POLI 405-3 Capstone Seminar: Empires

Spring 2020

Maybank Hall 316 TR 4:00-5:15
Professor Christopher Day
Office: 114 Wentworth St. Room 105
Office Hours: Mondays 8-11am
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Phone: 843-953-6617

Course Syllabus

While the contemporary world is made up of sovereign states, many grew out of the expansion and dissolution of empires. For a time, these were the dominant forms of political, social, and economic organization for most of the world. On one hand, empires were vast cosmopolitan territories that incorporated a diverse array of societies. On the other, empires are associated with the dislocation and destruction of these societies. Either way, the complex formation, maintenance, and decline of empires brought forth massive transformations of how societies came to be organized. The comparative study of empires is key to understanding the institutional role they have played in establishing long-run causes for contemporary political phenomena, institutional change and continuity over time within contemporary states, and major differences between them. Using a range of case studies, this Capstone Seminar will examine the historical institutional trajectories of modern empires. While it will focus on the period of European imperial expansion and contraction from the 15th century onward, it will also examine non-Western cases such as the Soviet, Chinese, and the Ottoman Empires. The Capstone will consider different theoretical, empirical, and methodological approaches to studying empires and the actors that comprise and resist them. Students will conduct independent research on specific topics such as how empires expand and are maintained, the divergent roles of the colonizers vs. colonized, different forms of resistance to empire, and how empires can overstretch and eventually end. Students will also consider dimensions of empire that persist today.

The Capstone Seminar is designed to be a culminating experience for Political Science majors. That is, the experience is an opportunity to use the toolkit of skills students have spent several years developing in other courses within the major – skills in reading, writing, critical thinking and analysis, effective communication, and above all in independent research. Class assignments will allow students to engage with the prevailing academic theories that explain a range of different questions that sit within the broader scholarship on empires. Students will also spend the semester generating and answering their own original research question.

The seminar proceeds in six parts. Part I will bookend the course with an intensive development of a conceptual and analytical framework that students will apply to theories and cases over the course of the semester. Parts II-V will deeply examine different research agendas within the study of empires. Part II will look Western empires, and Part III non-Western empires. Part IV will examine imperial overstretch while Part V will study how empires end. In Part VI, the course will culminate in a set of workshops designed to help students with their research project.
Prerequisites
Permission of the chairperson required for enrollment. Students must have successfully completed POLI 205 before enrollment. Students will normally have completed at least 27 semester hours in political science at the time of enrollment.”

Course Objectives and Methodology
Political Science student learning outcomes:

• Students will demonstrate mastery of the independent research process
• Students will display skills in critical analysis and effective communication

The course is taught through readings, class discussions, lectures, and film:

• Readings. In this Capstone, students will read several entire books along with several companion scholarly articles. These books represent some of the most recent scholarship on civil war and rebellion. Students are expected to have completed the readings before these class sessions. Keeping up with the readings will be vital to your overall course performance, and it will be difficult to catch up if you fall behind. The knowledge acquired in the readings will be cumulative. That is, each week you will be introduced to new ideas that will become part of the “tool-box” you will use to analyze readings and lectures in subsequent weeks.

• Discussions. Seminars are based on class discussions about readings and student research and students are expected to participate heavily.

• Lectures. Although lectures will not be a fundamental part of this Seminar, each major topic will have a corresponding lecture that will essentially serve as the “textbook” for the class, undergirding the readings and class discussions with key terms, concepts, cases, and historical context.

• Films. Students will view documentaries in class. Periodically students will be asked to view films outside of class and be prepared to discuss them.

Course Requirements
Evaluation will be based on the following exercises:

“Why it Matters” Paper (5%) Right off the bat at the beginning of Part I, students will write a 1,000-word essay on why the study of empires matters from scholarly, normative, and policy perspectives. This paper is due January 12

Response Papers (30%) During Parts II-V of this Seminar, students will write 1,000-word response papers that critically analyze and unify the central arguments of the book and companion pieces for that particular part of the course. I will provide a separate guideline for this exercise. Students will choose any three of the four weeks when Response Papers are due, which are on the following dates:
Independent Research Project (50%) The primary exercise of this Capstone is developing and writing a research paper. This paper will pose a research question and explain why it matters, will situate this question with a body of prevailing literature, will propose an original hypothesis, will generate data that either confirms or refutes this hypothesis, and will discuss its implications. The breakdown of the research paper’s components is as follows:

- 2/4: Research Design
- 3/3: Revised Research Design (10%)
- 4/7: First Draft (10%)
- 4/7-4/21: Workshop Participation (10%). Note that students who participate in the Moore Conference will not be required to present for the Capstone Workshop
- 4/26: FINAL DRAFT (20%)

Class Participation (10%) In this Capstone Seminar class participation plays an outsized role in student evaluation. Participation in the intellectual life of the campus is also part of this grade and students will receive credit for attending the following events:

- 2/6: Political Science Spring Convocation
- 4/17: Moore Conference

Student Feedback on Workshops (5%) Students are expected to provide on page of written feedback per workshop, uploaded to an OAKS discussion board.

Course Policies

Grading Scale

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<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92</td>
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<td>B+</td>
<td>88-89</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<td>D+</td>
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<td>D</td>
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<td>D-</td>
<td>60-62</td>
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<td>F</td>
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Attendance Policy. Attendance is REQUIRED. Tardiness is not cool.

Submission of Work. Students are expected to submit their work on the day it is due in hard copy form. In the event that students cannot submit work on time because of Life Circumstances, they must inform the professor at least 24 hours beforehand, and provide a concrete date for submission. After this date, work will not be accepted. Also, please note that “My computer crashed” = “My dog ate my homework”.

Honor Code. All students are expected be familiar with the College of Charleston Honor Code, and to abide by it. Violations will not be tolerated and will be dealt with appropriately. More is found here: http://deanofstudents.cofc.edu/honor-system/studenthandbook/index.php
Accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a documented learning disability, please let me know as soon as possible so special arrangements can be made for certain class requirements.

Other Special Circumstances. I normally will do business with anyone who lets me know in advance of any special circumstances. But please note that the expression “it is better to ask for forgiveness than permission” was not invented by a College Professor.

Center for Student Learning. The Center for Student Learning’s (CSL) academic support services give assistance in study strategies and course content. They offer tutoring, Supplemental Instruction, study skills appointments, and workshops. Students of all abilities have become more successful using these programs throughout their academic career and they are available to you at no additional cost. For more information regarding these services please visit the CSL website at http://csl.cofc.edu or call (843) 953-5635.

Extra Credit. Periodic extra credit opportunities may be available during the semester. Please note that these opportunities are EXTRA credit, not SUBSTITUTION credit for missed assignments. Also, keep in mind extra credit also does not mean extra work for your professor.

Required Readings


David Kang, East Asia Before the West: Five Centuries of Trade and Tribute (New York: Columbia University Press 2012)

Jack Snyder, Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press 1993)


All other readings will be available on OAKS.

“Like” the Department of Political Science on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/CofCPoliticalScienceClub?ref=hl

“Like” the African Studies Program on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/CollegeOfCharlestonAfricanStudiesProgram
Course Outline and Readings

Part I: Setting the Scene

1. January 9: Introduction

Bruce Gilley, “The Case for Colonialism,” https://www.nas.org/academic-questions/31/2/the_case_for_colonialism

2. January 12-16: Concepts


“Why It Matters” paper due Tuesday, January 12


4. January 28-30: Data and Methods


Part II: Western Empire

5. February 4-6
Doyle, pages 11-138


Research Design First Draft due Tuesday, February 4

6. February 11-13
Doyle, pages 141-372


Response Paper #1 due Thursday, February 13

Part III: Non-Western Empire

7. February 18
***No class Thursday, February 20th for the Model African Union***
Kang pages 1-81


8. February 25-27
Kang pages 82-171


Response Paper #2 due Thursday, February 27
Part IV: Imperial Overstretch

9. March 3-5

Snyder pages 1-152


Revised Research Design Due Tuesday, March 3

10. March 10-12

Snyder pages 153-322


Response Paper #3 due Thursday, March 12

11. Spring Break March 16-20

Part V: Imperial Retreat

12. March 24-26

Spruyt pages 1-145


13. March 31-April 2

Spruyt pages 146-274


Response Paper #4 due Thursday, April 2
Part VI: Capstone Research Paper Workshops

14. April 7-9: Workshops:

- Workshop Panel I 4/7
- Workshop Panel II 4/9

First Draft of Research Paper due Tuesday, April 7

15. April 14-16: Workshops

- Workshop Panel III 4/14
- Workshop Panel IV 4/16

16. April 21: Workshops

- Workshop Panel V 4/21

Final Research Paper due Sunday, April 26 by 7:00pm uploaded to OAKS

NOTE: Additional readings may be assigned and the course outline may be adjusted to serve the needs of the class.