EMPIRE & REVOLUTION:  
U.S. and European Colonialism in Southeast Asia  

University of Wisconsin-Madison  
Department of History  

History 600/755: A Pro-seminar  

Mr. McCoy                     Fall 2012

Course Description: Starting with reflections on the meaning of “empire” in an age of America’s global dominion, the course will explore the rise of European empires during the “high colonialism” of the 19th and 20th centuries. After reviewing the literature on the rise of modern empires, the course will explore both the expansion of European colonialism into Southeast Asia and the region’s response—ranging from resistance to peasant revolt and national revolution. With the world’s most diverse array of imperial powers and its longest, most intense colonization, Southeast Asia is the ideal region for a close, comparative study of imperialism.

In this selective survey of European empires, the seminar will focus closely on U.S. colonial rule in the Philippines from 1898-1946, an important but forgotten chapter in American history. Indeed, in two centuries of American history, the U.S. conquest and colonization of the Philippines is the only experience comparable to our recent involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq. By exploring this juxtaposition of past and present in the history of America’s foreign adventures, the seminar will, in its opening and closing sessions, explore the way the past bears upon the present.

The course thus introduces students to readings on the dynamics of empire and the social processes of both resistance and revolution in modern Southeast Asia—focusing on the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, and Burma. After a brief survey of some basic readings on the theory of empire, the seminar will move on to study aspects of colonialism and resistance in Southeast Asia, emphasizing the most creative scholarly works to emerge from this dynamic region—writings by Clifford Geertz, James C. Scott, Benedict Anderson, Anthony Reid, and others. Other topics will examine more focused scholarship, for example reviewing accounts by both Filipino and American scholars to gain some sense of the perspectives that drove both parties during the Philippine-American War (1898-1902).

More broadly, the course will explore issues central to the character of global empires—the causes of imperial expansion, the drive for military security, the psychology of colonial dominion, ecological and economic transformations, the rise of nationalist resistance, and the dynamics of imperial decline.

Instead of transferring a fund of facts about European empires and anti-imperial resistance, the seminar seeks to examine the perspectives and perceptions of Western and Asian scholars who have studied these complex processes. Hopefully, students will emerge from the course with a better understanding of the nature of empire, the emergence of modern Southeast Asia, the future of U.S. global power, and, more broadly, the dynamics of historical change.

Course Aims: As the final phase of the undergraduate History major or first step in a graduate career, the seminar allows students an opportunity to reflect upon lessons learned in past courses and to refine essential academic skills—critical reading, academic analysis, primary research, expository writing, and formal oral presentation.
**Class Meetings:** The seminar is scheduled to meet on Tuesdays, 4:00-6:00 p.m. in Room No. 5257 Humanities Building.

**Office Hours:** In Room 5131 Humanities, Thursdays, 12:00 to 2:00 p.m., and other hours by appointment. Telephone: 263-1855 (direct line); 263-1800 (History Department, message). Messages may be left in Mailbox No. 5026 or sent via e-mail to <awmccoy@wisc.edu>

**Grading:** Students shall be marked on their weekly participation, writing assignments, and oral presentation.

*Weekly Discussion Summaries:* Prior to two class meetings, all students shall prepare a two/three-page summary of two of the assigned readings for the topic under discussion that week. The papers are due in my Humanities mailbox at 10:00 am, as follows: (a.) on September 4 (two-three pages on all the week’s readings); and (b.) on December 10 (two pages on two readings for that week).

*Class Presentation:* At each class meeting, two students shall serve as the “discussant” by presenting a 15-minute summary of the readings. Then the class will have a general discussion of the readings. The discussants shall meet with the instructor to review the presentation in office hours week preceding. Each student will serve as discussant twice during the semester.

*Class Participation:* Students are responsible for reviewing all the readings assigned for each week, usually totaling about 200-250 pages, and will present a short oral summary of one or more readings at the start of each class. Attendance at all classes is required; each unexcused absence attracts a deduction of three percent from the final mark; and three unexcused absences mean failure.

*Final Paper:* By 10:00 am, on Monday, December 3 students shall submit a 15-page paper on one of the topics or themes covered in the course. Students shall place a one-page outline of their proposed project in my Humanities Building mailbox by 10:00 am, Monday, November 19.

**Grading:** Thus, the final grade shall be computed as follows:

- *discussant:* 20%
- *weekly papers:* 20%
- *weekly participation:* 20%
- *major essay:* 40%

**Readings:** There is no single text or group of texts capable of meeting the broad agenda of the course. Instead, the syllabus lists a number of similar readings for each topic to allow students a choice in case the main readings are not on the shelf. In preparation for each meeting, students should read all the “Required readings,” and then use the “Background readings” as alternative sources or for preparation of essays.

The undergraduate library in Helen C. White will hold 50 selected books on three-hour reserve, but all journal articles are available in Memorial Library. Selecting and skimming as
time and interest allow, students should finish about four readings per week, totaling about 200 pages.

**Texts for Purchase (University Bookstore):**


Wolf, Eric, in *Europe and the People without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

*Part I: Origins of Empire*

{N.B.: Paper Due, Tuesday, September 4, 9:00 am}

- **WEEK 1 (September 4) – Theories of Empire: World Systems Theory and beyond**

  **Required (222 pp.)**


  **Recommended**


**WEEK 2 (September 11)– Pre-colonial States and Empires: Southeast Asia before Europe**

*Required – Southeast Asia  (223 pp.)*


*Required – Global*


*Recommended*


**WEEK 3 (September 18) – Early Trading Empires: The Dutch, Portuguese, and Spanish**

*Required – Southeast Asia (230 pp.)*


*Required – Global*


*Recommended*


• WEEK 4 (September 25) – High Imperialism: The French and British Empires

*Required – Southeast Asia* (257 pp.)


*Required – Global*


*Recommended*


• WEEK 5 (October 2) – The U.S. Empire, from Disparate Islands to Global Hegemony

**Required – Southeast Asia (222 pp.)**


**Required – Global**


**Recommended**


Gedacht, Joshua, “'Mohammedan Religion Made It Necessary to Fire': Massacres on the American Imperial Frontier from South Dakota to the Southern Philippines,” in *Colonial Crucible*, pp. 397-409.


**Part II: The Imperial Project**

• **WEEK 6 (October 9) – Race, Gender, and the Cultural Logics of Imperialism**

**Required – Southeast Asia (264 pp.)**


**Required – Global**


**Recommended**


• WEEK 7 (October 16) – Colonial Economies, Plantations, and Labor Systems

**Required – Southeast Asia (264 pp.)**


**Required – Global**


**Recommended**


• WEEK 8 (October 23) – Environmental Management, from the Cities to the Forests

**Required – Southeast Asia** (193 pp.)


**Required – Global**


**Recommended**


**WEEK 9 (October 30) – Public Health, Medical Science, and Colonial Empire**

*Required – Southeast Asia (241 pp.)*


*Required – Global*


**Recommended**


**WEEK 10 (November 6) – Policing the Empire**

**Required – Southeast Asia  (188 pp.)**


Recommended


Part III: Anti-Imperialism and Resistance

• WEEK 11 (November 13) – Subordinate Elites & Colonial Collaboration

Required – Southeast Asia  (206 pp.)


Recommended


{N.B.: Outline Due, Monday, November 19, 9:00 am}

• WEEK 12 (November 20) – Elite Resistance & Peasant Rebellion

**Required – Southeast Asia (pp. 249)**


Required – Global


Recommended


• WEEK 13 (November 27) – End of European Empires

Required – Southeast Asia (252 pp.)


Required – Global


Fradera, Josep M., “Empires in Retreat: Spain and Portugal after the Napoleonic Wars,” in *Endless Empire*, pp. 55-73.


**Recommended**


• WEEK 14 (December 4) – U.K. and U.S. Imperial Transitions

**Required – U.K. (pp. 196)**


Barton, Gregory A., “Informal Empire: The Case of Siam and the Middle East,” in *Endless Empire*, pp. 247-261.


**Required – U.S.**


{N.B.: Paper Due, Monday, December 10, 9:00 am}
• WEEK 15 (December 11) – Legacies of Empire

Required – Southeast Asia  (248 pp.)


Required – Global


Recommended


II. ESSAY QUESTIONS:

1.) After reading the Stern-Wallerstein debate about agency and labor in the European World System, examine the Philippines or another Southeast Asian nation under colonial rule to determine if circumstances there affirm or challenge Wallerstein’s models for labor.

2.) Applying Victor Lieberman’s criteria for the “early modern state,” explore whether the Spanish Philippines or the Netherlands Indies are, despite alien rule, examples of this kind of state formation.

3.) Compare and contrast the processes of social and economic change in the great, lowland deltas of Southeast Asia—the Rio Grande de Pampanga with either the Irrawaddy or the Mekong—explaining why these economic transformations produced peasant revolts.

4.) Using the theories of Scott and Wolff, analyze the rise of radical peasant movements in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam and Central Luzon, Philippines in the decades surrounding World War II.

5.) Using Benedict Anderson’s writing in “Imagined Communities,” compare the rise of nationalism in Indonesia and the Philippines.

6.) After reading James Scott’s “Seeing Like a State,” analyze the US colonial state in the Philippines and the Netherlands Indies as instances of “high modernist” states.

7.) Drawing from most of James Scott’s readings on the syllabus, compare the dynamics of peasant politics in the Philippines and another Southeast Asian nation—focusing on the conditions of rice tenancy, patron-client relations, everyday resistance, and open revolt.

8.) While flying to Manila for a state visit, President George W. Bush cited the Philippines as example for and justification of the US occupation of Iraq. Compare American colonial rule over the Philippines (1898-1946) with the post 9/11 US occupation of either Iraq or Afghanistan.
9.) Using one or more European empires as the basis for comparison, analyze the character of American colonialism in the Philippines, defining its key attributes and exploring what was distinctive about US rule.

10.) Define the distinctive aspects of American “empire” since 1945. Using one of two pre-World War II European empires for comparison, analyze the character of US global dominion.

11.) Compare the process of decline for two or more European maritime empires during the 19th and 20th centuries, and speculate about the future of US global dominion during the 21st century. Be sure to document both your analysis of empires past and projections about future trends.

III. HOW TO WRITE A RESEARCH ESSAY—A THREE-STEP METHOD:

1.) Step One--Need to Read:
   a.) Sources/Research:
      1.) All good essays begin with the three “Rs”—reading, research, and reflection.
      2.) Like most essays, a history term paper is a distillation of its author's reading and reflections upon the subject at hand. The quality of an essay's expression and analysis reflects, subtly but ineluctably, the depth and diversity of its author's reading.
      3.) Conversely, if you do not read, then you cannot have anything of any substance to say on a subject.

   b.) Basic Format:
      1.) Assuming three paragraphs per page, you should have one source note per paragraph.
      2.) Every idea that is not your own and every major body of data you use in your essay should be sourced. In particular, quotations must be sourced.
      3.) You may use endnotes or footnotes in the following format:


      4.) For a second, sequential citation of the same work use “Ibid.; and for all subsequent, non-sequential citations of the same work use a short citation form, that might be:

         McCoy, *Southeast Asia Since 1800*, pp. 77-78.

c.) **How to Read for an Essay:**

1.) Using the course syllabus, begin with a general text to get an overview of the problem.
2.) Using the syllabus or textbooks, select more specific sources.
3.) As you read, begin forming ideas in your mind about:
   a.) your overall hypothesis, and;
   b.) the evidence you need or have found to support your argument.
4.) As you read, take notes, either on paper, or in the margin of a photocopy of the source. As you take notes, make sure you have the bibliographic information for your source: author, title, place of publication, publisher, and relevant pages.
5.) Towards the end of your reading, draw up an outline of the essay. If you are missing sources for the argument you would like to present, then do additional reading.

2.) **Step Two—Framing the Argument:**

a.) Outline: With your reading done, you are ready to outline your argument. Begin by asking yourself the single, central question you will ask and answer in the course of this paper. Next, write a one- or two-page outline of your essay with the basic components outlined below.

b.) Overall structure: Every scientific report, whether natural or social, has three basic elements—the problem/hypothesis, the evidence/argument, and the conclusion. To summarize very broadly, the introduction asks a question and poses a hypothesis, the argument arrays evidence to explore that hypothesis, and the conclusion reflects on the original hypothesis in light of the evidence presented.

Of these three elements, the opening formulation of an hypothesis is, by far, the most difficult. In your opening paragraph, try to stand back from the dense mass of material you have read and articulate a thesis, which usually explains causality (why events occurred) or analyzes significance (the particular import of an event or a pattern of events). Then identify the factors, topics, or elements that you will explore to test your thesis. Ideally, these factors should serve as a broad outline of the topics that you will explore in the next section of your essay, the argument/evidence.

By the time you start writing, you should be able to summarize your argument in the essay’s first sentence with something akin to the following formulation: ‘By applying A to B, the essay will discover/explore C.’ To illustrate, an essay on U.S. decline, might begin: ‘By exploring the decolonization in Britain and Spain, we can see signs of incipient decline in U.S. global power.’ Here are some further reflections on each of these sections:

1.) **The Problem:** In your introduction, state the problem clearly.
   a.) If necessary, you should give your definition of any key terms that require a specific usage (e.g., “revolution.”)
   b.) In stating your problem, refer to the literature in the syllabus.
   c.) A standard and often effective device is to identify two differing schools of thought about a single problem.
d.) Make sure you are examining the main point, not a minor side issue.

2.) **The Evidence:** In the middle part of your essay, you must present evidence—in logical order—to deal with the problem posed at the beginning of your essay. Be specific—give the reader brief narratives of an event, or provide some statistical evidence.

3.) **The Conclusion:** In the final page or two of your essay, reflect on the problem as stated in the introduction in light of the evidence you presented in the middle part of the essay. Stretch the data you present for clarity, but do not exaggerate or over-extend the usefulness of your data.

c.) **Level of Argument:** It is difficult to spell out in precise terms what I mean by “level of argument.”

1.) To overstate the case, you should not deal with the question of “the impact of French colonialism in the Mekong Delta” by probing the problem of whether “the French made life in Vietnam happier for the natives.”

2.) How do you define an appropriate question and level of analysis? Fundamental. You can sensitize yourself to the question by reading several sources with diverse viewpoints and approaches.

d.) **Nature of History Questions:** In courses such as this one, history involves the study of change in large-scale human communities, societies and nations, over time. Most history essays ask you to understand or explain two aspects of change—events and their causes, or, simply, what happened and why it happened. Thus, most history questions ask you to explain elements of the following:

   1.) In a limited period of time, explain the factors underlying a given event. Why did that event happen?

   2.) Explain the impact that an event, such as a war or revolution, had upon a human community within a period succeeding the actual event.

   3.) Over a longer period of time, explain how and why complex communities changed in a given way.

3.) **Step Three—Writing the Essay:**

   a.) **Outline:**

      1.) As discussed above, you will be writing from an outline of one to two pages for a 10 to 12 page essay. Each projected paragraph in the essay should be a line in your outline.

      2.) Write a first draft. If using a personal computer, there is a very real possibility that it will read like a long, chatty letter home, not a major research essay.

      3.) Reading aloud to yourself, if necessary, edit the prose and produce a second draft.

   b.) **Sentences:**

      1.) Each sentence should be a complete sentence with subject,
verb, and direct object.

2.) Vary your sentences to include short periodic sentences; simple compound sentences; compound sentences with clauses in apposition; and longer sentences communicating detail.

c.) **Paragraphs:**

1.) Start your paragraph with “topic sentence”--that is, a periodic or compound sentence stating the basic message of this particular paragraph.

2.) Varying your sentence structure, elaborate and expand this theme into a fully developed paragraph.

3.) Within the paragraph, try to link your sentences so that they flow from one to another.

4.) Paragraphs should not be too long. If you need a crude guide, have 3 to a page, or 8 to 10 typed lines each.

d.) **Aspire to style:**

1.) There is a music--with melody and rhythm--to your writing. Sensitize your mind's ear to the music of prose and try to make your own word music. Try to make your writing an expression of your inner voice.

2.) As in all forms of social discourse, there is an appropriate style for an academic essay.

   a.) Use a formal voice-not ponderous, just formal.

   b.) Avoid contractions (can't, didn't).

   c.) Avoid colloquialisms.

3.) In short, adopt a tone or voice somewhere between the chatty colloquial and the ponderously formal.