Societies and the Social Sciences: Empires and Political Imagination
MAP: V55.0600
015 = lectures, 016-019 = recitations
Lectures: Tuesday and Thursday, 9:30 to 10:45, Silver 206
Professors Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper
Preceptors Olga Sezneva and Quinn Slobodian

Course Description

Throughout history, most people have lived in empires. This course will focus on the comparative study of empires from the Romans to the present, and upon the variety of ways in which empires have inspired and constrained their subjects' ideas of rights, belonging, and power. The study of empire expands our ideas of citizenship and challenges the notion that the nation-state is "natural" and necessary. Students in this course will explore historians' various approaches to studying empires. We will investigate how empires were held together—and where they were weak—from perspectives that focus on political and economic connections over long distances and long time periods. Readings will include historical scholarship on the Roman, Chinese, Mongol, Spanish, Russian, French, British, and American empires, as well as primary sources produced by people living in these and other imperial polities.

Requirements

Lectures, recitations, readings and documents: Attendance at lectures and active participation in the recitations are integral parts of the course. The recitations (on Fridays or Mondays) have two elements. The first is discussion of the reading that appears under the lectures for the preceding Tuesday and Thursday as well as of the lectures themselves. The second is a discussion of a short document, usually an original source from the place and time that is the subject of the week's classes. Students will be asked to analyze in class the meanings and significance of the document and how it can be used to further understanding of the historical questions being examined. For the first recitation (either Friday Sept. 10 or Monday Sept. 13), the document discussion will focus on George Orwell's short story, "Shooting an Elephant," a copy of which will be passed out at the first lecture. Documents for later discussions will be made available as the course proceeds.

Exams and papers: There will be a midterm examination held in class on October 21 and a final examination on December 16 (10:00 to 11:50 am). In addition, students will write two short papers. The first paper, due on October 7 at 4:00 pm will be a 2-3 page document analysis similar to those accomplished orally at the recitations. During recitations on October 8 and 11, students will discuss their interpretations with the rest of the group. The second paper, due on December 2 at 4:00 pm, will be a 4-5 page review of a novel or a film with a strong focus on questions of empire. We will hand out a list of appropriate novels and films later in the course. Students may choose a film or novel from outside this list, provided that this selection is approved by their preceptors well ahead of the due date.
Evaluation Policy:

Students are expected to participate actively in discussions and to hand in papers on the due date. Incompletes are not allowed.

Recitations: 25%
Document Analysis: 10%
Mid-term examination: 15%
Essay: 20%
Final Exam: 30%

Books and Coursepack

The following books are available for purchase at the NYU bookstore:

Anthony Pagden, People and Empires.
Daniel Goffman, The Ottoman Empire and Early-Modern Europe.

Coursepack:
The bulk of the required reading consists of shorter extracts. All of these selected readings have been copied in a coursepack, 2 Volumes, available for purchase at Unique Copy Center: 252 Greene Street (between Waverly and W. 8th Street). Copies of the coursepack are also on reserve at Bobst Library.

Instructors' Office Hours and Contact Information

Professor Burbank: Tuesdays, 2:30-3:30 and by appointment, King Juan Carlos Center 715
Tel: 212-998-8628 Email: jane.burbank@nyu.edu

Professor Cooper: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:00-12:00, King Juan Carlos Center 708
Tel: 212-998-8606 Email: fred.cooper@nyu.edu

Olga Sezneva: Mondays, 12:00-2:00, Department of Sociology, 269 Mercer St., 8 floor.
E-mail: os220@nyu.edu

Quinn Slobodian: Thursdays, 3:00-5:00, Department of History, King Juan Carlos Center.
E-mail: qes200@nyu.edu
### Lecture Schedule and Readings

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 7</td>
<td>Introduction: Why Empires Matter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept. 9</td>
<td>What Empires Do</td>
<td>Anthony Pagden, <em>People and Empires</em>, 1-16</td>
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<td>Documents:</td>
<td>Sept. 10 and 13  George Orwell, &quot;Shooting an Elephant&quot;</td>
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<td>Documents:</td>
<td>Sept. 17 and 20  Vindolanda: Remains of a Roman City near Hadrian's Wall</td>
<td>The Roman Theatre at Lyons</td>
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<td>Sept. 21</td>
<td>Empire Space: The Mediterranean and Beyond</td>
<td>Pagden, <em>People and Empires</em>, 39-46</td>
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Sept. 24 and 27 Excerpts from "Medieval Sourcebook": Corpus Iuris Civilis, 6th Century (Prologue and Marriage section), and Charlemagne, Summons to Army, c. 804-11

Sept. 28 The Mongols' Empires
Readings:

Sept. 30 Putting Empire Together: The Ottomans
Readings:
Daniel Goffman, The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe, 1-97


Oct. 5 Ottoman Empire: How it Worked
Readings:
Goffman, 98-127, 159-88, 227-34

Oct. 7 Putting Empire Together: Spain
Readings:

Oct. 7 Document Analysis due at 4:00 pm in preceptor's mailbox

Ottoman documents from Bernard Lewis, Islam: From the Prophet Mohammad to the Capture of Constantinople, Vol. 1, pp. 135-48. Students’ written analyses due October 7. The essay can focus on one or two of these short documents.

Oct. 12 Empire Space: The Atlantic and the Americas
Readings:
Pagden, People and Empires, 47-79
David B. Abernethy, The Dynamics of Global Dominance, 45-63

Oct. 14 Empire Space: The High Seas and Merchant Empire
Readings:
Pagden, People and Empires, 81-98.
Documents: Oct. 15 and 18 TBA

Oct. 19    Empire, Slavery, and Indigenous Peoples
Readings:
Pagden, *People and Empires*, 98-112
C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins*, 6-61

**Oct. 21 Midterm**

Oct. 26    Empire Space: Russia between Europe and Asia
Readings:
Donald Ostrowski, *Muscovy and the Mongols: Cross-Cultural Influences on the Steppe Frontier, 1304-1589*, pp. 31-63

Oct. 28    Continental Empires: Autocracy, Enlightenment and Difference
Readings:

Documents: Oct. 29 and Nov. 4 TBA

Nov. 2 Empire Space: Asia
Readings:
Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 26-48

Nov. 4 China: The Extent and Limits of Territorial Power
Readings:
R. Bin Wong, "China's Agrarian Empire: A Different Kind of Empire, A Different Kind of Lesson," unpublished paper
Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 74-89

Documents: Nov. 5 and 8 TBA

Nov. 9 Empire in a Revolutionary Age: The "French" Revolution, Haiti, and Napoleon
Readings:
James, *Black Jacobins*, 62-117
Nov. 11  From Continental Empire to Nation-State? The Case of the United States
Readings:  
Richard White, *It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own: A History of the American West*, 85-118

Documents: Nov. 12 and 15 TBA

Nov. 16  Colonial Empires: Europe in Asia and Beyond
Readings:  
Pagden, *People and Empires*, 113-52  
Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, *Modern South Asia*, 57-106

Nov. 18  Colonial empires: Europe in Africa
Readings:  
Frederick Cooper, "Colonialism and Imperialism" from *Encyclopedia of Africa South of the Sahara*, I: 316-21.  

Documents: Nov. 19 and 22 TBA

Nov. 23  Continental Empires: Dilemmas of Power and Reform
Readings:  

Nov. 25  Thanksgiving

Nov. 30  World War I as a Crisis of Empire
Readings:  
Philipp Ther, "Imperial instead of National History: Positioning Modern German History on the Map of European Empires," unpublished paper  
Abernethy, *The Dynamics of Global Dominance*, 104-32

Dec. 2  The USSR's Alternative to Empire
Readings:  
Yuri Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State

Dec. 2   Essay due at 4:00 pm in preceptor's mailbox

Dec. 7  World War II and the End of Empire
Readings:
Abernethy, *The Dynamics of Global Dominance*, 133-72
Pagden, *People and Empires*, 155-69
Frederick Cooper, "Decolonization and Citizenship: Africa between Empire and a World of Nations," unpublished paper

Dec. 9  Imperial Formations after Empire
Reading:
Julian Go, "Imperial Power and its Limits: America's Colonial Empire in the Early 20th Century," unpublished paper

Documents: Dec. 10 and 13 TBA

Dec. 14  Concluding Discussion

Dec. 16  Final Exam (10:00 am - 11:50 am)