

HIS 715: Empires and Colonies of the Atlantic World (and Beyond)

Wednesdays 3:30-6:20; MHRA 3259

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Office hours: Mondays 2:00-3:00, Wednesdays 10:00-12:00, and by appointment (MHRA 2105)

Synopsis

This course surveys a range of approaches and themes related to the rise and consolidation of European overseas empires in the early modern period, with a focus on the Atlantic World. We will discuss major trends in the historiography, with particular attention to changing perspectives on the relationship between, and relative importance of, imperial structures, trans-imperial processes, and colonial agency.

Course Goals and Objectives

By the end of the course students should have developed significant skills in:

- analyzing historical monographs for their conceptual framework, methodological approach, use of sources, and position in wider historiographic debates
- identifying a variety of interpretive approaches to the study of European overseas empires
- engaging in persuasive, thoughtful, and courteous discussion with their academic peers
- writing academic prose that is clear, pointed, and analytically rigorous

Required Books

Benton, Lauren. *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400-1900* (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

Canny, Nicholas and Anthony Pagden, eds. *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800* (Princeton University Press, 1987).

Crosby, Alfred. *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900* (Cambridge University Press, 1986).

Daniels, Christine and Michael V. Kennedy, eds. *Negotiated Empires: Centers and Peripheries in the Americas, 1500-1820*. (Routledge, 2002).

Herzog, Tamar. *Frontiers of Possession: Spain and Portugal in Europe and the Americas* (Harvard University Press, 2015).

Kamen, Henry. *Empire: How Spain Became a World Power, 1492-1763* (Harper Perennial, 2003).

Koot, Christian. *Empire at the Periphery: British Colonists, Anglo-Dutch Trade, and the Development of the British Atlantic, 1621-1713* (NYU Press, 2011).

Pagden, Anthony. *Lords of all the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain, and France*. (Yale University Press, 1995).

Parry, J. H. *The Establishment of the European Hegemony, 1415-1715* (various editions).

Seed, Patricia. *Ceremonies of Possession in Europe's Conquest of the New World, 1492-1640* (Cambridge University Press, 1995).

Thornton, John. *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800*. Second Edition (Cambridge University Press, 1998).

White, Richard. *The Middle Ground* (Cambridge University Press, 1991).

Wolf, Eric. *Europe and the People Without History* (University of California Press, 1982).

Requirements

Graduate work requires, at a minimum, careful reading and deep understanding of assigned material; active, enthusiastic participation at all levels; pointed but courteous engagement with your classmates' ideas; timely completion of assignments. As a graduate student you should make the most of every opportunity to develop your analytic abilities and to push beyond the limits of your current knowledge.

Remember that, at the graduate level, you are reading primarily not for story or narrative, but rather for argument, approach, and sources. You should be able to identify the author's main argument; how s/he develops the argument; what kinds of sources s/he brings to bear; and how this work compares to other works in the field.

All written work should follow rigorous standards of structure, grammar, punctuation, spelling, and style. Clear writing showcases clear thinking. Carefully edit and proofread everything you write. Graduate students should own, and consult often, the latest edition of Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (University of Chicago Press).

All papers should be written in standard format (Times New Roman 12" type or similar, double spaced, with one-inch margins), with a relevant title, a clear argument, and a brief introduction and conclusion that frame your main point. Please number your pages.

Oral Assignments (30% of final grade)

Class presentations: Each week one student will **briefly** introduce our assigned reading and author, provide some helpful background and context, and frame several questions to begin our class discussion.

Class participation: Attendance at all classes is required except in case of illness or emergency. Come prepared to ask questions, to raise several key points, and to engage thoughtfully with your fellow students' ideas. Cultivate the art of being both a thoughtful listener and an articulate speaker.

Book reviews: Each student will read one additional book and give a **brief** presentation which summarizes the work and positions it vis-à-vis relevant course themes and our common readings. You will also write a review for the class. (See below.)

Written Assignments (70% of final grade)

- Three five to seven-page essays analyzing and comparing the unit readings, moving beyond the themes we have addressed in our discussions, and critically appraising similarities in and differences in their approaches. ***Due in class on Wednesday, September 13, Wednesday, October 18, and Wednesday, November 29.***
- One final essay deepening your analysis around a major theme or approach to empire, and drawing on readings from all three units. ***Due on Wednesday, December 6.***
- A two to three-page summary of your outside reading. ***Due in class on the day you present the book.***

You will receive more information about the criteria for the written assignments early in the semester.

Schedule of Readings

Unit 1: Approaches to Empire Writ Large

Wednesday, August 16: Klooster, “The Rise and Transformation of the Atlantic World,”
Fernández-Armesto, “Empires in their Global Context” (posted in Files section of Canvas)

Wednesday, August 23: Parry, *The Establishment of the European Hegemony*; David Eltis,
“Atlantic History in Global Perspective” and Nicholas Canny, “Atlantic History and Global
History” (articles posted in Files section of Canvas)

Wednesday, August 30: Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism*

Wednesday, September 6: Pagden, *Lords of All the World*

Wednesday, September 13: Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession*

Unit 1 essay due in class.

Unit 2: Analyzing Colonial Agency

Wednesday, September 20: Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History*

Wednesday, September 27: Canny and Pagden, eds. *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World*

Wednesday, October 4: White, *The Middle Ground*

Wednesday, October 11: Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World*

Wednesday, October 18: Daniels and Kennedy, eds. *Negotiated Empires*

Unit 2 essay due in class.

Unit 3: New Perspectives on Empire in Atlantic and World History

Wednesday, October 25: Kamen, *Empire: How Spain Became a World Power*

Wednesday, November 1: Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty*

Wednesday, November 8: Koot, *Empire at the Periphery*

Wednesday, November 15: Herzog, *Frontiers of Possession*

Wednesday, November 22: No class (Happy Thanksgiving!)

Wednesday, November 29: Articles posted in Files section of Canvas

Unit 3 essay due in class.

Final essay due on Wednesday, December 6.