

Spring 2014
Thurs 1:30-4:30

Professor Amy C. Offner
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Freshman Seminar

History 106.301: Comparative Empire

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, US and European powers developed changing strategies of empire designed to order societies at home and overseas. The practice of empire spurred worldwide debates that continue today: how did imperialism operate, what purposes did it serve, could it come to an end, and what might replace it? Over the course of two hundred years, these questions inspired some of the world's great novels, memoirs, polemics, and historical research, and this seminar introduces students to a sample of these writings. Together we'll explore varied forms of political, economic, military, and cultural power involved in imperial expansion; the experience and consequences of empire for both colonized and colonizer; and the emergence of anti-imperialist movements. We will read roughly 200 pages per week. No background is required.

Required Readings: All readings on the syllabus are required. The following books are on reserve in Van Pelt Library (Rosengarten Reserve) and available for purchase at House Of Our Own, 3920 Spruce Street. All other readings are on Canvas.

Chinua Achebe, *A Man of the People* (1988)
Robert Bickers, *Empire Made Me* (2004)
Nick Cullather, *The Hungry World* (2010)
Greg Grandin, *The Empire of Necessity* (2014)
James O. Gump, *The Dust Rose Like Smoke* (1996)
Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost* (1998)
Nico Slate, *Colored Cosmopolitanism* (2012)
Steve Striffler, *In the Shadows of State and Capital* (2001)
Lorrin Thomas, *Puerto Rican Citizen* (2010)
Vũ Trọng Phụng, *Dumb Luck* (2002)

Course Requirements

1. Active, informed, responsive class participation (40%). Our seminar is an opportunity to get to know your classmates intellectually, ask one another questions, help others answer theirs, and finally decide what you think. Everyone must complete the readings before class and participate in discussion throughout the semester in an informed, responsive way. By "informed," I mean informed by a close reading of our texts, and by "responsive," I mean responsive to each other, taking one

other seriously enough to respond to each others' observations, analyses, and questions.

Before each class meeting, I will distribute a few questions about the reading. Choose one of the questions. We will begin class with a go-round in which each of you will take about three minutes to answer your chosen question. You can speak extemporaneously, from an outline, or from a written statement, whatever makes you most comfortable.

The go-round will provide a springboard for our conversation, so listen to others' ideas. Where do you agree or disagree? What questions occur to you?

2. Paper 1: Primary source analysis (15%). A two-page paper giving your analysis of a primary source chosen from a small selection that I will distribute in class. A successful paper will draw on course readings to explain the significance of the source. What was the social position and perspective of the author? For whom was the author writing, and what did he or she hope to accomplish by writing the document? What historical events, debates, and ideas informed the author?
3. Paper 2: Book review (15%). A three-page paper giving your analysis of either Jasanoff, Cullather, Grandin, or Thomas. Do not spend any time rehearsing the details of the book, but succinctly state the author's argument and then evaluate it:
 - a. What evidence does the author provide for his or her argument?
 - b. Does he or she interpret the evidence in a convincing way?
 - c. What questions does the author leave unanswered that you would like to understand?
4. Paper 3: Final paper (30%). An eight-page paper giving your analysis of two books on the same topic. First, choose a reading that interests you from the assigned readings. Then talk with me and we will choose a second book that offers a different interpretation of the same topic. Your paper will critically compare the two readings and give your analysis of the topic at hand. More detailed instructions to come. A paper proposal stating your topic and listing the readings you'll compare is due on April 3.

Communication: The great pleasure of teaching is getting to know students. Come by my office hours or make an appointment to discuss any of the course material. For brief, procedural questions about the class, email is fine.

Disability policy: If you have a disability that requires special arrangements, please let me know at the beginning of the semester.

Academic integrity: Plagiarism and other violations of academic honesty can result in suspension and expulsion from Penn. Please review the university's guide on academic integrity (www.upenn.edu/academicintegrity), and do not hesitate to talk with me if you have any questions about the definition of plagiarism and academic honesty.

Class Schedule

- Jan 16 Introduction
- Jan 23 Varieties of Imperialism
P.J. Marshall, *Cambridge Illustrated History of the British Empire*,
excerpt
Barbara Harlow and Mia Carter, eds., *Archives of Empire*, excerpts

Part I: Forms of Power

- Jan. 30 Direct Rule
Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*
- Feb. 6 Trade and Investment
Steve Striffler, *In the Shadows of State and Capital*
- Feb. 13 Settler Colonialism
James O. Gump, *The Dust Rose Like Smoke*
- Feb. 20 Culture
Maya Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire*, excerpt
Zachary Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East*, chapter 3
First paper due in class
- Feb 27 Science
Nick Cullather, *The Hungry World*

Part II: Imperial Societies, Imperial Lives

- Mar. 6 Slave Societies
Greg Grandin, *The Empire of Necessity*
- Mar. 13 Spring Break
- Mar. 20 Citizens and Subjects
Lorrin Thomas, *Puerto Rican Citizen*
- Mar. 27 Working for Empire
Robert Bickers, *Empire Made Me*
Second paper due in class
- Apr. 3 Colonizer and Colonized
Vũ Trọng Phụng, *Dumb Luck*
Final paper proposal due in class

Part III: Anti-Imperialism

- Apr. 10 Nationalism
Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, excerpt
Katherine Mayo, *Mother India*, ed. Mrinalini Sinha, excerpt
- Apr. 17 Internationalism
Nico Slate, *Colored Cosmopolitanism*
- Apr. 24 Post-Colonialism
Chinua Achebe, *A Man of the People*
Final paper due in class