

# EMPIRE

HUM 210-0-20  
University Hall 122  
Mon., Wed., 3:30-4:50pm  
Kaplan Scholars Course, Fall 2019

TEACHERS:  
Adia Benton, Anthropology  
Daniel Immerwahr, History  
Jules Law, English

## *Emails and office hours*

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this honors class—taught by a historian, a cultural anthropologist of science, and an English professor—we will ask about empire, one of the most important forms of global connection in the modern age. We'll approach our topic in an interdisciplinary way, looking at culture, history, literature, and even science. And we'll examine a rich selection of novels, maps, films, art, and scholarship from different eras of modern history and different parts of the globe. We'll read some classic works on empire, such as Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*. Other times, we'll examine less obvious texts—Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* or a James Bond novel—to see how empire has made its mark even on works that at first glance don't seem to be about empire at all.

Some of the questions we'll consider: What are empires? How do they work? How do they regulate the circulation of people, things, and ideas? How do they shape people's fundamental experience, and how can we study that in various media? How are empires contested? Can they be destroyed? And how does their legacy (or continued operation) shape our world today?

As we ask about empire, we'll also do something else in this class. We'll take the act of humanistic inquiry seriously. We'll practice asking useful questions, reading carefully and creatively, arguing with force and precision, and making the signature moves of history, anthropology, and literary studies.

There will be no exams in this class. Instead, you'll show us what you've figured out through discussion and through your writings. We'll expect you to bring your A-game, and we're excited to learn what that looks like.

## WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

You'll write eight assignments for this class. For all, we'll distribute guidelines before the deadline. We're looking for clear, concise, and persuasive prose that conforms to the established norms of the English language, and we'll work with you during this class on hitting that mark. Generally, the more seriously you take your

writing—with “taking it seriously” meaning rereading, editing, and spending time trying to improve it—the better this will go.

### CLASS DISCUSSION

In both the seminars and in the lectures, we’ll spend a lot of time discussing ideas. Our collective goal is to have an intelligent conversation from which we all learn. It may seem that the best/only way to participate is to make sharp, original observations. But asking a question, confessing confusion, connecting something already on the table to another thing, offering your own spin on someone else’s idea, and offering evidence from the text are also all valuable. Examples:

RAJU: Did you notice that Gandhi’s parable about the thief is set in a small village? I think that’s important. I don’t think the story would make sense in a city.

NINA: Yeah, I noticed that, too. But what about the rest of India? In lecture we talked about all the Indians working in cities in the textile industry. It’s weird to think Gandhi would ignore them when outlining his moral theory.

JUDY: I’m not sure Gandhi ignores them. Take a look at the third paragraph of page 9. He knows about cities. He’s just worried that people in them will be “slaves” without any “moral fiber.”

JORGE: I agree with Judy. Maybe the point of that parable is to show why cities are so dangerous.

ANA: Yes! And Nina’s example helps me understand *why* he’s so nervous about cities. They’re the points of contact between India and Britain. For India to get self-rule, Gandhi thinks it’ll have to focus on its villages.

It’s relatively easy to come up with your own points. It can be harder to bounce off what other people are saying. Bonus points are awarded for contributions that do that. Still more bonus points are awarded for being aware of the dynamic of the classroom, particularly in the seminar meetings. If someone hasn’t been talking a lot, help make room for her or try to develop one of her ideas. If you’ve been talking the whole class and other people want to get in, try sitting out a few rounds.

## COURSE BOOKS

These books are all available at the university bookstore in Norris. There is, however, no need to purchase them as we've also placed them on reserve at the library. It is fine with us if you use a different edition of the book than the one on sale at Norris (although you might have to look over someone else's shoulder when we refer to specific parts of the text in class).

1. William Shakespeare, *The Tempest* (1611)
2. Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (1818)
3. Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (1847)
4. Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (1899)
5. Mohandas Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj* (1908)
6. Ian Fleming, *Dr. No* (1958)
7. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961)
8. Zohra Drif, *Inside the Battle of Algiers: Memoir of a Woman Freedom Fighter* (2017)

## GRADES

Your grade will be 75% papers and 25% participation. The papers will be weighted on an ascending scale, so that, of the paper component of your grade, 5% will be for your first paper, 10% for your second and for your third, 12.5% for your fourth and for your fifth, 15% for your sixth and for your seventh, and 20% for your final. The participation component of your grade may include reading quizzes and attendance. Your seminar teacher will do all your grading.

## SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS, READINGS, AND ASSIGNMENTS

*All readings are due the day listed.*

### BEFORE CLASS STARTS

- Read Shakespeare, *The Tempest*
- ASSIGNMENT 1: Write a 3-4 page essay on three relationships of power in *The Tempest*. Upload this to Canvas by Monday, Sept. 23, 10pm.

### WEEK 1

Note: Usually, the lecture course will meet on Mondays and Wednesdays, with seminars on Tuesdays and Thursdays. This first week, it will be switched. There is no class on Monday, the lecture will meet Tuesday and Thursday, and we'll have a discussion section on Wednesday.

Tues, 9/24: Introduction, meet in Kresge 2380

- No reading

Wed., 9/25: Another *Tempest*

- Reading: Aimé Césaire, *A Tempest* (1969) on Canvas
- Locations for seminar meetings: Benton in Kresge 2380; Law in Kresge 2315; Immerwahr in Kresge 5531

Thurs., 9/26, Europe's Periphery before Modern Imperialism, meet in Kresge 2380

WEEK 2

Mon., 9/30: Mapping the World

- For Mon: Spend some time with the contents of the "Maps" folder on Canvas
- Reading (for Tuesday): Stuart Hall, "The West and the Rest" (1992) on Canvas

Wed., 10/2: British Poetry and the Idea of the "World"

- Read "British Poetry" folder on Canvas

Friday, 10/3, noon: Upload ASSIGNMENT 2

WEEK 3

Mon., 10/7: Empire as Laboratory

- Read Shelley, *Frankenstein*, vol. 1 (getting ahead, will be discussed Wed-Thu)
- Read Benita Sampedro Vizcaya, "Health, Raciality, and Modernity in Colonial Equatorial Guinea" (2018) on Canvas

Tues: 10/8, 3:30pm: Upload ASSIGNMENT 3

Wed., 10/9: Early European Critiques of Empire

- Finish Shelley, *Frankenstein*

Fri., 10/11, 5pm: Midterm report

- Upload to Canvas by 5pm a write-up of how you are doing in this class. Are you on top of the readings? Understanding things? Participating in seminar? Writing at the top of your game? Having any problems we should know about? Your goal should be an earnest assessment, which we can use to make sure you're on the right track.

WEEK 4

Mon., 10/14: Vampires

- Read Luise White, "Cars Out of Place: Vampires, Technology, and Labor in East and Central Africa" (1993) on Canvas

Wed., 10/16: The Great Divergence and the Economics of Empire

- Read Kenneth Pomeranz, "Political Economy and Ecology on the Eve of Industrialization: Europe, China, and the Global Conjuncture" (2002) on Canvas
- Read Joel Mokyr, *A Culture of Growth* (2017), chaps. 11 and 16 on Canvas

Fri., 10/18, 5pm: Upload ASSIGNMENT 4

- On this day, we'll give *you* midterm reports, letting you know what we're seeing from you, what you might profitably work on, and so forth.

WEEK 5

Mon., 10/21: Visual Humanitarianism

- Read Aubrey Graham, "One Hundred Years of Suffering?: 'Humanitarian Crisis Photography' and Self-Representation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo" on Canvas
- Read Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, chaps. I-IV (1-4)—getting ahead for Wed.

Wed., 10/23: *Jane Eyre*

- Read Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, chaps. V-XX (5-20)

WEEK 6

Mon., 10/28: Oh, would like some more *Jane Eyre*?

- Read Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, chaps. XXI-XXXVIII (21-38)

Wed., 10/30: King Leopold and the Congo

- Read Mark Twain, *King Leopold's Soliloquy* (1905) on Canvas
- Read Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost* (1999), chaps. 6-10 (around 95 pp.)

Thu., 10/31, 7pm: *I Walked with a Zombie* screening, Block Museum

Fri, 11/1, 5pm: Upload ASSIGNMENT 5

WEEK 7

Mon., 11/4: Hearts of Darkness

- Read Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*
- Watch Coppola, *Apocalypse Now* (1979), linked on Canvas

Wed., 11/6: *Hind Swaraj*

- Read Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*

Friday, 11/8, 5pm: Upload ASSIGNMENT 6

WEEK 8

Mon., 11/11: Decolonization

- Read Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, chaps. 1 and 4

Tues., 5pm-8:15pm: Dinner and screening of *Battle of Algiers*, location TBA

Wed., 11/13: Frantz Fanon and the *Battle of Algiers*

- Watch Gillo Pontecorvo, *The Battle of Algiers* (1966).
- Read Zohra Drif, *Inside the Battle of Algiers*, chaps. 1-4

WEEK 9

Mon., 11/18: Zohra Drif and the *Battle of Algiers*

- Read Zohra Drif, *Inside the Battle of Algiers*, chaps. 5-9

Wed., 11/20: The Pointillist Empire

- Read Ian Fleming, *Doctor No*

Friday., 11/22, noon: Upload ASSIGNMENT 7

WEEK 10

Mon., 11/25: The War on Terror

- Darryl Li, "From Exception to Empire: Sovereignty, Carceral Circulation, and the 'Global War on Terror'" (2018) on Canvas
- Angela Davis, *Abolition Democracy* (2011), excerpts on Canvas.

Wed., 11/27: No class

Mon., 12/9, 5pm: Upload ASSIGNMENT 8

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

An easy way for an undergraduate to derail her college career is with an academic integrity violation, the most common of which is plagiarism. The university's rules can be found at [northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/](http://northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/). Please read them, as you will be held accountable to them. Here are some key principles:

1. If you are relying on somebody else's ideas or information, cite that person.
2. If you use someone else's words, enclose those words in quotation marks and cite that person. Taking someone else's prose, modifying it slightly, and passing it off as your own is never appropriate, even if you include a footnote.
3. You may not turn in work that is identical to or derivative of work you have turned in for another class without both prior permission and a clear accounting of what is old and what is new.

We will report all suspected academic integrity violations immediately to the dean.

## ACCESSIBILITY

Any student requesting accommodations related to a disability or other condition is required to register with AccessibleNU (847-467-5530; [accessiblenu@northwestern.edu](mailto:accessiblenu@northwestern.edu);) and provide professors with an accommodation notification from AccessibleNU, preferably within the first two weeks of class. All information will remain confidential.

## CIVILITY

We are committed to helping all students to fully engage in all areas of campus life. That means respecting each others' backgrounds, identities, and intellectual approaches, and seeking to learn from them. Attacks on another member of the class's identity, character, or motives are out of place in college, and they create an unpleasant, stifling environment. If you disagree with something someone said, feel free to say so, but do so politely, and make it about the proposition, not the person. When in doubt, err on the side of curiosity ("Interesting, tell me more about why you see it that way") and kindness.