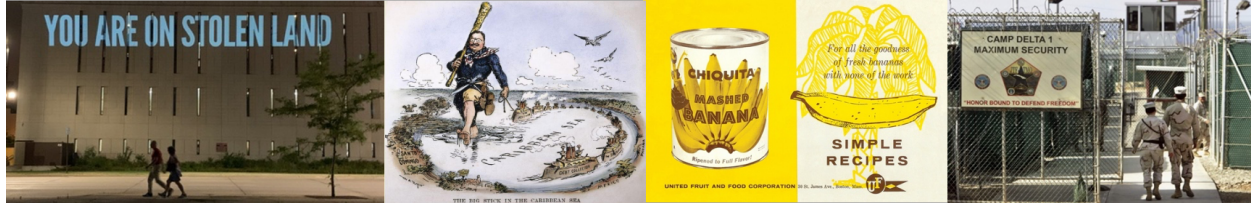




HISTORY 201
The Historian's Craft: The United States Empire
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Fall 2024



Wednesdays 1:20-3:15pm Education L151

Professor Allison Powers Useche, PhD

Office Hours: Tuesdays 1pm-3pm in 4120 Humanities or by appointment

Email: auseche@wisc.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The United States is often described as the world's first modern constitutional democracy, and the American political system has been promoted as a model for representative government around the world. But the United States is also and always has been an empire, occupying territories, governing subjects, and managing populations through decidedly undemocratic forms of rule. This course explores how tensions between theories of political universalism and colonial power hierarchies have shaped the development of the United States from the nation's origins as an Atlantic settler colony to its current status as a sprawling global empire. How has the U.S. projected power from the 18th century to the 21st? What disparate forms have imperial interventions taken, and why did they change over time? How have distinct modalities of empire recast patterns of labor, wealth distribution, migration, policing, environmental management, and racialized and gendered inequities? What strategies have individuals, communities, and nations used to challenge the legitimacy of United States colonial governance? We will grapple with these questions and more by analyzing a wide range of primary sources in addition to scholarship written by historians interpreting the past. This is a discussion-based seminar designed to support and challenge you as you work toward an original capstone project. Students will define their own historical questions, track down and analyze evidence, and contribute to ongoing discussions about the legacies of empire in the United States and the world today.

FORMAT:

This course will meet in person on Wednesday afternoons from 1:20-3:15pm. The first half of each seminar will be dedicated to seminar-style discussion of the assigned readings. The second half will include a series of research and writing workshops designed to develop the skills you will need to research, write, and revise your final papers. Since we meet only once a week, it is crucial that you are present at each session. If you need to miss a seminar meeting for any reason, please email me and we will arrange a meeting to discuss the materials.

HIST 201 is divided into two parts. During Weeks 1-9 of the semester, we will familiarize ourselves with different historical approaches and modes of analysis in the wide-ranging fields of the US Empire, US Foreign Relations, and the United States in the World. You will learn to formulate a viable and interesting research question, carry out original research using primary and secondary sources, evaluate existing historical debates,



and craft a historical argument supported by persuasive use of evidence. This will prepare you for Part Two of the course, when students become historians. Across Weeks 10-15 of the semester, you will research, write, revise, and present a work of original historical scholarship on a topic of your choice. After completing HIST201 you will be prepared to take any upper division history courses including writing intensive seminars such as HIST600 and the senior thesis writing workshop.

CREDIT HOURS

The credit standard for this 3-credit course is met by an expectation of a total of 135 hours of student engagement with the course's learning activities (at least 45 hours per credit or 9 hours per week), which include regularly scheduled meeting times (group seminar meetings of two hours per week), reading, writing, individual consultations with the professor, and other student work as described in the syllabus. The expectation is that you will work at least 2 hours outside of the class for every hour in the classroom. Because this course focuses so intensively on research, writing, and speaking, it fulfills Part B of the General Education Communication Requirement (Comm B).

REGULAR AND SUBSTANTIVE STUDENT-INSTRUCTOR INTERACTION

During our weekly seminar meetings I will provide direct instruction, clarify information about course content, facilitate discussion of the course materials, and lead research and writing workshops. I will additionally be available during my office hours each week for one-on-one meetings. If you cannot make my office hours but would like to meet, please email me and we will find an alternative time. I try to respond to all emails within 24 hours. If you have an urgent or time-sensitive matter to discuss, please include "URGENT" in the subject line of your email and I will reply as soon as possible.

COURSE WEBSITE, LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM & DIGITAL INSTRUCTIONAL TOOLS

All course materials are available on our [Canvas site](#).

REQUIRED READINGS:

All required readings will be posted to our course Canvas site. Your reading assignment each week will consist of 3-4 book chapters, scholarly articles, or film excerpts written by historians about the past—what we call "secondary sources." During each seminar meeting, student discussion leaders will then introduce 2-3 shorter "primary sources" produced during the period that we are studying for us to analyze together. We will discuss strategies for how to approach secondary and primary sources during the first few weeks of classes.

OBJECTIVES:

Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

- 1) Ask and answer informed questions about the past
- 2) Understand how historians make history and why our understandings of the past change over time
- 3) Evaluate arguments about history and weigh in on existing historical debates
- 4) Find and analyze sources using archival and library collections
- 5) Develop, present, and communicate arguments
- 6) Produce an original piece of historical scholarship
- 7) Learn from the insights, ideas, and research of your peers

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSESSMENT:

GRADING

Participation: 25%
Weekly Reading Reflections: 15%
Leading Discussion Section: 10%
Topic and Research Question: 5%
Paper Proposal and Outline: 5%
Rough Draft and Peer Review: 10%
Final Paper: 20%
Final Presentation: 10%

GRADING SCALE

A (93+); AB (87.50-92.99); B (82.50-87.49); BC (77.50-82.49); C (69.50-77.49); D (60-69.49); F (Below 60)

PARTICIPATION (25%)

Participation in seminar meetings is critical to your success in this course. Please come to seminar each week prepared to engage the readings and your peers. Discussions provide the opportunity for you to clarify and consolidate your understanding of the materials, hone critical thinking skills, and learn from the insights of your fellow students. You can miss one seminar meeting no questions asked. If you end up needing to miss more classes due to health issues (including mental health), emergencies, or any other extenuating circumstances, let me know and we will create alternative assignments so that your participation grade will not be affected. No medical documentation of the illness will be required. Please take care of yourselves and let me know how I can support you this semester.

LEADING DISCUSSION: (10%)

Each student will select one week to co-lead discussion for our seminar. In this assignment you will flex your analytic skills by introducing the readings to frame our discussion; your research skills by tracking down two additional primary sources to consider during our conversation; and your communication skills by presenting your ideas to the seminar. During this week you will work with a partner to open our meeting with a brief (5 minute) response to the readings followed by introduction of 3-5 discussion questions and two primary sources related to the week's themes. One of these primary sources should come from an assigned secondary reading (for example a map or a quote that the author analyzes). The other should come from an archival collection (most likely a digitized repository, through you are also welcome to use the WHS collections). During the first weeks of the semester we will explore a range of digitized archives that you can consult in your research. Please plan to meet with me at some point the week prior to your presentation. I am very happy to help you track down the kinds of primary sources you are looking for, and to refine your discussion questions.

Your opening presentation should include four key elements:

- Identify the arguments of each of the secondary source readings and place their authors in dialogue. How are the readings similar, and how are they different? Do the authors seem to agree or disagree? What historical questions do they ask, what historical actors do they center, and what kinds of evidence (sources) do they use to answer their questions?
- Reflect on which aspects of the readings you found to be particularly compelling, interesting, or perhaps confusing. The two co-leaders might agree or disagree on this!

- Identify one structural feature of a reading that you would like to highlight as we hone our historian's craft. This might include the way in which an author uses a story to open their chapter or article, the method an author analyzes a particular source, or how the author positions their argument as contributing to a particular historical field.
- Research **two primary sources** related to the week's topic and themes. The second primary source that you find might or might not relate to the readings. If there is a topic that you'd like to consider but that the readings did not address, feel free to bring a related source into our conversation.
- Pose 3-5 questions to guide our discussion of the week's readings

I will circulate a presentation sign-up sheet during our first seminar meeting.

WEEKLY READING REFLECTIONS (15%)

During the first two thirds of the course, you will submit a short post on Canvas before each weekly discussion in response to the week's readings. Each post should be 1-2 paragraphs in length. While you may choose to focus your analysis on one or two of the sources, your post should make clear that you have completed and engaged all of the week's assigned readings. *Weekly reading reflections must be completed by 11:59 PM on Tuesday evenings.*

Options for weekly response posts:

- Answer one or more of the reading questions that I will post to Canvas on Wednesday afternoons after our seminar ends
- Reflect on something from the readings that interested you, surprised you, or confused you
- Analyze the structure of one or more of the assigned readings: Where does the author begin? How do they characterize their contributions to one or more historical fields? What kinds of evidence do they use to support their argument?
- Respond to another student's post, ideally using "Helpful Language for High Quality Discussion" posted to our course Canvas page (source: UW Madison Discussion Project)

During the final third of the course there are no assigned readings as you will be working toward your capstone research projects. Each week you will submit and receive feedback on one piece of writing that builds toward your final paper.

TOPIC AND RESEARCH QUESTION (5%)

Submit a one paragraph explanation of the topic and possible research question that you plan to explore in your final paper. Why do you find this topic interesting or compelling? What do you hope to learn in your research? What kinds of primary sources could you potentially use in order to answer your research questions? This can be preliminary and it is fine if your topic and question change as you progress in your research. *Due by midnight on Monday, November 4 by midnight via Canvas.*

RESEARCH PROPOSAL AND OUTLINE: (10%)

Build on your research question to craft a research proposal and outline, including an annotated bibliography with at least two secondary sources and three primary sources that you will use to answer your research question. We will go over a more detailed prompt and rubric for this assignment later in the semester. *Due by Monday, November 11 at midnight via Canvas.*



ROUGH DRAFT (10%)

You will be graded only on the completion of your rough draft. We will go over a more detailed prompt and rubric for this assignment later in the semester. Rough drafts will be returned with comments from the professor that should be addressed in your revisions. *Due by Tuesday, November 19 at midnight via Canvas.*

PEER REVIEW (10%):

Peer review is a crucial part of how historians make produce scholarship. All scholarly books and articles must pass through a process of review by experts in the field before being published. But even before submitting scholarship to be considered for publication, historians (myself included!) rely on friends and colleagues for feedback on works in progress. To receive full credit for peer review, you will provide thoughtful comments and suggestions on the paper draft of a classmate and write a short (1 paragraph reflection on how you plan to incorporate the feedback you received into your revisions). I will provide a set of prompts for you to consider in your peer review.

CAPSTONE ASSIGNMENT RESEARCH PAPER (20%)

Build on your draft to complete a 7-10 page capstone project, drawing on primary and secondary sources to answer an original research question of your choosing. To answer this question, you should engage 3-5 primary sources and 2-3 secondary sources. Students taking the honors option for the course should write a 10-page paper that engages 5-7 primary sources and 4-5 secondary sources. *Due by midnight on December 15 via Canvas.*

FINAL RESEARCH PRESENTATION (10%)

This presentation of your research is modelled on the ways historians share our scholarship at professional conferences. During our final seminar meeting of the semester on December 11, you will distill your capstone paper into a five-minute talk through which you communicate the significance of your original historical research to your peers. The presentation will be graded on its coherence (does it have a clear argument?), use of sources (does it utilize effectively both primary and secondary sources, including through visual slides?), relevance (does it engage with histories of the United States Empire?) and polish (is it well-rehearsed and presented in a compelling manner)?

DEADLINES AND EXTENSIONS:

You are welcome to request an extension on any of the graded assignments for the course if the requirements of other classes, workplace responsibilities, family commitments, health concerns, or other issues make it difficult to submit an assignment on time. All requests for extensions made 24 hours in advance of the deadline will be granted. Requests for extensions made on or after the deadline will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

STUDENTS' RULES, [RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES](#)

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION STATEMENT

I aspire to create a classroom strengthened by students who feel heard, safe, and supported. If you have concerns about any aspect of the course, please let me know. 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.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES STATEMENT

I am committed to providing any accommodations that will enable you to thrive in our course, including but not limited to those requested through the McBurney Disability Resource Center. 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. Faculty [I], 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. (See: [McBurney Disability Resource Center](#))

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. I encourage you to think critically about the advantages and risks of using Generative AI in educational settings. Consulting an AI program should never be a substitute for your own careful analysis of our course materials—not least because these programs notoriously invent quotes that do not in fact exist, then attribute them to authors past and present. This course is designed to train you to produce original historical research and scholarship. Please do not outsource your writing assignments to machine learning programs that often reproduce existing biases and misconceptions. Submitting AI-generated text for course assignments is plagiarism—a serious form of academic misconduct. Historians include careful citations for all of the sources that we analyze in our scholarship. ChatGPT is not a citable authority, and the sources that AI programs cite are not reliable. If you would like some help getting started with any of your writing assignments for this course, please come to office hours to about your ideas.

[Academic Calendar & Religious Observances](#)

COURSE EVALUATIONS

You will be provided with several opportunities to evaluate this course and your learning experience. Your participation is an integral component of this course, and your confidential feedback is important to me. You will receive an official email two weeks prior to the end of the semester, notifying you that your course evaluation is available. In the email you will receive a link to log into the course evaluation with your NetID. I strongly encourage you to participate in this anonymous course evaluation and will provide you with time in seminar to complete the evaluation.



SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND READING ASSIGNMENTS:

Week 1: Introduction—Thinking Like Historians, Seeing Empire

Wednesday, September 4

Workshop: What are primary and secondary sources? How do historians find and analyze different kinds of sources to interpret the past?

PART I: FORMATIONS OF UNITED STATES COLONIALISM

Week 2: Unsettling Colonial Narratives

September 11

Readings:

Daniel Immerwahr, “The United States is an Empire” in Kevin Kruse and Julian Zelizer, eds., *Myth America* (2022)

Michael Witgen, *Seeing Red: Indigenous Land, American Expansion, and the Political Economy of Plunder in North America* (2022) Chapter 1: A Nation of Settlers [pages 35-44 and 80-89]

Quinn Slobodian, *Crack -Up Capitalism* (2023) Chapter 10: “Silicon Valley Colonialism”

Workshop: What is an archive? How do historians use digitized archives to find primary sources related to particular topics or time periods?

Week 3: Citizens and Subjects

September 18

Readings:

Rosina Lozano, *An American Language* (2018) Chapter 4: A Language of Citizenship

Christina Heatherton, *Arise! Global Radicalism in the Era of the Mexican Revolution* (2022) Chapter 1: How to Make a Flag: Internationalism and the Pivot of 1848 [excerpt]

Beth Lew-Williams, *The Chinese Must Go: Violence, Exclusion, and the Making of the Alien in America* (2018) [pages 153-162]

Lakota Nation v. The United States (2022) film excerpt

Workshop: What is historiography? How can we identify arguments in secondary sources? How do historians frame their arguments as part of a broader conversation in the field?

Week 4: Overseas Empire

September 25

Readings:

Jorell Meléndez Badillo, (2024) *Puerto Rico: A National History* Chapter 6

Noenoe Silva, *Aloha Betrayed* (2004) Chapter 4: The Anti-Annexation Struggle

Marixa Lasso, *Erased: The Untold Story of the Panama Canal* (2019) Chapter 2: The Canal Zone in 1904

Workshop: Finding and interpreting primary sources using online newspaper databases

Week 5: Military Basing and Global Power

October 2

Readings:

Harvey Neptune, *Caliban and the Yankees: Trinidad and the United States Occupation* (2007) Chapter 5

Daniel Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire* (2019) Chapter 21: Baselandia

Rebecca Herman, *Cooperating with the Colossus* (2022) Chapter 3: Base Labor

Workshop: Analyzing Music and Cultural Production as Primary Sources

Week 6: Decolonization and the Politics of History

October 9

Readings:

Keisha Blaine, *Set the World on Fire: Black Nationalist Women and the Global Struggle for Freedom* (2018)
Chapter 5: Pan-Africanism and Anti-Colonial Politics

Nick Estes, *Our History is the Future* (2019) Chapter 5: Red Power

Omar Valerio-Jiménez, “La Caravana de la Reconquista: The Brown Berets Contest Memories of Conquest” in Mario T. García, ed., *Rewriting the Chicano Movement: New Histories of Mexican American Activism in the Civil Rights Era* (2021)

Workshop: Activist Archives at the Wisconsin Historical Society

Week 7: Cold War Colonialisms, Displacements, and Diasporas

October 16

Readings:

Monica Kim, *Interrogation Rooms of the Korean War: The Untold Story* (2019) Introduction: War and Humanity and Conclusion: The Diaspora of War

Shelley Sang-Hee Lee, “The Vietnam War, Southeast Asia, and the Transformation of Asian America” in *A New History of Asian America* (2013)

Greg Grandin, *The End of the Myth* (2019) Chapter 13: “More, More, More”
Harvest of Empire (2012) film excerpt

Workshop: Finding and Interpreting Legal Documents as Primary Sources

Week 8: From Cold War to War on Terror

October 23

Readings:

Mary Dudziak, *War Time: An Idea, Its History, Its Consequences* (2012) Chapter 4: What is a War on Terror?

Lisa Bhungalia, *Elastic Empire* (2023) Chapter 1: War Through Law



Eyal Weizman, *Forensic Architecture: Violence at the Threshold of Detectability* (2017) Introduction
[pages 13-47]
National Bird (2016) film excerpt

Week 9: Colonial Legacies, New Imperialisms, Decolonial Visions

October 30

Readings:

Greg Grandin, *The End of the Myth* (2019) Chapter 14: “The New Preemptor”

Ed Morales, “The Roots of Puerto Rico’s Debt Crisis—And Why Austerity Will Not Solve It,” *The Nation* (July 8, 2015)

Elizabeth Ellis, “Centering Sovereignty: How Standing Rock Changed the Conversation” in *Standing with Standing Rock* (2019)

Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Abolition Geography* (2022) Chapter 14: From Military-Industrial Complex to Prison Industrial Complex

Topic and Research Question due by midnight on Monday, November 4 by midnight via Canvas

Workshop: From Research Question to Research Proposal

PART II: WORKING TOWARD YOUR CAPSTONE PROJECT

Week 10: Starting to Think About Your Capstone Project

November 6

Workshop: Preparing for our Research Trip to the WHS

Week 11: Archival Research

November 13

Workshop: Visit to the Wisconsin Historical Society—meet in our usual seminar room and we will walk over to the WHS together

Research Proposal due by midnight on Monday, November 11 via Canvas

Week 12: Peer Review

November 20

Paper draft due to Professor Powers and your peer review partner by Tuesday, November 19 at midnight. We will read, discuss, and workshop papers with peer review partners in seminar on November 20.

Workshop: Peer Review of Drafts

Week 13: No Class—Thanksgiving Break

November 27



Week 14: Using Peer Review suggestions for Final Revisions

December 4

Week 15: Final Research Presentations

December 11

Special final seminar meeting with conference style presentations. Come ready to present your research, argument, and conclusions!

Final Papers are due December 15 by 11:59pm on Canvas



CAMPUS RESOURCES

THE HISTORY LAB: A resource center where experts (Ph.D. students) will assist you specifically with your history related courses and papers. No matter your stage in the writing process — choosing a topic, conducting research, composing a thesis, outlining your argument, revising your drafts — the History Lab staff can help you sharpen your skills and become a more successful writer. Schedule a one-on-one consultation at <http://go.wisc.edu/hlab>.

THE WRITING CENTER: Another writing resource on campus that provides one-on-one consultations with students to assist them with writing assignments. The writing center is open to all courses (not only history related ones). You can find more information about hours & how to schedule an appointment on their website: <http://www.writing.wisc.edu/index.html>.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES: As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning. These might include strained relationships, anxiety, high levels of stress, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, or loss of motivation. University Health Services can help with these or other issues you may experience. Help is always available. You can learn about free, confidential mental health services available to you; call 608-265-6600 (option 2) or visit uhs.wisc.edu.

SURVIVOR RESOURCES: All students deserve to be safe and respected at UW-Madison. Free, confidential resources are available on and off campus for students impacted by sexual assault, sexual harassment, dating violence, and stalking (regardless of when the violence occurred). You don't have to label your experience to seek help. Friends of survivors can reach out for support too. A list of resources can be found at <https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/survivor-resources/>

BADGER RECOVERY: Badger Recovery is a university affiliated recovery community for UW-Madison students in recovery from substance use disorders and their allies. Students in recovery from something other than alcohol and/or drugs may also find our community of support and services helpful and are welcome. To learn more about Badger Recovery, our peer to peer all recovery meetings, or our non-clinical staff support go to uhs.wisc.edu/recovery or email us at recovery@uhs.wisc.edu.

[University Health Services](#)

[Undergraduate Academic Advising and Career Services](#)

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