

**The United States Empire
History 510:533**

Spring 2021
Monday, 5:00-7:00pm

Professor Kornel Chang
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313 Conklin Hall
Office Hrs: By appointment over zoom

Description

This reading-intensive seminar focuses on U.S. empire-building, examining how it 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 animated and justified American imperialism over the course of two centuries. Students will track the evolution of American power, comprehending its shifting logic and contradictions, and examining how it has changed over time and space. This will involve studying the American Empire from the vantage point of class and political economy, race and gender, policing, public health, development, and the environment.

Course Requirements

I. Participation and Discussion (20%)

Class meetings consist of discussions with students debating historical evidence, research methods, and interpretations. Active participation and listening is expected for each session.

II. Critical Response Papers (40%)

Students will be required to write a 1-2 page response to the reading each week. The paper is due via e-mail prior to class. Late papers will not be accepted.

III. Final Historiographical Essay (40%)

For the final essay, students will have the opportunity to explore one of the major historiographical issues/questions raised in the class in depth, analyzing and synthesizing several texts of your choosing. (15-20 pages).

COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Week 1

Jan 25 **Course Overview**

Week 2

Feb 1 **The Logic of Empire**

Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansion and the Empire of Right*.

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

Daniel Immerwhar, *How to Hide an Empire: A History of the Greater United States*, 3-19.

Week 3

Feb 8 Slavery and Capitalist Expansion

Barbara Fields, "Race and Ideology."

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

- Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*.

Week 4

Feb 15 Continental Expansion

Ned Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West*.

Daniel Immerwhar, *How to Hide an Empire*, 25-45.

Week 5

Feb 22 The Gendered Empire

Linda Gordon, *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction* (Harvard, 2001)

- Laura Briggs, *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science, and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico*.

Week 6

Mar 1 The Slaveholder's Empire

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

Week 7

Mar 8 The Colonial Crucible of Modernity

Warwick Anderson, *Colonial Pathologies: American Tropical Medicine, Race, Hygiene in the Philippines*

Alfred McCoy and Francisco Scarano eds., *Colonial Crucible*, 83-128.

Week 8

Mar 15 Spring Break – No Class

Week 9

Mar 22 Empire of Labor and Migration

Julie Greene, *The Canal Builders, Making America's Empire at the Panama Canal*.

Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 56-90.

Week 10

Mar 29 Anti-Racism and Racism

Ada Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation, and Revolution, 1868-1898*.

Paul Kramer, "Empires, Exceptions and Anglo-Saxons: Race and Rule between the British and United States Empires, 1880–1910," *Journal of American History*, 88:4 (2002): 1315–53

Week 11

Apr 5 Decolonizing Empire

Daniel Immerwhar, *How to Hide and Empire*, 215-402.

Bradley Simpson, "The United States and the Curious History of Self-Determination." *Diplomatic History* 36:4 (2012): 675–694.

Week 12

Apr 12 From Western to Global Frontiers

Megan Black, *The Global Interior: Mineral Frontiers and American Power*.

Week 13 The Cold War Empire

Apr 19

Paul Chamberlain, *The Cold War's Killing Fields: Rethinking the Long Peace*.

Week 14

Apr 26 War on Terror as Empire Building

Naomi Paik, *Rightlessness: Testimony and Redress in U.S. Prison Camps Since World War II*.

Week 15

May 3 TBD