Ethnic Studies 289  
Theories and Cultures of U.S. Imperialism  
Winter 2009

Monday 4 – 6:50 PM  
(two rescheduled seminars on Friday 1/23 and Wed 2/18)  
SSB 103

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Office Hours: Monday 1-2 pm, Wednesday 1-3 pm, or by appointment

Course Description
How and when did the United States become an empire? The course approaches the historical and contemporary problem of the United States as an imperial power through both historiography and cultural analyses of U.S. imperialism. U.S. exceptionalism and racial exclusion have been embedded in national paradigms, while scholars have attempted to remake and critique these paradigms during a century of imperial expansion. More recently, interdisciplinary scholars have tried to understand the development of U.S. empire as a series of overlapping cultural projects formed by racialized, sexualized, and gendered hierarchies, practices, and encounters. We will examine imperial cultures at “home” and outside of formal U.S. borders as mutually constitutive of political and economic processes of empire-building.

Required Texts (available at Groundwork Bookstore, 452-9625, and on reserve at SSH Library):


There are also several reserve readings, available for download through the library’s e-reserves system (http://reserves.ucsd.edu). Each such reading has the notation “*” in the syllabus. NOTE: remote access by proxy instructions:

http://blink.ucsd.edu/Blink/External/Topics/Policy/0,1162,24528,00.html
Course Requirements
1) Your attendance and active participation is vital and essential; any unexcused absences will be factored into your final grade. Participation in class discussion is not simply a question of quantity, but also of quality and thoughtfulness. Students should come to class prepared for discussion, with all texts and discussion posts read.
2) Weekly Discussion Boards – 25%
Each student is required to post substantive comments and discussion questions (about 1 page, or 300-400 words in length) for each week’s readings on the class WebCT site (https://webctweb.ucsd.edu). The first post should be done by 6 pm the evening before seminar; students are responsible for reading all course posts before class. A minimum of one follow-up, consisting of your reflections and revisions, should be posted by noon two days after the seminar meeting.
3) Class Presentation and response paper (4-5 pp) due day of presentation – 25%
The presentation is not a book report or summary of the readings. Please follow attached presentation guidelines.
4) Final Paper – 50% (due March 11)
This paper can be related to your ongoing research interests or extended analyses of class themes and materials. Double-spaced, 12-15 pp (not including bibliography). A one-page research proposal is due on week 3. As students will be at different stages of their MA thesis and prospectus preparation, please feel free to consult with me individually.

Disabilities
If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please inform me and bring a notification letter outlining your approved accommodations. I will make all reasonable efforts to assist you. You may also seek assistance or information from the Office for Students with Disabilities, 858-534-4382.

Class Schedule

Week 1 (January 5) – Introduction
Presentation sign-up

Week 2 (January 12) – The Frontier Myth and the question of empire in U.S. History


Week 3 (class rescheduled for Friday, 1/23, 3-5:30 pm, SSB 253) – Rethinking American Exceptionalism
Submit one page proposal for final paper


Week 4 (January 26) – Rethinking American Exceptionalism, cont’d.


Week 5 (February 2) – Marxism, Imperialism and Post-Marxist Critiques


Week 6 (February 9) – Racial Capitalism


Week 7 -- class rescheduled for Wednesday 2/18, 3- 5:30 pm during colloquium
Meet in SSB 253


Week 8 (February 23) — Cultures of U.S. Imperialism


Week 9 (March 2) – Resistance and Counter-Colonial Tactics

*Adria L. Imada. Excerpt from *Aloha America: Hula Circuits through the U.S. Empire*.

Week 10 (March 9) -- New Imperialisms, New Directions?
From “New Imperialisms” issue of *Radical History Review* 2006 (95)

*Ann Laura Stoler and David Bond, “Refractions Off Empire: Untimely Comparisons in Harsh Times,” 93-107
*Hakim Adi, “A New Kind of Imperialism,” 108-114

Final Papers due Wednesday, March 11, 3 pm in my box in Ethnic Studies office