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

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


Daniel Immerwahr, How to Hide an Empire, 25-45.

Week 5  The Gendered Empire  
Feb 21


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  
Feb 28


Mae Ngai, Impossible Subjects, 56-90.

Week 8  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.


Week 10  Individual Student Meetings to go over Final Paper

Week 11
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<th>Date</th>
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| Apr 4 |      | Against Empire                            | Penny Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anti-Colonialism, 1937-1957*.
| May 2   | 15   | TBD                                        |                                                                                   |