

Colloquium on the American Empire

Required texts:

The Imperial Tense, edited by Andrew J. Bacevich
The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy, and the End of the Republic, by Chalmers Johnson
Nemesis: The Last Days of the American Republic, by Chalmers Johnson
Colossus: The Price of America's Empire, by Niall Ferguson
Dangerous Nation, by Robert Kagan
Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism, by Greg Grandin

Grading: Your grade will be comprised of three components:

--mid-term essay: 1/3

--final essay: 1/3

--class grade (weekly assignment notes, attendance, preparation, participation, decorum): 1/3

Weekly Assignments: This class requires that you write 750-1000 words of comment, summary, criticism and/or analysis in response to each week's reading assignment. Make two copies of your assignment: one to hand in at class on Monday and one to keep in a separate folder and bring to class daily.

Proposed Method: The course proposes to be a mutual exploration of the idea of the American Empire via a dialogue between the students, the teacher, the historical sources we examine, and the World Outside the Walls. After absorbing a range of perspectives on the idea of an American Empire each student is expected to advance their own interpretation of the subject matter.

Informal Pre-requisite: All that you have learned until now. You must apply this prior knowledge in order to do well in this class.

Underlying Assumption on which Everything Else is Based: That human beings can, by diligent study, make tentative sense of the sum total of human experience (known as History) and understand its relationship to the present and future, at least enough to make the whole thing worth doing. This is the secular faith of the Historian.

Classroom decorum: As civil society is a necessary pre-condition for true freedom, so is a civil classroom a necessary pre-condition for learning. Accordingly, please adopt a civil attitude while in class. Please refrain from chatting, sleeping, eating, doing work from other classes, or anything not directly related to our class. Such activities are disrespectful of the class, your classmates, and your professor. Leaving during class (except for restroom emergencies) without notifying me in advance is highly disruptive and therefore prohibited. Electronic devices of any sort (phones, pagers, ipods, etc.) must be turned off for the duration of the class. Violators of these rules will be asked to leave the class for the day; repeat violators will have to drop the course.

Course Outline:

Week 1: Introduction to the Idea of an American Empire

Readings:

Week 2: American Empire: Contrasting Views

Readings: Bacevich (all); begin Ferguson

Week 3: Empire without Tears: The Vision of Niall Ferguson

Readings: Ferguson (complete); begin Johnson, *Sorrows*

Week 4: Apostate: Chalmers Johnson's America

Readings: Johnson, *Sorrows* (complete); begin Kagan

Week 5: A Dangerous Nation?

Readings: Kagan (complete);

Week 6: The "New Imperialism" FIRST PAPER DUE IN CLASS.

Readings: Grandin, Intro, chapters 1 and 2

Week 7: The New Imperialism (II)

Readings: Grandin (complete)

Week 8: The Last Days of the Republic?

Readings: Johnson, *Nemesis* (first half)

Week 9: Memorial Day—No Class

Readings: Johnson, *Nemesis* (complete)

Week 10: The Last Days of the Republic? (II)/Review and Reconsideration

Readings: bring to class a rough intro and more or less complete outline of final paper

Final papers due in class at time of final examination