History of U.S. Empire
History 510:533
Spring 2023
Wednesday, 4:00-6:50pm

Professor Kornel Chang
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313 Conklin Hall
Office Hrs: Wed, 2:30-4:00pm or over zoom

Description
This reading-intensive seminar focuses on U.S. empire-building, examining how the United States evolved from a white settler society to a global hegemon in the twentieth century. Drawing on both canonical and more recent scholarship, the course pays close attention to the ideals, rationales, and policies that fueled and justified American expansionism and imperialism over the course of two centuries. Students will study how the United States has exerted its power—militarily, economically, and culturally—and analyze its impact on the continent and around the world. The course also delves into the experiences of the colonized and occupied, exploring how they resisted, negotiated, and accommodated U.S. imperial power.

Course Requirements
I. Participation and Discussion (20%)
Class meetings consist of discussions with students debating historical evidence, research methods, interpretations, and writing. Your classroom participation should indicate careful reading of the texts.

Attendance is required. Missing more than one class can negatively impact your grade.

II. Response Papers (30%)
Students are required to submit weekly response papers to the readings. I am not looking for summaries and general arguments; rather papers should focus on specific approaches, methods, evidence, and writing techniques that the scholar uses to build their arguments and tell a good story. The paper is due by via e-mail prior to class.

III. Lecture/Primary Source Paper (50%)

Academic Integrity
Written work submitted must be your own. Your written work must properly cite for ideas and words that are not yours. It also goes without saying, you are not allowed to use AI i.e. Chatgpt to write your papers.

The entire Academic Integrity Policy can be found here: http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/

REQUIRED TEXTS (Available for Purchase at Rutgers Bookstore)


• Pekka Hämäläinen, *Comanche Empire* (Yale, 2009)

• Matthew Karp, *This Vast Southern Empire: Slaveholders at the Helm of American Foreign Policy* (Harvard, 2016)


• John Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (Norton, 1999)


COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS

**Week 1**

Jan 17

Course Overview

**Week 2**

Jan 24

What Kind of Empire is this?


Ann Laura Stoler, “On Degrees of Imperial Sovereignty,” *Public Culture*

Gilbert Joseph, Catherine LeGrand, and Ricardo Salvatore, *Close Encounters of Empire*, Introduction

**Week 3**

Jan 31

Slavery and Capitalist Expansion

Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market*

**Week 4**

**Conquest of the Continent**

Feb 7

Pekka Hämäläinen, *Comanche Empire*.


**Week 5**

**The Slaveholder’s Empire**

Feb 14

Matthew Karp, *This Vast Southern Empire: Slaveholders at the Helm of American Foreign Policy*


**Week 6**

**Sex and Gender**

Feb 21


Laura Briggs, “Demon Mothers in the Social Laboratory.”

**Week 7**

**Hawai’i and 1898 Empire**

Feb 28

Noenoe Silva, *Alhoa Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism*

Daniel Immerwhar, *How to Hide and Empire*, Select Chapters.

**Week 8**

**Conspiring against Empire**

Mar 6


**Week 9**

**Spring Break**

Mar 13

No Class

**Week 10**

**Labor and Migration**
Mar 20

Mac Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*.

Daniel Bender and Jana Lipman, *Making the Empire Work*, Intro.

**Week 11**

Mar 27 **Occupying Empire**


**Week 12**

Apr 3 **Student Meetings to Discuss Paper**

**Week 13**

Apr 10 **Decolonizing Empire**


**Week 14**

Apr 17 **Transitioning into the Post-Cold War World**


**Week 15**

Apr 24 **TBD**