Political theories of imperialism.

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Overview. While empires have risen and fallen across the world—and not just in “the West”—since antiquity, imperialism assumes a unique form and occupies a paradoxical position in modernity. Modern imperialism is unique because state powers, centered in Europe, for the first time claim either to conduct day-to-day affairs of farflung but noncontiguous territories and the peoples who inhabit them or else to control peoples by native proxy. It is, moreover, paradoxical because the imposition of alien administration on subject peoples in the colonies would seem to stand in stark contrast to the adoption and development in the metropole of representative forms of democratic governance, national sovereignty, the rule of law, and civilian rather than military regimes of governance. By what arguments were these differences reconcilable? How could the same state encourage participatory citizenship at home and yet rule non-democratically on behalf of peoples abroad?

In this course we will examine the political theories by which thinkers either justified or contested the systematic political inequalities and dissymmetries between metropolitan powers and colonies, so that we may come to a critical understanding of the strategic goals, social structures and motivations, and political effects that characterize imperialism as a modern power formation. Consequently we will scrutinize ideas—such as progress, civilization, race, tribalism, universalism, development, and backwardness—that have played some part in the making of modern imperialism. Although the course begins with Rome, our two main case studies of imperialism and anti-imperialism are Britain in India and France in Algeria during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. We also will consider imperialism’s legacies in postcolonial states into the twenty-first century.

Note on teaching philosophy. One of the best ways to learn how to engage in the activity of political theory is inductively, by first observing how someone else engages in it. Thus I will often present my own evaluations and interpretations in the lectures. Often these will take the form of questions and critiques rather than definitive answers. You need not take my claims as authoritative. Indeed, I invite you not to do so, but in advancing your own claims, your task is to learn to discern the techniques of reasoning, criteria of judgment, and conventions of interpretation employed in the texts and lectures and to apply the methods that you observe to your own argumentation.

Lecture format. The lectures for this course will follow a more or less traditional European-style format in combination with a quasi-Socratic method. This means that I will read from a prepared text, but I will pause frequently during each lecture to entertain a brief discussion of a passage from the assigned reading. You are invited to participate in these in-class dialogues—these are voluntary and not required, but in participating you will learn better.

Please be forewarned that if you believe that you will find yourself unsuited to listening to me deliver prepared lectures—without PowerPoint pyrotechnics and without stand-up comedy—then it would be in your interest and mine for you not to take this course. A college-level course in political theory is not a form of entertainment that you can absorb passively. Rather, the lectures demand of you that you apply yourself by listening and taking notes, by evaluating the analyses I advance, and, if you wish, by testing the limits of analytical claims in dialogue with me.

Requirements. This course will require that you read 100-125 pages each week. Much of the reading is dense and difficult. If you skim the assignments or read them when you are tired or distracted, it is unlikely that you will achieve even a basic grasp of their arguments. You must set aside the time to read the texts closely and carefully.
You will be tested on the material in a final, comprehensive exam. You will also be required to write two essays, the first between four and five pages in length and the second between six and eight pages in length. Study guides for the examinations and essay topics will be distributed in class two weeks prior to the relevant deadlines. Finally, you will be graded on your participation in discussion section meetings, so attendance of your weekly discussion section is required. I leave it up to the course assistant’s discretion how your participation will be graded.

Your final course grade will be based on the following formula:

- First essay: 20%
- Second essay: 40%
- Final exam: 30%
- Section participation: 10%

Work submitted past the given deadline will be heavily penalized at the rate of one full letter grade per day. It is your responsibility to present your work at the beginning of class on the date due: manage your time wisely. Academic dishonesty of any kind (e.g., among others, plagiarism) is unacceptable and will result in a failing grade for the course and possible suspension or expulsion from the University of Wisconsin.

Texts.

In addition to these texts, which are available for purchase at the Rainbow Bookstore Cooperative (426 W. Gilman), you will be asked to consult a handful of writings online. The URLs for online documents appear after the assignments.

Reading schedule.

I. Introduction / Imperialism in antiquity.

23 January 2013.
- Introduction.

28 January 2013.
  https://mywebspace.wisc.edu/klausen/web/polisci506sec2/

II. Two modern imperialisms: Britain/India & France/Algeria.

30 January 2013.

4 February 2013.
- Tocqueville, *Writings on Empire and Slavery*, 81-128.
6 February 2013.
Tocqueville, *Writings on Empire and Slavery*, 129-73.

11 February 2013.
Edmund Burke, Speech in Commons on India (1783).
http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1783Burke-india.html

13 February 2013.
http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1849jsmill-colonies.html
http://oll.libertyfund.org/
(Look up Collected Works by author’s last name and then by volume number.)

18 February 2013.

20 February 2013.

### III. Critical studies of imperialism.

https://mywebspace.wisc.edu/klausen/web/polisci506sec2/
http://oll.libertyfund.org/
(Look up this text by author’s last name.)

27 February 2013.

4 March 2013.
***First essay due at the beginning of lecture today.***
https://mywebspace.wisc.edu/klausen/web/polisci506sec2/

6 March 2013.
(Print each chapter in turn from this table of contents.)

11 March 2013.
13 March 2013.

18 March 2013.
George Orwell, “Shooting an Elephant.”
http://www.online-literature.com/orwell/887/

20 March 2013.

**23-31 March 2013. Spring Break. Class will not meet.**

1 April 2013.

**IV. Two anti-imperialist theorists: Gandhi & Fanon.**

3 April 2013.

8 April 2013.

10 April 2013.

15 April 2013.
Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 1-52.

17 April 2013.
Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 52-144.

22 April 2013.
Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 145-80.

24 April 2013.
Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 219-39.
**Film screening:** *Battle of Algiers* (dir. Gillo Pontecorvo, 1967).

29 April 2013.
**Screening** (continued): *Battle of Algiers*.

**V. Ambivalences of postcolonialism: the help & redress of states.**

1 May 2013.
***Second essay due at the beginning of lecture today.***

6 May 2013.

8 May 2013.

12 May 2013.
**FINAL EXAMINATION: 5.05-7.05 P.M.**

The time of the final examination is absolutely firm. We will neither offer nor administer alternate exams. Make your travel, work, or study arrangements accordingly.