

**Seminar on Imperialism  
PLSC 486X  
Fall 2018**

**Benjamin O. Fordham**  
E-mail: [bfordham@binghamton.edu](mailto:bfordham@binghamton.edu)

**Office Hours:**  
LNG 58  
Tuesday and Thursday, 1:00-2:30; and by  
appointment

This seminar will focus on the phenomenon of imperialism, especially as it has been practiced by modern states. The exercise of power by the United States since the end of the Cold War, and especially since 9/11, has sparked renewed interest in the topic, but imperialism has long been an important issue in international relations theory. European imperialism was crucial in the development of the contemporary international system, and its legacy continues to influence the international distribution of power and wealth. This course will examine the reasons for the rise of empires, the ways imperial states maintain their power, why empires have collapsed, and what their legacies have been. Beyond the historical significance of the topic, the theories developed to explain it are useful for understanding many aspects of international relations, especially interactions between great powers and militarily weaker states and societies. In particular, we will consider whether theoretical arguments developed to explain the course of earlier empires help in understanding American foreign policy.

**Course Materials**

We will read most or all of five books during the course of the semester. These books are available at the campus bookstore but you could certainly order them online as well.

- Doyle, Michael W. 1986. *Empires*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Hobson, J. A. 2005 [1902]. *Imperialism: A Study*. New York: Cosimo.
- Snyder, Jack. 1991. *Myths of Empire*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press
- Spruyt, Hendrik. 2005. *Ending Empire*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

In addition to these books, we will read many articles and book chapters. These are available either from a library database--usually J-STOR--or on the Blackboard page for the course, as indicated below. I will also occasionally ask you to watch a movie outside of class to add to our discussion.

**Assignments and Grading**

**Attendance and Participation.** Because this class is a seminar, we will spend nearly all our time discussing the assigned readings. There will be no lectures. Your participation is essential to the success of the class. Completing the assigned reading is vital, but you also need to be prepared to discuss them. I may ask one of you to summarize a particular reading when we begin discussing it. Make sure you know the essentials of each author's argument. The quality of your participation in class discussion will count for 30 percent of your semester grade.

This class meets only once each week, so we have relatively few sessions. For this reason, attendance is especially important. If you miss more than two classes, your final grade will be lowered by one full letter grade for each additional session you do not attend.

**Quizzes.** We will have a quiz on the assigned reading most weeks. The quizzes will consist of 4 multiple choice questions that are intended to be relatively easy, if you have done the reading. No make-up assignments will be offered if you are absent from class when one of the quizzes takes place, but I will drop the lowest grade you receive on them. Overall, these assignments will account for 20 percent of your final grade.

**Term Paper.** Each student will write a term paper on a topic related to the course. This paper should be roughly 15-30 pages long, although your grade will not depend on the number of pages you write.

A prospectus for your term paper is due no later than the October 30th class meeting. The prospectus is important. It will count for 10 percent of your final grade. The prospectus should do the following:

1. State the research question your paper will answer, explaining why it is important. It is much easier to write a research paper based on a question than on a general topic area. This question could be historically specific, focusing on a particular set of places and times. Here are a few examples:

- To what extent did the United States exercise imperial control over Indonesia between its independence in 1949 and the overthrow of Sukarno in 1965?
- Why were the French able to colonize parts of Southeast Asia beginning in the 1860s but failed to colonize Mexico when they attempted to do so around the same time?
- Why was Ethiopia able to resist European colonization during the late 19th Century when nearly all of rest of the African continent was divided into European colonies?

Alternatively, your research question could be more general, focusing on relationships that apply to many different historical cases. Example include the following:

- Why did some colonies become independent peacefully, while others did so only after a violent revolution? Why do some colonial rebellions fail, while others result in independence?
- Why were British colonies more likely to become democracies after independence than French colonies were?
- Does the presence of a dominant power in a region reduce the level of militarized violence there?

2. Briefly discuss at least two different arguments that could answer your research question. The theoretical arguments we will read during the semester could suggest answers to your question.

3. Explain how you will test the value of the answers you proposed to your research question. You may do so using a careful study of a small number of relevant cases, or by gathering data on a larger number of cases.

4. Provide a list of the sources you will use. In addition to giving a citation for each source, you should write one or two sentences explaining what information it will provide and how it will relate to your overall argument. For example, you might locate statistics on U.S. trade and investment in Indonesia during the 1945-65 period, cite this source, and note that you plan to use it to show the relevance (or irrelevance) of these economic considerations in shaping the relationship.

The term paper is due no later than noon on Wednesday, December 12th. You should submit your paper through [turnitin.com](https://turnitin.com), at the link provided in the Blackboard page for the class. You may provide me with a hard copy of your paper if you prefer, but the text must still be submitted to [turnitin.com](https://turnitin.com). If you submit the paper on or before our last seminar meeting on December 3rd, I will comment on it and return it to you for revision if you like. Your term paper will be worth 40% of your final grade for the semester.

**Plagiarism.** Originality is extremely important in relatively long writing assignments like the one in this class. Make sure you indicate all excerpts that are quoted or closely paraphrased from another work. The works you use in preparing your paper should be properly cited. Any citation system you like is acceptable, provided that you use it consistently. If you are unsure about your citation practices, please consult me. Submitting as your own the work of another author is plagiarism, and is completely

unacceptable. Anyone submitting plagiarized work will receive an "F" in the course and will face further disciplinary action from the University.

### **Tentative Schedule**

The dates and reading assignments may change during the semester. If so, an announcement will be made in class. Note that our second class meeting is on Wednesday, September 5th, rather than on Monday. University-wide, all Monday classes are meeting on this particular Wednesday.

#### **Meeting Date      Topic and Reading Assignment**

**August 27**

**Introduction**

**September 5**

**Defining Empire and Imperialism**

Discussion questions: What is an "empire," and how does it differ from a large state? What is "imperialism," and how does it differ from an ordinary foreign policy? To what extent should we expect similarities among empires? Are comparisons between ancient and modern empires likely to be informative?

Reading Assignment:

- Doyle, Michael W. 1986. *Empires*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. Pages 1-138.
- Allsen, Thomas T. 2011. "Pre-Modern Empires." In *The Oxford Handbook of World History*, edited by Jerry H. Bentley. New York: Oxford University Press.

**September 10**

**No class meeting**

**September 16**

**European Imperialism**

Discussion questions: What is the process through which European empires spread? Why did European empires rule some societies directly and others indirectly? How did some societies escape European imperial rule entirely? Have international conditions changed in ways that would make the development of empires like these more difficult today?

Reading Assignment:

- Doyle, Michael W. 1986. *Empires*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. Pages 141-372.

**September 24**

**American Empire?**

Discussion questions: Does the United States have an empire? In what ways is the present-day United States similar to, and different from, 19th Century Britain? Are ideas about empires and imperialism helpful in understanding American foreign policy?

Reading Assignment

- Ikenberry, G. John. 2004. "Liberalism and Empire: Logics of Order in the American Unipolar Age." *Review of International Studies* 30(4): 609-30.
- Immerwahr, Daniel. 2016. "The Greater United States: Territory and Empire in U.S. History." *Diplomatic History* 40(3): 373-391.
- MacDonald, Paul K. 2009. "Those Who Forget Historiography Are Doomed to Rewrite It: Empire, Imperialism, and Contemporary Debates about American Power." *Review of International Studies* 35(1): 45-67.
- Rosen, Stephen Peter. 2003. "An Empire if You Can Keep It." *The National Interest* 71: 51-61.
- Supplemental movie: *The Quiet American* (2002)

**October 1**

**The Rise of Empires I: Classic Economic Theories**

Discussion questions: Why does Hobson say "surplus capital" promotes imperialism? What is the role of interest groups? Is capitalism inevitably imperialistic? How do

Lenin's and Kautsky's accounts of imperialism differ from Hobson's, and from one another?

Reading Assignment:

- Hobson, J. A. 2005 [1902]. *Imperialism: A Study*. New York: Cosimo. Part I.
- Lenin, Vladimir I. 1916. "Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism."
- Kautsky, Karl. 1914. "Ultra-Imperialism."
- Magdoff, Harry. 1970. "Militarism and Imperialism." *American Economic Review* 60(2): 237-42.

**October 8**

### **The Rise of Empires II: Political Theories**

Discussion questions: What problems with economic theories of imperialism do these authors find? Do these concerns apply to all the economic theories we have considered, or only to some of them? What alternative theoretical explanation do these authors suggest?

Reading Assignment:

- Cohen, Benjamin J. 1973. *The Question of Imperialism*. New York: Basic Books, chapter 7.
- Waltz, Kenneth N. 1979. *Theory of International Politics*. Reading, PA: Addison Wesley, chapter 2.
- Schumpeter, Joseph A. 1951 [1919]. "The Sociology of Imperialisms." In *Imperialism and Social Classes*, tr. Heinz Norden. Cleveland: Meridian Books. 1-98.

**October 15**

### **The Rise of Empires III: Technology and Conditions in the Periphery**

Discussion questions: What was the role of technology in promoting European imperialism? Why might conditions on the colonized areas be more important in shaping imperialism than conditions in the metropole? Do overseas trade and investment make colonialism more likely? What conditions are most likely to "invite" imperialism? Could these conditions emerge today?

Reading Assignment:

- Headrick, Daniel. 1981. *Tools of Empire*. New York: Oxford University Press. Introduction and Part Two.
- Gallagher, John A. and Ronald J. Robinson. 1953. "The Imperialism of Free Trade." *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, 6(1): 1-15.
- Robinson, Ronald. 1972. "Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism: Sketch for a Theory of Collaboration." In *Studies in the Theory of Imperialism*. London: Longman.
- Galbraith, John S. 1960. "The 'Turbulent Frontier' as a Factor in British Expansion." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 2 (2): 150-68.

**October 22**

### **Running the Empire**

Discussion questions: What is the best way to organize an empire? Is colonial rule the best way to exercise "imperial" power? Are there good alternatives to military coercion as a tool for building and maintaining an empire?

Reading Assignment:

- Cooley, David. 2005. *Logics of Hierarchy*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. Chapters 1-3.
- Lake, David A. 1996. "Anarchy, Hierarchy, and the Variety of International Relations." *International Organization* 50 (1): 1-33.
- Robinson, Ronald. 1972. "Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism: Sketch for a Theory of Collaboration." In *Studies in the Theory of Imperialism*.

London: Longman. (This is a repeat from the previous week, but it is sure to come up again.)

- Fick, Nathaniel C., John A. Nagl, and David H. Petraeus. 2009. "How to Win a Losing War." *Foreign Policy* 170: 42-7.
- Staniland, Paul. 2018. "The U.S. Military is trying to manage foreign conflicts--not resolve them. Here's why." *The Washington Post*, July 16, 2018.
- Supplemental movie: Lives of a Bengal Lancer (1935)

### October 29 **Justifying the Empire**

Discussion questions: How do empires justify their power? How, if at all, can the subject people be persuaded to accept this situation as legitimate? Is empire ever genuinely justifiable?

Reading Assignment:

- Hechter, Michael. 2009. "Alien Rule and Its Discontents." *American Behavioral Scientist* 53(3): 289-310.
- Ikenberry, G. John, and Charles A. Kupchan. 1990. "Socialization and Hegemonic Power." *International Organization* 44 (3): 283-315.
- Alice Conklin, "Colonialism and Human Rights, a Contradiction in Terms? The Case of France and West Africa, 1895-1914." *American Historical Review* 103(2): 419-442.
- Crocker, Chester A. 2003. "Engaging Failing States." *Foreign Affairs* 82(5): 32-44.
- Supplemental movie: Breaker Morant (1980)

### November 5 **Empires and Democracy**

Does having an empire erode democracy within the imperial power? Can empires spread democracy to the areas of the world they rule?

Reading Assignment:

- Hobson, J. A. 2005 [1902]. *Imperialism: A Study*. New York: Cosimo. Part II, chapters 1, 3, and 7.
- Chua, Amy. 2007. *Day of Empire*. New York: Doubleday. Introduction and chapter 6.
- Skrentny, John David. 1998. The effect of the Cold War on African-American civil rights: America and the world audience, 1945-1968. *Theory and Society* 27: 237-285.
- Peceny, Mark. 1999. "Forcing Them to Be Free." *Political Research Quarterly* 52 (3): 549-82.
- Johnson, Chalmers. 2006. *Nemesis*. New York: Henry Holt and Company. Chapter 2.

### November 12 **Imperialism, Aggression, and War**

Discussion questions: Does imperialism make war among imperial states more likely? Is imperialism the same thing as an "aggressive foreign policy"? Are the "myths of empire" Snyder discusses the causes of empire, or results of it?

Reading Assignment:

- Snyder, Jack. 1991. *Myths of Empire*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. Chapters 1-3, 7-8, and one other chapter of your choice.
- Snyder, Jack. 2003. "Imperial Temptations." *The National Interest* 71: 29-40.

### November 19 **Benefits of Empire?**

Discussion questions: Is an empire (or at least a hegemon) necessary to provide certain international public goods? What benefits do empires provide to the people incorporated into the empire? Are these benefits likely to exceed the costs they impose?

Reading Assignment:

- Krasner, Stephen D. 1976. "State Power and the Structure of Foreign Trade." *World Politics* 28(3): 317-47.
- Ferguson, Niall, and Morris Schularick. 2006. "The Empire Effect: The Determinants of Country Risk in the First Age of Globalization, 1880-1913." *Journal of Economic History* 66(2): 283-312.
- Coyne, Christopher, and Steven Davies. 2007. "Empire: Public Goods and Bads." *Econ Journal Watch* 4(1): 3-45.
- Butt, Ahsan I. 2013. "Anarchy and Hierarchy in International Relations: Examining South America's War-Prone Decade, 1932-41." *International Organization* 67(3): 575-607.

### **November 26 Decolonization**

Discussion questions: Why did the colonial empires that existed in the early 20th century fall apart so quickly after World War II? Can the same considerations that explain the rise of empires explain their collapse as well? Why were some decolonization processes peaceful and others violent?

Reading Assignment:

- Spruyt, Hendrik. 2005. *Ending Empire*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Supplemental movie: Michael Collins (1996)

### **December 3 Economic and Political Legacies of Imperialism**

Discussion questions: What was the effect of imperialism on economic growth and inequality in colonized areas? What imperial practices might make democracy, ethnic conflict, or other political outcomes more or less likely?

Reading Assignment:

- Bairoch, Paul. 1986. "Historical Roots of Economic Underdevelopment: Myths and Realities." In *Imperialism and After*, edited by Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Jurgen Osterhammel. London: Allen & Unwin. 191-216.
- Barkey, Karen. 1997. "Thinking About Consequences of Empire." In *After Empire*, edited by Karen Barkey and Mark von Hagen. Boulder, CO: Westview Press. 99-114.
- Mahoney, James. 2003. "Long-Run Development and the Legacy of Colonialism in Spanish America." *American Journal of Sociology* 109 (1): 50-106.
- Laitin, David D. 1985. "Hegemony and Religious Conflict: British Imperial Control and Political Cleavages in Yorubaland." In Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol, eds., *Bringing the State Back In*. New York: Cambridge University Press. 285-316.