HISTORY 410: TOPICS IN WESTERN IMPERIALISM

Dr. Aidan Forth, 546 Crown Center, aforth@luc.edu
Thursday, 4:15pm-6:45pm, Information Commons, room 216
Office hours: Wednesday 3:00-5:00pm, Thursday 11:00-1:00pm, or by appointment

This class is an introduction to the rich historical scholarship on Western imperialism from the origins of early modern Atlantic empires to the decline of the European colonial order in the late twentieth century. Why did empires form and how did they change over time? What forms of knowledge and power derived from and facilitated empire? How did the politics of race, class and gender intersect with imperial power? What was the impact of Western expansion on colonial people? What comparisons and connections can we detect between different empires? And finally, what are the legacies of the imperial relationship and its dynamics of violence, economic exploitation, multicultural interchange and globalization?

GRADING

20% 5-sentence summaries of readings each week
20% Class participation (includes weekly forum posts)
30% 3 Book reviews (10% each; 4-5 pages)
30% Final essay (10-15 pages).

100% Total
EXPECTATIONS

It is crucial that you finish the assigned readings for each class and come ready with thoughtful questions and comments. At the beginning of each class, please turn in a 5-sentence summary of the reading for that week. This will help focus your thoughts for class discussion and will prove very useful when it comes time for field exams.

Each week you will also post a question to the online Sakai forum by no later than 10am each Thursday. The question will demonstrate thoughtful engagement with the issues raised by the reading for that week. I will use the questions as the basis for class discussion.

Participation in class is fundamental to your intellectual and professional development, and it accounts for an important component of your final grade. The quality of your contributions is as important as the quantity.

You will write three book reviews (3-4 pages), each on one of the assigned monographs of your choosing. You will be expected to provide a critical (though not necessarily negative) assessment of the book’s methodological approach and analysis of evidence. The goal is not to summarize the work but to assess its contribution to the field and its success in answering the questions it poses. You will also be graded on writing and style.

For the final paper you will produce a historiographical review essay (10-15 pages) on a topic of your choosing by incorporating 4-5 outside readings. The goal is to place the books into conversation with each other and with other developments in the field. How have different authors approached the topic? What alternating methodologies and sources of evidence do they use, and to what effect? Please consult with me about your topic well in advance, and by no later than October 15th.

Be warned: the historiographical review is a genre of analysis that is fundamental to history as an academic discipline, but it is a form of writing with which first year graduate students sometimes have trouble. If, for example, you are interested in the 1857-8 “Mutiny” in India, you will not write a narrative of the event. Rather, you will write a critical analysis about how different historians have written about the topic. We will talk more about this together in class.

CLASS SCHEDULE

PART I: INTRODUCTION


PART II: THE RISE OF WESTERN EMPIRES

September 3: Frederick Cooper and Jane Burbank, Empires in World History: power and the politics of Difference (Princeton University Press, 2010).


September 17: NO CLASS. DR. FORTH IS AT A CONFERENCE.


FIRST BOOK REVIEW DUE SEPTEMBER 24

PART III: THE TACTICS OF RULE

Recommended: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fVC8EYd_Z_g


SECOND BOOK REVIEW DUE OCTOBER 15


**THIRD BOOK REVIEW DUE NOVEMBER 12**


**CONCLUSION: THE EMPIRE TALKS BACK**


**FINAL ESSAY DUE DECEMBER 10 at 4:15 PM.**