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

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  Continential Expansion  
Feb 15


Week 5 The Gendered Empire  
Feb 22


Week 6 The Slaveholder’s Empire  
Mar 1

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

Week 7 The Colonial Crucible of Modernity  
Mar 8

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 Empire of Labor and Migration  
Mar 22

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


Week 10
Mar 29  Anti-Racism and Racism


**Week 11**

Apr 5  Decolonizing Empire


**Week 12**

Apr 12  From Western to Global Frontiers


**Week 13**

Apr 19  The Cold War Empire


**Week 14**

Apr 26  War on Terror as Empire Building


**Week 15**

May 3  TBD