World Cultures: Empires and Political Imagination  
MAP: V55.0500  
Fall 2006  
Professors Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper  
Tuesdays, Thursday, 9:30-10:45, in Cantor 102

Course Description

Throughout history, few people lived for very long in a polity that consisted entirely or even mainly of people with whom they shared a language and culture. Any examination of the variety of human cultures must take account of the forms of power within which people tried to make their way, sometimes seeking higher degrees of autonomy, sometimes accommodating to rulers' authority, sometimes trying to extend their own power over others. Empires—polities which maintained and enhanced social and cultural distinction even as they incorporated different people—have been one of the most common and durable forms of politics. This course will focus on the comparative study of empires from the Romans and the Chinese 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' 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, Ottoman, 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 Wednesdays) have two elements. The first is discussion of the reading up to that point in the class, but focusing on the most recent topics. The second is a analysis 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. Documents are in the coursepack.

Exams and papers: There will be a midterm examination held in class on October 19 and a final examination on December 21. In addition, students will write two short papers. The first paper, due on October 3 in class will be a 2-3 page document analysis similar to those accomplished orally at the recitations. During recitations on October 4, students will discuss their interpretations with the rest of the group. The second paper, due on December 4 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 book is available for purchase at the NYU bookstore:
Daniel Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early-Modern Europe*.

Coursepack:
The coursepack is in three parts. Part 1 is manuscript chapters from a book in draft form by Professors Burbank and Cooper, *Empires and Political Imagination in World History*. (The first 6 chapters are available at the beginning of the semester; a second set of chapters will be made available part way through the semester.) Part 2 consists of short articles and book chapters. Part 3 is a set of original documents, mostly from the period being studied in a particular week, that will be discussed in section on the day under which it is listed. Copies of the coursepacks are also on reserve at Bobst Library. The coursepack is available at New University Copy, 11 Waverly Place.

Instructors' Office Hours and Contact Information

Professor Burbank: Thursdays, 11:00-12:00 or by appointment, King Juan Carlos Center 603 Tel: 212-998-8628 Email: jane.burbank@nyu.edu

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

Marc Goulding: Tuesdays, 11:00-1:00, King Juan Carlos Center 5W. Email: marcgoulding@hotmail.com

Priya Lal: Tuesdays, 11:00-12:00, King Juan Carlos Center 5W. Email: priyalalista@gmail.com

Paul Sager: Thursdays, 11:00-12:00, or by appointment, King Juan Carlos Center 5W. Email: paul.sager@nyu.edu

Lyuba Grinberg: Thursdays, 2:00-3:30., King Juan Carlos Center 5W. Email: li250@nyu.edu
Lecture Schedule and Readings

Sept. 5  Introduction: Why Empires Matter


Sept. 7  What Empires Do
Reading:
Burbank and Cooper, Chapter 1

Sept. 12  Rome and Its Antecedents
Readings:
Burbank and Cooper, Chapter 2

Sept. 13  Discussion: urbanism and architecture in the Roman empire (images and plans)

Sept. 14  Rome: How it Worked
Readings:

Sept. 19  Empire Space: The Mediterranean and Beyond
Readings:
Burbank and Cooper, Chapter 3

Sept. 20  Discussion: Byzantine and Carolingian documents

Sept. 21  Empire Space: Eurasia
Readings:

Sept. 26  The Mongols' Empires
Readings:
Burbank and Cooper, Chapter 4

Sept. 27  Discussion: excerpts from Khwandamir's *Habibu's-Siyar*, on Mongol rule
Sept. 28  Putting Empire Together: The Ottomans  
Readings:  
Daniel Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe*, 1-97.

Oct. 3  Ottoman Empire: How it Worked  
Readings:  
**Paper due in class:** document analysis based on document in Coursepack, part 3, on Ottoman empire.

Oct. 4  Discussion: Ottoman document and your papers

Oct. 5  Putting Empire Together: Spain  
Readings:  
Burbank and Cooper, Chapter 5  

Oct. 10  Empire Space: The Atlantic and the Americas  
Readings:  
Burbank and Cooper, Chapter 6

Oct. 11  Discussion: Bartolomé de las Casas' history of the Spanish empire

Oct. 12  Empire Space: The High Seas and Merchant Empire  
Readings:  

Oct. 17  Empire, Slavery, and Indigenous Peoples  
Readings:  

Oct. 18  Discussion: Review for midterm exam

Oct. 19  **Midterm**

Oct. 24  Empire Space: Russia between Europe and Asia  
Readings:  
Burbank and Cooper, Chapter 7

Oct. 25  Discussion: Mongol Charter to the Russian Church, Catherine the Great's Laws
Oct. 26  Continental Empires: Autocracy, Enlightenment and Difference
Readings:
Mark Bassin, “Inventing Siberia: Visions of the Russian East in the Early

Oct. 31  Empire Space: Asia
Readings:

Nov. 1  Discussion: The Qing Emperor's Message of 1731

Nov. 2  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," in Craig Calhoun, Frederick Cooper, and Kevin Moore, eds.,
Lessons of Empire, 189-200.

Nov. 7  Empire in a Revolutionary Age: The "French" Revolution, Haiti, and Napoleon
Readings:
Burbank and Cooper, Chapter 8
James, Black Jacobins, 85-117.

Nov. 8  Discussion: Revolutionary documents: US, France, Haiti

Nov. 9  From Continental Empire to Nation-State? The Case of the United States
Readings:
Burbank and Cooper, Chapter 9
Richard White, It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own: A History of the
American West, 85-118.

Nov. 14  Colonial Empires: Europe in Asia and Beyond
Readings:
Burbank and Cooper, Chapter 10
Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, Modern South Asia, 57-106.

Nov. 15  Discussion: empire and education in India

Nov. 16  Colonial empires: Europe in Africa
Readings:
John Comaroff, “Images of Empire, Contests of Conscience: Models of Colonial
Domination in South Africa,” in Tensions of Empire, pp. 163-98.
Nov. 21  Continental Empires: Dilemmas of Power and Reform  
Readings:  
Burbank and Cooper, Chapter 11  

Nov. 22  No class

Nov. 23  Thanksgiving

Nov. 28  World War I as a Crisis of Empire  
Readings:  
Burbank and Cooper, Chapter 12  

Nov. 29  Discussion: Wilson's 14 Points

Nov. 30  The USSR's Alternative to Empire  
Readings:  

Dec. 4 (Mon.) Essay due at 4:00 pm in preceptor's mailbox

Dec. 5  World War II and the End of Empire  
Readings:  
Burbank and Cooper, Chapter 13

Dec. 6  Discussion: Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*

Dec. 7  Imperial Formations after Empire  
Reading:  
Julian Go, "Imperial Power and its Limits: America's Colonial Empire in the Early 20th Century," in Calhoun, Cooper, and Moore, *Lessons of Empire*, 201-14

Dec. 12  Concluding Discussion (whole class)

**December 21 (Thursday) 8AM-9:50AM Final Exam**