

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):

Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land, The American West as Symbol and Myth*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007.

William Appleman Williams. *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1988.

Cedric Robinson. *Black Marxism: The Making of a Black Radical Tradition*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000.

Laura Wexler. *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of U.S. Imperialism*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000.

Noenoe K. Silva. *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.

V.I. Lenin. *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of capitalism, An Outline*. International Publishing Company, 1969.

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

*Frederick Cooper. "Colonialism and Imperialism," in *An Encyclopedia of Africa: South of the Sahara*. New encyclopedia of Africa [electronic resource] / John Middleton, ed. Detroit: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2008. 467-473.

*Frederick Jackson Turner. "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," in *The Frontier in American History* (1920): 1-38.

Henry Nash Smith. *Virgin Land, The American West as Symbol and Myth* (1950)

Week 3 (class rescheduled for Friday, 1/23, 3- 5:30 pm, SSB 253) – Rethinking American Exceptionalism

Submit one page proposal for final paper

*Shelley Streeby. "Empire," in *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*, ed. Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler. New York : New York University Press, 2007.

*William Appleman Williams. *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*. [1st ed. Cleveland,: World Pub. Co., 1959.

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

*Richard Hofstadter. "Cuba, the Philippines and Manifest Destiny" in *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays*, New York, Knopf, 1967. 145-187.

*James P. Shenton. "Imperialism and Racism," In *Essays in American Historiography: Papers Presented in Honor of Allan Nevins*, ed. Donald Sheehan & Harold C. Syrett. New York: Columbia University Press, 1960, 231-50.

*Oscar V. Campanes. "1898 and the Nature of the New Empire." *Radical History Review*. 73:1, 1999, 1-17.

*Ann Laura Stoler. "On Degrees of Imperial Sovereignty." *Public Culture* 18: 1 (2006): 125-146.

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

V. I. Lenin. *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism, An Outline*.

*Neferti Xina M. Tadiar. *Fantasy-Production: Sexual Economies and Other Philippines Consequences for the New World Order*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004. 1-75.

*Lisa Lowe. "Work, Immigration, Gender: New Subjects of Cultural Politics." In *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Empire*, ed. Lisa Lowe and David Lloyd. Durham: Duke University Press, 1997. 354-374.

Week 6 (February 9) – Racial Capitalism

Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, part I.

Excerpts from Joseph Roach. *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (1996)

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

Meet in SSB 253

Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism*, part II.

Excerpts from Michel-Rolph Trouillot. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (1997)

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

*Amy Kaplan, "'Left Alone with America': The Absence of Empire in the Study of American Culture," in *Cultures of United States Imperialism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1993. 3-21.

Laura Wexler, *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of U.S. Imperialism*, 2000.

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

Noenoe K. Silva. *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism* (2004)

*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)

*Michael Hardt, “Second Empire; or, The Eighteenth Brumaire of George W. Bush,” 89-92

*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