

HISTORY 952: EMPIRE AND DECOLONIZATION

University of Wisconsin, Madison
Fall 2023
Thursdays, 2:25pm-5:25pm, Humanities 5257

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Fall 2023
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Course Description

“Decolonization as a theme is a much wider concept than the mere 'winning of independence' or 'transfer of power'...It entails the exploration of dreams, the analysis of struggles, compromises, pledges and achievements, and the rethinking of fundamentals,” argue historians W.R. Ochieng and Atieno-Odhiambo. Following Ochieng and Atieno-Odhiambo, this course provides a deep and wide analysis of the history of empire and decolonization. We will look at brutal wars and inspiring world-making projects, and at the languages and practices that enabled empire and its undoing. In the process, we will challenge the idea that decolonization marked a discrete point demarcating the boundary between imperial forms and independent state sovereignty. Focusing on North American and European imperialism and decolonization, we’ll investigate how empire was always incomplete—and similarly how colonial power relations did not vanish when former colonies gained political independence.

This course introduces both foundational and cutting-edge scholarship. We will be working across fields to see different paradigm shifts in empire and decolonization studies: transnational/international history, ethnic and postcolonial studies, legal and institutional history, environmental history, and histories of gender and sexuality. Together, we will grapple with the challenges that confront us when we attempt to discern the contemporaneous projects of empire-building and decolonization, as writers, researchers, and citizens of the world.

Requisites: Graduate Standing

Course Designations: Graduate Attribute

Credit Policy Statement: The credit standard for this course is met by an expectation of a total of 135 hours of student engagement with the course learning activities (at least 45 hours per credit), which include regularly scheduled seminar meetings, reading, writing and other student work as described in the syllabus.

Learning Outcomes:

- Acquire an understanding of the major debates and scholarly trends in the global history of empire and decolonization from the 19th century to the present

- Explore a range of historiographic analysis methods
- Hone writing and oral presentation skills
- Refine a framework for connecting the history of the past to our historical present

Grades and Evaluation:

Attendance and participation: 20%

Oral presentations (three total): 30% (10% each)

Reverse-engineering paper (**due November 2nd**): 25%

Faultlines of interpretation paper (**due December 7th**): 25%

Grading Scale

A = 92.50-100

AB = 87.50-92.49

B = 82.50-87.49

BC = 77.50-82.49

C = 69.50-77.49

D = 60-69.49

F = 60 or below.

Required Textbooks:

All assigned readings will either be uploaded to Canvas or be on hold at Memorial Library for student use.

Requirements

Attendance and Participation (20%)

In this class, we will be building knowledge collectively and growing together as thinkers; everyone's participation is crucial. Students are expected to attend all class meetings and take part actively in discussion.

Oral Presentations (30%)

At two points in the semester, you will be responsible for leading discussion on the readings. Please prepare a 20-minute oral presentation, focusing in on one historiographical question raised by one or more of that week's readings. The presentation will accomplish two goals: 1. It will offer a detailed overview of the historiographical question (What is the question? How and why did it become important? How has it changed over time?); 2. It will suggest why this historiographical question helps us better understand the readings. The presenter is expected to do additional readings to complete the presentation, which should be a polished, conference-style intervention. The presenter should also prepare a one-page outline, which they will distribute to each member of the class in hard copy. Each student will present twice over the course of the semester. Your final oral presentation will take place on December 7th, and will involve a 10-minute presentation of your faultlines of interpretation paper to the class. The presentation should provide a detailed summary of your central argument.

Reverse-Engineering Paper (25%)

In this paper, you will select one of the monographs we have read together in the class and conduct a five-page reverse-engineering exercise. Your aim is to answer the following

questions: 1. What research question did the scholar seek to answer in their book? Why did this research question appear compelling to the scholar?; 2. What sources did the scholar use to answer their research question(s), and where were those sources located?; 3. What, in your view, is the relationship between the research question asked and the sources consulted? Could you imagine other kinds of sources being used to answer that research question?

Faultlines of Interpretation Paper (25%)

Please use *either* your oral presentations *or* your reverse-engineering paper as a springboard for this final writing assignment. In this assignment, you will complete a ten-page paper investigating faultlines of interpretation. Your task is to select one monograph from the syllabus and imagine a parallel historical project, of which you are sketching out the initial outlines. Please note that you are not expected to carry out this project; the paper is simply a thought exercise. It could take several different forms. You might start with the research question posed by the scholar and imagine different kinds of primary and secondary sources that could be used to answer that question, thinking also about how different sources could lead to different conclusions. Another option could be that you modify the original research question posed by the scholar, to either build on their scholarship or challenge one of the components of their historical argument. A final option could be that you imagine how to turn the contents of one of the monographs from the semester into a historical exhibition. If you go with this final option, you will receive a handout with detailed information on how to organize your paper.

Week 1

September 7: Introduction to the Class: Imperial Durabilities

No advanced reading required.

The following texts will be distributed in class or otherwise inspire this conversation:

Joan W. Scott, "History Writing as Critique," in Keith Jenkins, Sue Morgan, and Alun Munslow, eds., *Manifestos for History* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2007), 19–38

David Armitage, "In Defense of Presentism," in *History and Human Flourishing*, ed. Darrin McMahan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022)

Aníbal Quijano, "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality," *Cultural Studies* 21: 2-3 (2007): 168-178

Ann Laura Stoler, *Duress: Imperial Durabilities in Our Times* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016)

Week 2

September 14: Thinking about Empire & History Writing

Jean O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians Out of Existence in New England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010)

Dilip Menon, "Changing Theory: Thinking Concepts from the Global South," in *Changing Theory: Concepts from the Global South* (Delhi: Routledge, 2022)

Week 3

September 21: Imperial Ecologies

Corey Ross, *Ecology and Power in the Age of Empire: Europe and the Transformation of the Tropical World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017)

Philipp Lehmann, *Desert Edens: Colonial Climate Engineering in the Age of Anxiety* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2022), chapters 6 and 7

Week 4

September 28: Queer Sovereignty and Race

Laurie Marhoefer, *Racism and the Making of a Gay Rights: A Sexologist, His Student, and the Empire of Queer of Love* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022)

Wigbertson Julian Isenia, "Queer Sovereignities: Re-Imagining Sexual Citizenship from the Dutch Caribbean," in *The Routledge Companion to Sexuality and Colonialism* (London, Routledge: 2021)

Week 5

October 5: Denaturalizing Decolonization

Emily Marker, *Black France, White Europe: Youth, Race, and Belonging in the Postwar Era* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2022)

Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), introduction

Jini Kim Watson and Gary Wilder, "Introduction: Thinking the Postcolonial Contemporary," in *The Postcolonial Contemporary: Political Imaginaries for the Global Present*, Jini Kim Watson, Gary Wilder, eds. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2018), 1-30.

Week 6

October 12th: Religion and Mass Violence (with Ethan Katz)

Ethan Katz (texts TBD), from his work in progress, *Freeing the Empire: The Uprising of Jews and Antisemites that Helped Win World War II*

Week 7

October 19th: Decolonizing Law (with Umut Özsu)

Umut Özsu, *Completing Humanity: The International Law of Decolonization, 1960-1982* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023)

Natasha Wheatley and Samuel Moyn, "Introduction: Towards a History of the Decolonization of International Law," *Journal of the History of International Law* 23, no. 1 (2021): 1-228

Week 8

October 26th: No Class

Week 9

November 2nd: Migration after Empire (with Christoph Kalter)

Christoph Kalter, *Postcolonial People: The Return from Africa and the Remaking of Portugal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022)

Tiffany Florvil, *Mobilizing Black Germany: Afro-German Women and the Making of a Transnational Movement* (University of Illinois Press, 2020), introduction

Week 10

November 9th: Wounds of War (with Monica Kim)

Monica Kim, *The Interrogation Rooms of the Korean War: The Untold History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019)

Mary Dudziak, *Wartime: An Idea, Its History, Its Consequences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), chapters 1-3

Week 11

November 16th: Public History Workshop: History on Display (with Kacie Lucchini-Butcher)

Week 12

November 23rd: No Class

Week 13

November 30th: Carbon Economies, Sexual Economies (with Chelsea Schields)

Chelsea Schields, *Offshore Attachments: Oil and Intimacy in the Caribbean* (University of California Press, 2023)

Christopher Dietrich, "Oil Power and Economic Theologies: The Energy Crisis and U.S. Foreign Policy towards the Third World, 1973-1977," *Diplomatic History* 40,3 (2016): 500-529.

Week 14

December 7th: Student Presentations

A NOTE ON GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

There are risks and benefits to using generative AI in educational settings; it is crucial to use AI with caution and intentionality, rather than reflexively. Students may consult ChatGPT about class material as they might Wikipedia, in the knowledge that both generative AI and Wikipedia are not citable authorities, and that their information is not always accurate or reliable.

Students may not present text generated by AI as their own writing. Doing so constitutes plagiarism. If you use generative AI in your writing process, you must hand in both the original text you inputted *and* the revised version, based on the tool's suggestions.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY STATEMENT

By virtue of enrollment, each student agrees to uphold the high academic standards of the University of Wisconsin-Madison; academic misconduct is behavior that negatively impacts the integrity of the institution. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and helping others commit these previously listed acts are examples of misconduct which may result in disciplinary action. Examples of disciplinary action include, but is not limited to, failure on the assignment/course, written reprimand, disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES STATEMENT

The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform faculty [me] of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. We will work either directly with the student [you] or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's

educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA. McBurney Disability Resource Center: <https://mcburney.wisc.edu/>

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION STATEMENT: <https://diversity.wisc.edu/>

Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background – people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world.