: How Company-States Made the Modern World*. Princeton University Press.

10/12 Week 7—Hegemonic Empire: The British Empire

- Go, Julian. 2012. *Patterns of Empire: The British and American Empires, 1688 to the Present*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1, “Imperial Paths to Power,” pp. 28-66.
- Arrighi, Giovanni. 1993/2010. *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power, and the Origins of Our Times*, 2nd edition. London: Verso. Chapter 3, “Industry, Empire, and the ‘Endless’ Accumulation of Capital,” pp. 219-246.
- Pitts, Jennifer. 2009. *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France*. Princeton University Press. Introduction, pp. 1-21.
- Davis, Mike. 2002. *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World*. Verso Books. Chapter 9, “The Origins of the Third World,” pp. 279-310.

Supplementary readings:

- Gallagher, John, and Ronald Robinson. 1953. “The Imperialism of Free Trade.” *The Economic History Review* 6: 1-15.
- Mehta, Uday Singh. 1999. *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought*. University of Chicago Press.
- Cain, P. J., and A. G. Hopkins. 2002. *British Imperialism: 1688-2000*. Pearson Education.
- Magubane, Zine. 2004. *Bringing the Empire Home: Race, Class, and Gender in Britain and Colonial South Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bell, Duncan. 2009. *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860-1900*. Princeton University Press.
- Elkins, Caroline. 2022. *Legacy of Violence: A History of the British Empire*. Knopf.

10/19 Week 8—Non-European Empires: America and Japan

- Burbank and Cooper. Chapter 9, “Empires across Continents: The United States and Russia,” pp. 251-286.
- Immerwahr, Daniel. 2019. *How to Hide an Empire: A Short History of the Greater United States*. Random House. Introduction, pp. 3-19.

- Beckert, Sven. 2017. "American Danger: United States Empire, Eurafrika, and the Territorialization of Industrial Capitalism, 1870–1950." *American Historical Review* 122: 1137-1170.
- Myers, Ramon Hawley, and Mark R. Peattie (eds.) 1984. *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895-1945*. Princeton University Press. "Introduction," pp. 3-52.

Supplementary readings:

- May, Ernest R. 1961. *Imperial Democracy: The Emergence of America as a Great Power*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.
- Frymer, Paul. 2017. *Building an American Empire: The Era of Territorial and Political Expansion*. Princeton University Press.
- Young, Louise. 1998. *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism*. University of California Press.
- Mann, Michael. 2012. *The Sources of Social Power*, Vol. 3: *Global Empires and Revolution, 1890-1945*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 4, "Asian Empires: Fallen Dragon, Rising Sun," pp. 100-128.

Part III How Empires End

10/26 Week 9—Empire to Nations in the 19th Century?

- Tilly, Charles. 1990. *Coercion, Capital, and European State*. Blackwell. Pp. 20-33, 38-47, 91-95.
- Anderson, Benedict. 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso. Chapter 6, "Official Nationalism and Imperialism," pp. 83-112.
- Wimmer, Andreas and Yuval Feinstein. 2010. "The Rise of the Nation-State across the World, 1816-2001." *American Sociological Review* 75:764-90.
- Kumar, Krishan. 2010. "Nation-States as Empires, Empires as Nation-States: Two Principles, One Practice?" *Theory and Society* 39: 119-143.

Supplementary readings:

- Burbank and Cooper. Chapter 11, "Sovereignty and Empire: Nineteenth-Century Europe and Its Near Abroad," pp. 331-368.
- Osterhammel, Jürgen. 2014. *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century*. Princeton University Press. Chapter 8, "Imperial Systems and Nation-States: The Persistence of Empires," Pp. 392-428.
- Zhao, Gang. 2006. "Reinventing China: Imperial Qing Ideology and the Rise of Modern Chinese National Identity in the Early Twentieth Century." *Modern China* 32: 3-30.
- Wimmer, Andreas. 2018. *Nation Building: Why Some Countries Come Together While Others Fall Apart*. Princeton University Press. Chapter 4, "Communicative Integration: China versus Russia," pp. 113-170.
- Fradera, Josep M. 2018. *The Imperial Nation: Citizens and Subjects in the British, French, Spanish, and American Empires*. Princeton University Press.

11/2 Week 10—Empire, War, and Revolution

- Burbank and Cooper. Chapter 12, "War and Revolution in a World of Empires: 1914-1945," pp. 369-412.
- DuBois, W. E. B. 1915. "The African Roots of the War." *Atlantic Monthly* 115(May): 707-714.
- Martin, Terry Dean. 2001. *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*. Cornell University Press. Chapter 1, "The Soviet Affirmative Action Empire," pp. 1-27.
- Esherick, Joseph, Hasan Kayali, and Eric Van Young, eds. 2006. *Empire to Nation: Historical Perspectives on the Making of the Modern World*. Rowman & Littlefield. Chapter 8, "How the Qing Became China," pp. 229-259.

Supplementary readings:

- Tilly, Charles. 1997. "How Empires End." Pp.1-11 in *After Empire: Multiethnic Societies and Nation-Building*, edited by Karen Barkey and Mark von Hagen. Westview Press.
- Motyl, Alexander J. 2001. *Imperial Ends: The Decay, Collapse, and Revival of Empires*. New York: Columbia University Press. Chapter 3, "Imperial Collapse," pp. 67-87.
- Lachmann, Richard. 2009. "Greed and Contingency: State Fiscal Crises and Imperial Failure in Early Modern Europe." *American Journal of Sociology* 115: 39-73.
- Hirsch, Francine. 2005. *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*. Cornell University Press.
- Riga, Liliana. 2012. *The Bolsheviks and the Russian Empire*. Cambridge University Press.
- Overy, Richard. 2021. *Blood and Ruins: The Last Imperial War, 1931-1945*. Viking.

Essay 2 is due via e-mail by 11/4 (Friday).

11/9 Week 11—Decolonization in the 20th Century

- Burbank and Cooper. Chapter 13, "End of Empire?" Pp. 413-442.
- Jansen, Jan C., and Jürgen Osterhammel. 2017. *Decolonization: A Short History*. Princeton University Press. Chapter 1, "Decolonization as Moments and Process," pp. 1-34.
- Manela, Erez. 2007. *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism*. Oxford University Press. "Introduction: A Spring of Upheaval," pp. 3-13.
- Getachew, Adom. 2019. *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-determination*. Princeton University Press. Chapter 3, "From Principle to Right: The Anticolonial Reinvention of Self-Determination," pp. 71-106.

Supplementary readings:

- Strang, David. 1990. "From Dependency to Sovereignty: An Event History Analysis of Decolonization 1870-1987." *American Sociological Review* 55: 846-860.
- Goodwin, Jeff. 2001. *No Other Way Out*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 4, "The Only Domino: The Vietnamese Revolution in Comparative Perspective," pp. 106-133.
- Mazower, Mark. 2003. *No Enchanted Palace: the End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations*. Princeton University Press. One Chapter.
- Shipway, Martin. 2007. *Decolonization and its Impact: A Comparative Approach to the End of the Colonial Empires*. Wiley.

- Lawrence, Adria K. 2013. *Imperial Rule and the Politics of Nationalism: Anti-Colonial Protest in the French Empire*. Cambridge University Press.
- Cooper, Frederick. 2014. *Citizenship between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945-1960*. Princeton University Press.

Part IV Colonial Legacies and Imperial Revival

11/16 Week 12—Colonial Legacies and Post-Colonial Critiques

- Cumings, Bruce. 2002. *Parallax Visions: Making Sense of American-East Asian Relations*. Duke University Press. Chapter 3, “Colonial Formation and Deformation: Korea, Taiwan, and Vietnam,” pp. 69-94.
- Mamdani, Mahmood. 2001. *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*. Princeton University Press. Chapter 3, “The Racialization of the Hutu/Tutsi Difference under Colonialism,” pp. 76-102.
- Fanon, Frantz. 1963. *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press. Chapter 1, “On Violence,” pp. 1-51.
- Said, Edward. 1979. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage. Introduction, pp. 1-28.

Supplementary readings:

- Barkey, Karen, and Mark von Hagen. 1997. *After Empire: Multiethnic Societies and Nation-Building: The Soviet Union and the Russian, Ottoman, and Habsburg Empires*. Westview Press.
- Go, Julian. 2020. “The Imperial Origins of American Policing: Militarization and Imperial Feedback in the Early 20th Century.” *American Journal of Sociology* 125(5): 1193-1254.
- Wyrzten, Jonathan. 2015. *Making Morocco: Colonial Intervention and the Politics of Identity*. Cornell University Press.
- Césaire, Aimé. 1950/1955. *Discourse on Colonialism*. NYU Press.
- Hall, Stuart. 1993. “The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power” in B Glieben and S Hall (Eds), *The Formations of Modernity: Understanding Modern Societies: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Young, Robert JC. 2001/2016. *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh. 2009. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

11/23 No Class (Thanksgiving)

11/30 Week 13—The American Empire in the New Century

- Ferguson, Niall. 2004. *Colossus: The Rise and Fall of the American Empire*. New York: The Penguin Books. Chapter 5, “The Case for Liberal Empire,” pp. 169-199.
- Johnson, Chalmers. 2004. *The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy, and the End of the Republic*. Macmillan. Chapter 6, “The Empire of Bases,” pp. 151-186.
- Mann, Michael. 2013. *The Sources of Social Power, vol. 4: Globalization, 1945-2011*. Chapter 10, “American Empire at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century,” pp. 268-321.

Lachmann, Richard. 2020. *First Class Passengers on a Sinking Ship: Elite Politics and the Decline of Great Powers*. Verso. Chapter 8, "The American Economy: Financial Cannibalization."

Supplementary readings:

Mann, Michael. 2003. *Incoherent Empires*. London: Verso.

Steinmetz, George. 2005. "Return to Empire: The New US Imperialism in Comparative Historical Perspective." *Sociological Theory* 23: 339-367.

Maier, Charles S. 2006. *Among Empires: American Ascendancy and its Predecessors*. Harvard University Press.

Gindin, Sam, and Leo Panitch. 2012. *The Making of Global Capitalism: The Political Economy of American Empire*. Verso.

Cooley, Alexander, and Daniel H. Nexon. 2020. *Exit from Hegemony: The Unraveling of the American Global Order*. Oxford University Press.

12/7 Week 14—A New Chinese Empire?

Shue, Vivienne. 2022. "Regimes of Resonance: Cosmos, Empire, and Changing Technologies of CCP Rule." *Modern China* 1-42.

Fiskejo, Magnus. 2006. "Rescuing the Empire: Chinese Nation-Building in the Twentieth Century." *European Journal of East Asian Studies* 5: 15-44.

Kaplan, Robert D. 2014. *Asia's Cauldron: The South China Sea and the End of a Stable Pacific*. Random House. Chapter 2, "China's Caribbean," pp. 32-50.

Hung, Ho-fung. 2022. *Clash of Empires: From 'Chimerica' to the 'New Cold War'*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 4 "Spheres of Influences."

Supplementary readings:

Mullaney, Thomas S. 2012. *Coming to Terms with the Nation: Ethnic Classification in Modern China*. Stanford University Press.

Lee, Ching Kwan. 2018. *The Specter of Global China: Politics, Labor, and Foreign Investment in Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Tenzin, Jinba. 2022. "Rethinking the Rise of China: A Postcolonial Critique of China and a Chinese Critique of the Postcolonial." *Journal of Historical Sociology* 35(1): 83-106.

Essay III is due via e-mail by 12/9 (Friday).