Modern Empires

History 405
Thurs: 2:00pm–4:50pm
L40 Harris Hall
Graduate Seminar, Fall 2014

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Office hours: Tues. 2:30pm–4:30pm

Course Description

This graduate seminar offers an introduction to the major themes and methodologies pertinent to the study of modern (1750–present) empires. How and why did empires become the dominant form of international politics for most of the modern period? How did they work? How were the colonized governed? How did they resist? Our survey will include works on the British, French, U.S., Dutch, German, and Japanese empires. Among the major themes will be gender, state formation, military violence, anti-imperialism, imperial knowledge production, and settler colonialism. The emphasis in this class will be on reading—reading books that have received critical acclaim in their subfields. The writing load will be comparatively light.

Workload, grading, and assignments

The main activities of this course will be reading and discussing books, generally on the order of one long book per week or the equivalent. Weekly reading assignments will run to as much as 500 pages and I will expect you to do all of the reading. The upside—if avoiding work counts as an "upside" (a dubious proposition in graduate school)—is that I will ask relatively little from you in terms of additional work for the course. There will be no research requirement and, in fact, relatively little occasion for any outside reading. The workload for this course will not crescendo toward the end of the quarter, as most courses do.

This course is meant to prepare you to take qualifying exams on this topic and the forms of assessment for the course will all be geared toward that goal. You will be graded on participation in discussion, a presentation or a book review, an oral examination administered at the end of the term, and an undergraduate lecture. With the exception of the lecture, which will be graded separately, your grades will be cumulative in the following sense. Each of the first three tasks—the participation, presentation, and oral exam—is a way of assessing the same thing: whether you have done the readings well and developed interesting thoughts about them. Thus, stellar performance in one of the categories compensates for underwhelming performance on the others. Technically, you could participate very little in class, give a lackluster presentation, and then come into the oral exam at the end of term and blow me away with your deep familiarity with the readings and unspeakably clever insights, and walk out with an A. But I wouldn't recommend trying that.

Grade breakdown

Participation, presentation/review, and oral exam:	75%
Lecture:	25%

Class participation

The goal here is to advance an intelligent conversation from which we all learn. The most obvious way to do that is to say smart things and say them clearly. But that is not the only meaningful way to participate. Asking a question, connecting something already on the table to another thing, clarifying something that someone else has said, and offering evidence from the text under discussion are also all valuable. Bonus points are awarded for contributions that draw

on what others have said. Other things to keep in mind: aim for clarity, keep in mind the value of an amicable classroom environment, and try not to monopolize the conversation.

Presentation

We'll start every meeting with a twelve-minute presentation on the reading for that week. Your job, when you are the presenter, is to imagine that you are the author of the book we've all just read. You are now at a conference and have twelve minutes to get your point across. You are not obliged to cover every part of the argument, but just to sell your audience as much as possible on the book you've just written.

Usually, classroom presentations are treated with a sort of smiling indifference. The presenter drones on far past the time limit, everyone endures it, and then when it is over it is forgotten. Not this time! We'll treat these as serious-minded attempts to master the art of public speaking, the most underrated tool in the historian's toolkit. So, after every presentation, we'll critique it for style as well as substance (which we'll be able to do, since we'll have read the book, too). The goal, of course, is to mutually support each other in acquiring this important academic skill.

If you want to use slides for your presentation, talk to me and we'll figure out a way to make it work.

Book review

The other option, besides a presentation, is a 2,500-word book review. Here, your task is not to defend the book as if you've written it, but to think about what it does and doesn't do. Every book contains measures of both insight and blindness. Can you cogently walk your reader through the book, giving a fair sense of each?

Book reviews are due the week after the book in question has been discussed.

Oral exam

At the end of the term, we'll schedule a time for you come by and talk with me for 20–40 minutes about the reading and what you got out of the class. This is not intended to be something to dread, but rather an occasion for you to show me what you know and especially to talk about things that you didn't get a chance to address during the class. It will also be a dry run for qualifying exams. All readings will be on the table for this discussion but as we schedule the exams I'll ask you if there are any texts or issues that you particularly want to talk about. I will try to ask you at least one question to which you do not know the answer—that is to test the bounds of your knowledge—but the point of this is to find out what you do know, not what you don't know.

Lecture, due 12/8 by 4pm

Instead of a research paper, your end-of-term written assessment will be an hour-length undergraduate lecture on a specific topic within the general area of this class. You may write the entire lecture out or submit a full outline (containing all the points you will make, if not the exact sentences in which they would be expressed). You are also encouraged to submit PowerPoint or Prezi files designed to accompany the talk.

The object of this exercise is not to show off your command of historiographical nuance or to cram your lecture with as much information as possible but to reflect upon the big picture and figure out a way to communicate that to an undergraduate audience. That will involve having a clear argument and finding a way to present it simply and dramatically, in a way that undergraduates will be able to remember. The requirements of a lecture are different from those of an academic paper. I would strongly advise that you avoid walking your imagined audience through the ins and outs of the existing literature on the topic. In fact, do not drop scholars'

names at all unless you feel that doing so serves some pedagogical function. Do not do *anything* in this lecture that does not serve a pedagogical function. Other things to be wary of: taxonomies, lists, lengthy "background" sections, and ground-covering of any sort. The ideal lecture is an aerodynamic machine, with a comprehensible main argument, a clear structure, just the right amount of detail (be especially careful to avoid laying it on too thick, Goldilocks), narrative hooks, and a strict subordination of auxiliary material to the main points. Your audience should know, at every point in the lecture, why they are hearing what they are hearing and how it fits into the larger structure. Feel free to signpost like crazy (e.g., "That story I just told you was a way of illustrating *x*. Now I'm going to argue *y*. Remember: these both relate to my big point *A* in the following way…").

Another important distinction between the lecture and the academic paper is the requirements for originality in each. When you write an academic paper, you are asked to produce an original analysis and expected to rigorously document any words, facts, or ideas that you have taken from others. The lecture, however, is essentially a derivative genre and you are encouraged to take others' ideas, anecdotes, narrative devices, main theses, and categorical distinctions without cluing your students into where you got it all from (unless that attribution serves a pedagogical function). As a lecturer, you are not performing your original compositions, but covering the classic songbook and adding your own flourishes to your favorite tunes. The limit here, beyond which above-board borrowing shades into "Let's sit down and talk about plagiarism" territory, is the use of other scholars' sentences without attribution or the use of their ideas without comprehension. If you want to use other scholars' words but you don't want to bother talking about why with your students, just enclose them in quotation marks and add a footnote below—imagine that anything in the footnotes will be read by me but not heard by your undergraduate audience.

One recommendation: I've had students before who treated this as a research assignment and set out to lecture on something they didn't know about, often a highly specific topic ("The Transition from Keynesianism to Neoliberalism in Southeast Asia"). You are of course welcome to do any outside reading you that you need to do, but please keep in mind that the purpose of this assignment is not to break new ground for the field but to synthesize findings within it. It may thus be easier for you to take this as an opportunity to consolidate rather than to extend your knowledge base, to use books you have already read (especially ones for this course) as the basis for your lecture, and to try to weave them together into something coherent. At any rate, I would be fine with that.

Please turn in, with your lecture, an account of where you got your material and why you made the choices that you did about how to present it. Here, as in the footnotes, your audience is not a classroom of imagined undergraduates but me, and you are welcome to go into any historiographical details you want to (e.g., "Author *G* has a nice description of the Bretton Woods conference but tells it as the story of an international community reaching a consensus. I took a lot of *G*'s material but repurposed it as a story about conflicting personalities, because I wanted the students to understand that . . ."). I don't need a sentence-by-sentence account of where you got what from, but this short essay should indicate main sources and what you got from each. It should be at least a page in length.

Remember all of those lectures you've heard that made you want to die from boredom? Don't write one of those! Remember the lecture that made you want to go to grad school? Write *that* lecture.

Schedule of Readings, Events, and Assignments

All readings have been ordered at Norris and are on reserve at the library. Particularly heavy reading weeks are indicated with the skull and crossbones.

Sept. 25: Classic theory

- John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, "The Imperialism of Free Trade" (1953) on Blackboard
- Edward Said, *Orientalism* (1978), introduction, on Blackboard

Oct. 2: Overview

- Jane Burbank and Fred Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, 2010), chaps. 1, 8–14

Oct. 9: Settler colonialism

- James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783–1939* (Oxford, 2009), introduction, chaps. 1–7, 9, 12–15, conclusion


Oct. 16: Colonialism and categories of representation

- Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton, 2001)

Oct. 23: Colonial intimacies

- Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley, 2002)

Oct. 30: Race and ethnographic discourse

- George Steinmetz, *The Devil's Handwriting: Precoloniality and the German Colonial State in Qingdao, Samoa, and Southwest Africa* (Chicago, 2007), chaps. 1–5, 8

Nov. 6: Anti-imperialism

- Cemil Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought* (Columbia, 2007)

Nov. 13: Inclusion and exclusion

- Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism between the Two World Wars* (Chicago, 2005)


Nov. 20: Empire and war

- Louise Young, *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (Berkeley, 1998)

Dec. 4: The new face of empire?

- Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Harvard, 2000), preface, part I, 2.3–2.6, intermezzo, 3.4, and pp. 339–360.
- Barry R. Posen, "Command of the Commons: The Military Foundation of U.S. Hegemony," *International Security* 1 (2003): 5–46

LECTURE DUE DECEMBER 8, 4PM