

The United States Empire
History 510:533
Spring 2022
Monday, 5:00-7:20pm

Professor Kornel Chang
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313 Conklin Hall
Office Hrs: 4-5pm or by appointment over zoom

Description

This 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.

As a reading-intensive graduate seminar, students will be expected to read about 250 pages a week.

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 24 **Course Overview**

Week 2

Jan 31 **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*

Jeremi Suri, "The Limits of American Empire: Democracy and Militarism in the Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries," in Alfred W. McCoy and Francisco A. Scarano, eds., *Colonial Crucible: Empire in the Making of the Modern American State* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 523–531.

Week 3

Feb 7 Slavery and Capitalist Expansion

Barbara Fields, "Race and Ideology."

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

Week 4 Continental Expansion

Feb 14

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 The Gendered Empire

Feb 21

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

Week 6 The Slaveholder's Empire

Feb 28

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

Week 7 1898 and Formal Empire

Alfred W. McCoy and Francisco A. Scarano, eds. *Colonial Crucible: Empire in the Making of the Modern American State* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), Select Chapters.

Christina Duffy Burnett and Burke Marshall, "Between the Foreign and the Domestic: The Doctrine of Territorial Incorporation, Invented and Reinvented," from Burnett and Marshall, eds., *Foreign in a Domestic Sense: Puerto Rico, American Expansion, and the Constitution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 1–36

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

Week 8

Mar 14 Spring Break – No Class

Week 9 Occupying Empire

Mar 21

John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*, 19-200, 319-345.

Mary Louis Roberts, "The Price of Discretion: Prostitution, Venereal Disease, and the American Military in France, 1944–1946," *American Historical Review* (October 2010): 1002-1030.

Week 10

Mar 28 Individual Student Meetings to go over Final Paper

Week 11

Apr 4 **Against Empire**

Penny Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anti-Colonialism, 1937-1957*.

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

Week 12

Apr 11 **Decolonizing Empire**

Daniel Immerwhar, *How to Hide and Empire*, 1-19 and 215-402.

Neil Smith, *American Empire: Roosevelt's Geographer and the Prelude to Globalization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), prologue, chap. 1.

Week 13

Apr 18 **Latin America**

Peter H. Smith, *The Talons of the Eagle: Latin America, the United States, and the World*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Week 14

Apr 25 **The Environment and the Globalization of Empire**

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

Week 15

May 2 **TBD**