The British Empire

Prof. Jeffrey Auerbach   History 496BE
Office: Sierra Tower 603       Spring 2011
Hours: TTh 11-12, T 2-3        Time: TTh 9:30-10:45
Phone: x3561         Location: SH182
Email: jeffrey.auerbach@scun.edu  Class # 18712

Description: This course explores the causes, course, and consequences of British imperialism from its origins in the late-sixteenth century until the dissolution of the British Empire in the late-twentieth century. At its height, the British Empire encompassed one quarter of the earth, and was so geographically dispersed that the sun literally never set on British-controlled territory. This course will examine how and why Great Britain acquired such a vast empire, the nature of its rule, forms of resistance, and the reasons for its disintegration. It seeks to investigate not only the impact of the British Empire on the world, but also the impact of the empire on Britain.

Objectives

• To develop a basic chronology of British imperialism
• To understand the global impact of the British empire
• To analyze complex issues of causation involving multiple factors including politics, economics, strategic and military imperatives, social dynamics, and underlying cultural and intellectual forces
• To consider the motivations and consequences of imperialism at the individual and national levels
• To read, analyze, and evaluate primary and secondary historical sources; to construct arguments based on them; and to express these arguments verbally and in written form

Readings (All of the following are required and are available at the Matador Bookstore):

• Philippa Levine, British Empire: Sunrise to Sunset (Pearson, 2007)
• Peter Mancall, Envisioning America: English Plans for the Colonization of North America, 1580-1640 (Bedford, 1995)
• Daniel Defoe, Robinson Crusoe (Bantam, 1981)
• Caroline Elkins, Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of Britain’s Gulag in Kenya (Henry Holt, 2005)

Assignments/Requirements

• Regular class attendance and informed participation in discussion along with several brief reading quizzes (15%)
• Active participation in Penal Colony Group Project (15%)
• A 3-page “Colony Brief” in which each student will select one region of the world that was colonized by the British – either formally or informally – and write a summary of the reasons why Britain colonized that region, the nature of British rule in that region, the circumstances of Britain’s departure from that region, and the present-day legacy or consequences of Britain’s presence (15%). Due April 19.
Two 3-page papers (15% each), the first analyzing the documents in Envisioning America and/or Robinson Crusoe, due Feb. 22; the second analyzing the arguments regarding free-trade imperialism (Robinson and Gallagher, MacDonagh, and Platt) due March 24.

A comprehensive final examination scheduled for Tuesday, May 17, from 8:00-10:00 am, that will include identifications, short answer, and essay (25%)

Course Policies:

- All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the specified due date. Late papers will be accepted for one week after the due date, but will be marked down one-third grade (e.g., from an A to an A-) per day. Missed assignments will be entered as a zero.
- More than two absences for any reason will adversely affect the student’s grade, as will repeated lateness.
- All cell phones must be turned off during class.
- Any student caught plagiarizing (copying or borrowing someone else's work, whether on paper or from the internet, without crediting them fully) or cheating on an exam will receive a failing grade for the course and will be referred to the Office of Academic Affairs for disciplinary action.
- The instructor reserves the right to modify the course schedule or assignments. Students will be given adequate notice of any changes.
Schedule of Topics and Readings

(Readings denoted with an asterisk (*) are available on Moodle)

**I. The Early Empire**

Jan. 25  Introduction

Jan. 27  Consolidating the Kingdom

    Levine, ch. 1
    *Atlas*, pp. 1-19

Feb. 1/3 The New World

    Mancall, *Envisioning America*
    *Atlas*, pp. 20-29

Feb. 8/10 Captives and Colonizers

    Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*

Feb. 15 Sugar and Slaves

    Levine, ch. 2
    *Atlas*, pp. 30-33, 38-41

Feb. 17 Revolution and Recovery

    Levine, ch. 3

Feb. 22 Abolition and Emancipation

    *Atlas*, pp. 56-57
    First Paper Due

Feb. 24 Cook and the South Seas

March 1/3 Australia: Penal Colony in the Pacific

    Levine, ch. 4
    *Atlas*, pp. 46-49, 82-83
II. The Age of High Imperialism

March 8     India: Conquest and Reform

Levine, ch. 5
* Atlas, pp. 36-37, 58-69
* Raja Rammohon Roy, *A Second Conference Between an Advocate for, and An Opponent of the Practice of Burning Widows Alive* (1820)
* William Bentinck, *On Ritual Murder in India* (1829)

March 10   Opium Regimes

* Atlas, pp. 70-71
* Lin Zexu, *Letter to Queen Victoria* (1839)

March 15   Imperial Crises: From India to Jamaica

* Alfred Tennyson, “The Defense of Lucknow” (1879)

March 17   The Expansion of Empire and the Scramble for Africa

Levine, ch. 6
* Atlas, pp. 72-73, 76-77, 92-95, 102-103

March 22   Rulers and Ruled

Levine, ch. 7-9
* Atlas, pp. 78-79, 104-105

March 24   Rhodes, South Africa, and the Boer War

* Atlas, pp. 44-45, 74-75
  Second Paper Due

March 29   British Imperial Culture: Metropole and Colony

* Atlas, pp. 84-91, 96-99, 100-101

March 31   No Class: Cesar Chavez Day
April 5/7  No Class: Spring Break

**III. Disintegration and Decline**

April 12  War and Empire

Levine, ch. 10
*Atlas*, pp. 106-113

April 14  Mandate Days

*Atlas*, pp. 116-117

April 19  From Empire to Commonwealth

*Atlas*, pp. 118-121, 132-133
Colony Brief Due

April 21  Mohandas Gandhi and the Challenge of Nationalism

* Mohandas Gandhi, Excerpts from *Hind Swaraj*
* George Orwell, “Shooting an Elephant”
*Atlas*, pp. 122-123, 132-133

April 26/28  Decolonization and the End of Empire

Levine, ch. 11
Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning*, pp. 1-119

May 3  Mau Mau and the British Gulag

Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning*, pp. 120-375

May 5  The Empire Strikes Back

May 10  Imperial Legacies

*Atlas*, pp. 134-135

May 12 Conclusion and Review

May 17 Final Exam, 8:00-10:00 a.m.