

HIST 585-1: Special Topics in History

Topic: Comparative Empire

Instructor	Day(s)	Time(s)	Maximum Enrollment
Crais and Ravina	TU	4:15 – 7:15 pm	12

Semester Description:

At the beginning of the twentieth century, most people lived within an empire, either under colonial rule, or within a colonizing power. Indeed, for much of human history over the past few thousand years, empire has been the norm, not the exception. Empire still seems strikingly relevant. The current struggle over Crimea, for example, recalls the great powers struggles of the mid-1800s more than the Cold War. Such tensions can make WWI seem closer and more relevant than WWII. The matter of empire resonates from current discussions of Chinese policies in the South China Sea, to the “Rhodes Must Fall” protests in South Africa, to reconsiderations of American history from its founding in the eighteenth century.

This course is an introduction to, and intensive investigation of, the history and historiography of empires—what they were, what they are, how they work, and why we should care. The seminar is intended for students across the humanities and interpretative social sciences. We will examine a range of explanations for empire: institutional, geopolitical, economic, and cultural. Many of our readings will focus on the European empires of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but we will also examine ancient and early modern empires as well as non-Western empires such as the Ottoman, Chinese, Japanese, and the Comanche. At the core of this seminar is the conviction that the problem of empire—the problem of the organization of power—is a central part of the modern world, including the present. Empire, then, is an ineluctable part of the world we inhabit.

Required Textbooks, Articles, and Resources:

1. TBA

Grading:

TBA