

Instructor: Aslam Kakar  
Office hours: Wednesdays 11:00-1:00  
(by appointment)  
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## **America and the World**

Wednesdays 6:00-9:00  
Location: HILL HALL 210  
Rutgers University – Newark  
21:790:202, Index: 06203

**Course Description:** This course will explore the history and politics of America's imperial expansions, past and present, in order to understand America's role in the world. In the course, we will learn about distinct phases of America's territorial expansion, as well as other forms of imperialism. We will go over questions such as: what constitutes an empire and what is imperialism? What is the difference between terms such as "empire," "imperialism," "colonialism," "colonization," "post-colonialism," etc.? Has the US been, and does it continue to be imperialist? We will seek to answer these questions historically, by looking at the role of the US in multiple parts of the world, including the settler context. We will also take a brief tour of empires throughout history: The Roman, British, French, Dutch, Portuguese, Islamic, etc., empires. We will use historical approaches about these imperial powers to analyze the status of American power at home and internationally.

Finally, we will inquire into how the history of American settlers and foreign policy, impacts on contemporary global politics. In this context, we will look at some important case studies such as, Latin America, the Caribbean, South and Southeast Asia and the Middle East. The course emphasizes Albert Einstein's idea that "The important thing is not to stop questioning." He also said, "A man should look for what is, and not for what he thinks should be." This course provides an opportunity for students to develop their thinking about the United States' imperial expansion, if there is any such thing, and the world in general.

*Welcome to class!*

### **Required text:**

Adam Burns, *American Imperialism: The Territorial Expansion of the United States*, Oxford University Press/Edinburgh University Press, 2017.

Stephen Howe, *Empire: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, 2002.

The text can be purchased, either new or used, at the [University bookstore](#).

- Please bring a copy of your readings to class each week, and please complete your readings before class.
- Other required and suggested readings will be uploaded on Blackboard

**Learning Objectives:**

- To gain historical knowledge of different phases and forms of American interventionism using grounded case studies
- To gain knowledge about geography of the United States and world and the political, economic and geostrategic importance of countries, oceans, straits, etc.
- To promote critical thinking in assessing America’s role in the world
- To develop and also question different conceptual tools that are used to understand America’s position in the world
- The ability to interpret course materials and demonstrate creative thinking
- Improvement of writing skills through essay-style test questions
- To encourage curiosity and skepticism about the course topics and appreciation of complexities involved in debates on America’s role in the world.
- The development of translational skills: taking what you have learned in class and translating and synthesizing that knowledge into different formats, such as multimedia outputs
- To professionalize students and foster forward-thinking in preparation for their future and present careers, including working cooperatively and self-reflexively

**Assessment:**

There will be three tests in this class, and you will also earn grades for attendance and participation.

Assessment	Date	Value
Test 1: Take home essay(s)	March 5	35%
Individual Presentation	Throughout the Semester	15%
Participation	Throughout the Semester	15%
Final Exam: Take home essay(s)	May 5	35%

Participation grades are awarded on the basis of: 1. Attendance; 2. Coming to class prepared with your readings done, and engaging in class in ways that demonstrate your careful reading of the assigned texts; 3. Collegiality: showing respect for your fellow students even when you might disagree, and actively working to make sure that everyone in the course has an opportunity to be heard – i.e. encouraging the participation of others; 4. Active participation in class workshops and activities, including in groups.

## Course Policies

**Absence Policy:** In accordance with University policy, students are expected to attend to every session with all relevant required course materials and work. If you are absent from class, contact me as soon as possible, preferably before the next class meeting. Students remain responsible for any missed work, for work completed in class, and for work due, and must arrange for that work to be delivered to the faculty on time. Per the university policy, absences are excused only in the case of illness, death in the family, religious observance, or official college business. These instances must be documented and approved in advance when the instance was foreseeable. Note: *having an airline ticket to travel (unless it is for one of the documented reasons listed above) is not grounds for an excused absence.*

**Blackboard:** Please check the blackboard regularly for readings and announcements.

**Completion of Requirements:** You should complete ALL the requirements of the course. If you do not submit an assignment or appear for your presentation, you will automatically fail the course. If you foresee any problems with the timely submission of assignments and/or appearing for your presentations, you must notify me immediately. All assignments are due on the given time.

**Make-Ups for Presentations and Examinations:** Students who miss class on the date they were scheduled to make their presentation will not be able to make it up on another date, unless the absence was documented and excused in accordance with the university policy outlined above. Students will not be allowed to make up the mid-term or final exams on another date unless the absence was documented and excused in accordance with the university policy outlined above.

**Use of Electronic Devices:** *Please turn off all cell phones and personal electronic devices when you enter the classroom.* You can use laptops, but only for taking notes. Note that your class participation grade will automatically drop to an **F** if you use your phone or laptop for a non-classroom related activity.

**Email Communication:** Outside of the classroom, the primary method of communication will be via emails. It is your responsibility as a student in this course to ensure that your Rutgers email ID is operational to receive my emails to you. Contact the Technology Help Desk immediately if you experience problems in receiving emails from me.

**Disruptive Student Behavior:** Students who engage in any prohibited or unlawful behavior that results in disruption of class may be directed by the instructor to leave the class for the remainder of the class period. As a last resort, if a disruptive student refuses to leave the room, campus Public Safety will be contacted for assistance at 973-353-5581/ (973) 972-4491.

**Inclement Weather Policy:** If classes are canceled due to inclement weather, students are responsible for checking their university email and/or Blackboard for information from their faculty advising them of any immediate impact on the students' preparation for the next class meeting.

**Academic Integrity:** All students must sign an academic pledge.

[http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI\\_Policy\\_9\\_01\\_2011.pdf](http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI_Policy_9_01_2011.pdf). "On my honor, I have neither received nor given any unauthorized assistance on this examination (assignment)." All students

are expected to adhere to the university academic integrity policy. Please read [http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI\\_Policy\\_2013.pdf](http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI_Policy_2013.pdf)

**Syllabus and Course Requirements:** Finally, you are responsible for understanding and acting upon the contents and requirements of this syllabus. If you have any questions regarding any aspects of this syllabus, feel free to write or talk to me. Also, if you have questions or concerns regarding your performance in the course or on a project, I encourage you to schedule an appointment with me during my office hours. You can also seek academic support from the places mentioned below.

**Important information:**

- ❖ For information such as add/drop dates please visit the following website: <https://registrar.newark.rutgers.edu/office-registrar-academic-calendar>
- ❖ Students with disabilities who require accommodation should work with the [Office of Disability Services](#) (973-353-5300). Also please let me know whether you require any accommodation, and we can work together with the Office of Disability Services to ensure your needs are met.
- ❖ Students should be aware of the services of [The Writing Center](#). The Writing Center offers writing tutoring and writing workshops to all undergraduate students currently enrolled in classes.
- ❖ All students are required to be familiar with, and adhere to, the University’s Academic Integrity Policy (see the University’s [Academic Integrity site](#)). Students who commit plagiarism will be reported to the Academic Integrity Facilitator, and may be subject to sanction. It is your responsibility to be fully familiar with the University’s policy on academic integrity.

**SCHEDULE OF READINGS**

*Please note that the readings for the last two weeks are yet to be defined. In case of reshuffling of readings for any other week, you will be notified at least a week or so before. Check your email and blackboard at least once a day for announcements.*

**Week One, Jan 23: Introductory Class**

- Will discuss the purpose and objectives of the course
- Review syllabus thoroughly and carefully, so that you understand what you are supposed to be doing during the semester
- Read and discuss “agreements” which, if we all agree to, will guide our class environment during the semester

**Week two, Jan 30: What is Imperialism? Is the United States an Empire?**

**Required Readings:**

Howe, Chapter 1: *Introduction: I read the news today... Empire: A very Short Introduction* (PP. 1-9)

Burns, *Introduction: Defining an Empire*, Chapter 1 (PP. 1-8)

Burns, *Chapter 1: Atlantic to Pacific (1783-1893)*, (PP. 8-30)

**Optional:**

Three theories explaining imperialism (pp. 23-25)

Theories of imperialism: Political theories, Conservative theories, Liberal theories, Marxist theories, Social-psychological theories

**Week three, Feb 6: Settler Colonialism (Case Study on Native American Displacement)****Required Readings:**

Burns, *Chapter 2: Heading Northwards (1812-1903)*

Howe, *Chapter 1: Who is an imperialist?*

Juan Carlos Ocaña Aybar, *Colonialism and imperialism* (PP. 1-8)

**Optional:**

Howe, *Chapter 2: Empire by Land*

**Week four, Feb 13: Global Territorial Expansion (Haiti Case study)****Required Readings:**

Burns, *Chapter 3: Leaving the Continent (1817-1890)*

Howe, *Chapter 3: Empire by Sea*

**Optional:**

*Colonialism*, [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#) (pp. 1-17)

**Week five, Feb 20: America in the Atlantic and Pacific (Cuba & Guano Islands Case Studies)****Required Readings:**

Burns, *Chapter 4: A Two Ocean Empire (1890-1898)*

*The United States becomes a world power (1890-1920)*

**Week six, Feb 27: The Spanish-American War and its Aftermath (Puerto Rico case study)**

**Required Readings:**

Burns, *Chapter 5: Spanish Plunder (1898-1917)*

Howe, *Chapter 4: Ends and aftermaths of Empire*

**March 5: Test 1 (35%)**

**Week seven, March 6: American Imperialism in Global Context (Case Study on Hawaii)**

**Required Readings:**

Burns, *Chapter 6: An Empire Among Equals (1899-1917)*

Howe, *Chapter 5: Studying and judging empires*

**Week eight, March 13: America and the Middle East (Case studies: Iran, Israel, Lebanon, Iraq, Gulf states)**

**Required Readings:**

Burns, *Chapter 7: Occupation Over Annexation (1912-1973)*

Sheldon L. Richman, "Ancient History": *U.S. Conduct in the Middle East Since World War II and the Folly of Intervention* (pp. 1-49)

*1958: When America first went to war in the Middle East, Bruce Riedel*

<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/07/02/1958-when-america-first-went-to-war-in-the-middle-east/>

**Spring Recess (March 16-24)**

**Week nine, March 27: America and the Middle East Contd. (Case studies: Syria, Libya, Egypt, Yemen)**

**Required Readings:**

Salim Yaqub, *Review: U.S Foreign Policy in the Middle East*, Douglas Little, In *Reviews in American History*, (The Johns Hopkins University Press, Dec., 2003), pp. 619-625

Atallah S. Al Sarhan, *United States Foreign Policy and the Middle East*, (Open Journal of Political Science, 2017), pp. 1-19

*Lost in the Middle East*, Steven A. Cook: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/04/20/america-is-having-a-middle-eastern-identity-crisis/>

**Optional:**

Shibley Telhami, Steven Kull, *Americans on the Middle East: A Study of American Public Opinion*, Program on International Policy Attitudes, University of Maryland (October 8, 2012), pp. 1-10

**Week ten, April 3: America and the World Now: Contemporary Imperialism? (Case Study of Afghanistan)****Required Readings:**

Robert Grenier, What If America Had Never Invaded Afghanistan?, *The Atlantic*, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/02/what-if-america-had-never-invaded-afghanistan/385026/>

Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security and U.S. Policy, *Congressional Research Service* (PP. 1-36)

The U.S. War in Afghanistan, 1999 – 2018, *Council on Foreign Relations*: <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-war-afghanistan>

**Optional:**

*The fatal expense of American imperialism*, Jeffrey D. Sachs  
<https://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2016/10/30/the-fatal-expense-american-imperialism/teXS2xwA1UJbYd10WJBHBM/story.html>

**Week eleven, April 10: America and the World Now: Contemporary Imperialism? (Case Study on Afghanistan Contd.)****Required Readings:**

Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security and U.S. Policy, *Congressional Research Service* (PP. 37-65)

Afghanistan: Background and U.S. Policy in Brief, *Congressional Research Service*

Glenn Greenwald, Afghanistan and American Imperialism, *The Gaurdian*,  
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/mar/19/afghanistan-american-imperialism-glenn-greenwald>

Kathy Gannon, Afghans submit 1.17 million war crimes claims to international court, *Independent*,  
<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/afghanistan-war-crimes-claims-victims-millions-submitted-court-isis-taliban-a8214301.html>

### **Optional**

Somini Sengupta and Marlise Simons, U.S. Forces May Have Committed War Crimes in Afghanistan, Prosecutor Says, *The New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/15/world/asia/united-states-torture-afghanistan-international-criminal-court.html>

## **Week twelve, April 17: American Military Bases Abroad (To be Defined)**

### **Required Readings:**

Burns, *Chapter 8: Continuing Imperialism (1940-2013)*

Burns, *Conclusion*

## **Week thirteen, April 24 (To be defined)**

## **Week fourteen, May 1, Wrap up**

**May 6 – Final Test (35%)**