

School of History
and Politics

American
Empire

Honours Course
Guide

Semester 1, 2009

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This honours course will consider nineteenth and twentieth century American history as an imperial history. After first defining terms, we will spend the term reading books that will consider social, political, cultural and economic dimensions of the issue. We will discuss the development of a transcontinental North American nineteenth-century empire before discussing the growth of an overseas empire in the early twentieth century. After discussing cultural elements of American “soft power” during the Cold War we will finish with an appraisal of contemporary imperial projects.

Meeting Time: Fridays 12-2 pm

Meeting Place: Napier 518

Assignments:

1). Minor Essay 25%

Students must provide a critical review of one of the books read in weeks 4-5.

Due Week 6 1000 words

2). Research Paper 75%

Due June 15 4500 words

We will discuss this assignment in depth as the term progresses.

In addition to doing these written assignments students are expected to come prepared to discuss the readings for each week in class.

Course Readings:

Students will be expected to purchase the books on the syllabus through Amazon. A short course reader will be available for the articles.

Week 1 introduction
March 9

Week 2
March 13

What is an Empire?

Linda Colley, “The Difficulties of Empire: Present, Past and Future,” *Historical Research* 79, no. 205 (August. 2006): 367-382.

Charles Maier, *Among Empires: American Ascendancy and Its Predecessors* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 24-77.

Amy Kaplan, “Left Alone with America: The Absence of Empire in the Study of American

Culture,” in *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, ed. Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 3-21

Week 3 Postcolonial Studies and Empire **March 20**

Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, eds.
Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 1-40.

Ann Laura Stoler, “Tense and Tender Ties: The Politics of Comparison in North American History and (Post) Colonial Studies”, in Stoler, ed. *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), pp. 23-70.

Week 4 Nineteenth-Century American Empires **March 27**

Amy S. Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005)

Week 5 Nineteenth-Century American Empires **(cont.)** **April 3**

Ned Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land: Indians and Empire in the Early American West* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006)

Week 6 American Empire at the Turn of the Twentieth Century

April 9,---Special Meeting time Thursday at 2pm

Thomas Bender, “An Empire among Empires,” in *A Nation among Nations: Americas Place in World History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006), 182-245.

Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), introduction.

Semester Break

Week 7 American Empire at the Turn of the Twentieth Century (cont.)

Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000).

Week 8 American Empire at the Turn of the Century (cont)

Laura Wexler, *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of U.S. Imperialism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

Week 9 America in the Caribbean

Mary A. Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

Week 10 American Culture and the Cold War

Penny Von Eschen, *Sachmo Blows up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).

Week 11 American Consumer Culture and Empire in the Cold War

Victoria de Grazia, "The Consumer-Citizen: How Europeans Traded Rights for Goods," in *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance Through Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005).

Reinhold Wagnleitner, “forward to the American Edition” and “introduction” in *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War: The Cultural Mission of the United States in Austria after the Second World War*, trans. Diana M. Wolf (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994)ix-xiv, 1-7. (to be circulated).

Week 12 Iraq and its Middle East Antecedents

Melani McAlister, ““Benevolent Supremacy”: The Biblical Epic at the Dawn of the American Century, 1947-1960,” in *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East, 1945-2000* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 43-83.

Douglas Little, “Opening the Door: Business, Diplomacy, and America’s Stake in Middle East Oil,” in *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 43-75.