

Empire & Revolution:
American & European Colonialism in Southeast Asia
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Department of History
History 600

Mr. McCoy

Fall 2004

Course Description: Starting with reflections on the meaning of “empire” in an age of America’s unchallenged 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 the expansion of European colonialism into Southeast Asia and the region’s response—ranging from resistance to peasant revolt and national revolution.

In this selective survey of European empires, the seminar will focus closely on US colonial rule in the Philippines from 1898-1946, an important but forgotten chapter in American history. Indeed, in two centuries of American history, the US conquest and colonization of the Philippines is the only experience comparable to our current involvement in 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 for students unfamiliar with the Southeast Asia's history, the seminar will move on to study the broad analytical literature, focusing on the most creative works on scholarship to emerge from this dynamic region. To understand, for example, the reasons for the intensity of guerrilla resistance in the Philippine-American War (1898-1902), students will review accounts by both Filipino and American scholars to gain some sense of the perspectives that drove both parties during this brutal conflict.

More broadly, the course will explore a series of issues central to the character of global empires--the causes of global 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-colonial revolutions, 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 and, more broadly, the dynamics of historical change.

Course Aims: As the final phase of the undergraduate History major, 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 a seminar room in the Humanities Building.

Office Hours: In Room 5131 Humanities, Thursdays 4:00-6:00 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@facstaff.wisc.edu>

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

Weekly Discussion Summaries: During the first three weeks of the class, all students shall place a two- or 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, the day before class.

Class Presentation: At each class meeting, one student 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. Students are responsible for reviewing all the readings assigned for each week, usually totaling about 100 pages.

Final Paper: On Monday, December 10, 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 mail box by 10:00 am, November 19, and then meet with for individual appointments to be arranged in class.

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

- discussant: 20%
- short weekly discussion 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 100 pages.

Possible Readings (In process):

Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities*.
Geertz, Clifford, *Agricultural Involution*.
Reid, Anthony, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, I*.
Said, Edward W., *Orientalism*.
Scott, James C., *Moral Economy of the Peasant*.