

Media and Empire

Professor Paula Chakravartty

Course #: IDSEM-UG 1765001 (19340)
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Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays 11:00-12:30

Course Description

What does the telegraph, photography and cinema, the Internet and social media, have to do with empire building? Contemporary discussions about media and technology often focus on the ways in which our world today has been radically transformed by new kinds of information technologies and novel forms of globalized cultures, yet uneven flows of technology have long (dis)connected the world through imperialism. This course examines the complex role of modern media and information in the making of European and American empires, beginning in the late-19th century, through the long 20th century and stretching into the current era of globalization and the War on Terror. We will focus our empirical discussion (mostly but not exclusively) on the US in relation to Asia and the Middle East and draw from a wide range of scholarship including: Anthropology, History, Media and Cultural Studies, Political Economy, as well as Feminist and Postcolonial Studies.

Course Objectives

This class provides an overview of the role of media technologies and the ways in which they shape modern infrastructures and cultures of Western imperial power and control over Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East. The course is organized around the following four themes: Infrastructures and Cultures of Colonial Violence; Anti-Colonialism & Third World Nationalisms, The Cold War and the Aftermath of Empire; The War on Terror: Rule and Resistance. The class is a selective snapshot of a wide expanse of empirical history and scholarly debates about modernity, capitalism and the very fact of American “exceptional” empire across multiple disciplines, and the texts we cover are in no way exhaustive of these discussions. Instead, the main goals for this class are to introduce students to consider the role of media and information technologies in relation to extant debates and to reflect on current discussions about economic and cultural globalization and the “War on Terror” from a broader historical context.

Required Texts:

- Bayoumi, Mustafa (2015) *The Muslim American Life: Dispatches from the War on Terror*. New York: NYU Press.
- Butler, Judith (2010) *Frames of War: When is Life Greivable?* New York: Verso
- Fanon, Frantz (1947) *The Wretched of the Earth*, Grove.
- Lee, Christopher (Editor) (2010) *Making a World After Empire: The Bandung Moment and its Political Afterlives*. Ohio University Press.
- McCoy, Alfred (2009) *Policing America's Empire: The United States, the Philippines and the Rise of the Surveillance State*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Required books are available at NYU Bookstore 726 Broadway

All other additional book chapters, articles and on-line materials will be posted on the NYU Classes Site.

Requirements, Assignments and Grading

Attendance/Participation _____30%

Punctual attendance and active participation is key to your success in this course. In order to help you organize your thoughts about the readings, highlight a quote or argument from the readings that raised an interesting question or comment regarding the theme for the day and come to class prepared to discuss. You will sometimes be given short in-class assignments or be asked to bring in and summarize readings in class; this will count toward your participation grade. You are encouraged to be pro-active in your learning about regions and topics that might be new to you. You can draw from these optional background readings (posted under resources in the class website) and events (also announced and posted on class website) in relation to your class discussions. You should also draw from your own as well as your classmates' reaction posts to inform your class discussion.

Attendance is very important for this class and if you cannot attend because of illness or an emergency of some kind, please email me in advance. More than two absences without a reasonable excuse will result in a lowered grade (one-half grade for each day missed).

Weekly Reaction Posts _____

As a formal part of your reaction grade, you are required to submit a total of **10 brief** (250 words) posts on the weekly readings between Weeks 2 (February 2nd) and Week 14 (May 3rd). You can choose any 10 weeks that interest you over the course of the semester, and post your reaction paper on the NYU classes website by Wednesday evening (by 9:00 PM) of each week. These should identify connections between one or more of the readings and themes that we are addressing for a particular week. *Reactions are not summaries but rather critical and creative commentaries.* The professor as well as well as your classmates will read through the weekly posts in order to better inform weekly class discussions.

Please note that these reaction posts are formal written assignments and you should pay attention to grammar, style and use of language as well as page/word limit. These posts will not be given a letter grade, but you risk losing a substantial component of your participation grade (at least 10 percent) if you do not submit 10 posts over the course of the semester.

Film Review Assignment _____10%

We will be watching a number of full-length films and documentaries during the course of the semester. You are required to submit **two short** (2 page) film reviews of **any two of the films** we watch over the course of the semester for a total of 5 points each. Film Reviews are always due at the beginning of the class following the screening/viewing of the film. More details about this assignment will be posted on the class website.

Mid-Semester Paper (8 Pages) _____ 30%

Your first paper will explore themes covered in the first half of the semester. The format of the paper will allow you to further consider and compare the texts that you have read and viewed for class thus far. You will have a choice of at least two essay topics to explore; detailed guidelines for this paper and how it will be graded will be posted on the class website by March 1st. The paper is due as a Word Document submitted through the NYU Classes website by **Thursday, March 10th**.

Final Paper (8-10 Pages) _____ 30%

Your final paper will focus on at least one (or more) of the central themes we discuss during the second half of the semester. This paper can focus on a topic of interest to you and you should draw from your own areas of concentration to develop a research paper. Detailed instructions for your final paper will be posted by April 14th and your final paper is due as a Word Document submitted through the NYU Classes website by **Saturday, May 14th** (by 4:00 PM).

Policies

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity:

As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Suspected cases of plagiarism or other violations of academic integrity will be addressed according to Gallatin's student discipline rules. For a full description of the academic integrity policy, please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website:

<http://gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/integrity.html>

Style for Assignments:

Students will be asked to cite and reference their assignments in the APA (American Psychological Association) or MLA (Modern Language Association) styles, which will be reviewed in class. Standard instructions for class assignments include: identifying assignments with student numbers rather than names, stapling, and double-spacing, and using 12-point font.

Electronic Devices:

All electronic devices should be in the off or vibrate position and out of sight during class session. Laptops should be used only to take notes and or access material directly relevant to class discussion.

Turning in Papers and Assignments:

All papers should be submitted as Word Documents uploaded to the NYU Classes site.

Late Assignments:

It is difficult for the instructor to coordinate grading, ensure fairness, or return papers in a timely manner when assignments are not handed in on time. Each day that a paper is late, you will lose half a letter grade (An A paper will be graded as A-, etc). Papers will not be accepted more than 1 week after the assignment was originally due, unless there are extenuating circumstances (such as an illness that can be documented), in which case the student and instructor will come to an agreement together.

Students with Disabilities:

Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with documented disabilities, with the advice and assistance of the appropriate services on campus.

Syllabus Changes: This syllabus is a contract between professor and students. However, it is subject to change with sufficient notice to students.

COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK 1

January 26th: Introduction

January 28th: “Killer Apps” and Empire: Contested Histories

Come to class prepared to discuss Ferguson & McCoy.

Required Viewing & Reading:

- Ferguson, Niall (2011) “The 6 Killer Aps of Prosperity” Ted Talks:
http://www.ted.com/talks/niall_ferguson_the_6_killer_apps_of_prosperity.html
- McCoy, Alfred (2009) *Policing America’s Empire: The United States, the Philippines and the Rise of the Surveillance State*: Prologue.

WEEK 2

I) Exceptionalism & Empire

February 2nd: Settler Colonialism and American Empire

- Mamdani, Mahmood (2015) “Settler Colonialism: Then and Now,” *Critical Inquiry*, 41: 1-35.

February 4th: US Colonial Expansion

- McCoy, Alfred (2009) *Policing America’s Empire: The United States, the Philippines and the Rise of the Surveillance State*: 15-58

WEEK 3

February 9th: Science, Technology and Markets

Required Readings:

- Adas, Michael (1989) *Machines as the Measure of Man: Science, Technology and Ideologies of Dominance*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press: Chapters 3&5.

February 11th: Infrastructures of Empire

- McCoy, Alfred (2009) *Policing America’s Empire: The United States, the Philippines and the Rise of the Surveillance State*: 59-125.
- Larkin, Brian (2008) *Signal and Noise: Media, Infrastructure and Urban Culture in Nigeria*. Duke University Press. 16-72.

WEEK 4

February 16th: Colonial Consumption: Race, Gender & Sexuality

- McClintock, Anne (1995) *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in Colonial Conquest*. New York: Routledge: 207-231.

February 18th: Photography and Empire (Guest Lecture, Professor Nerissa Balce)

- McCoy, Alfred (2009) *Policing America's Empire: The United States, the Philippines and the Rise of the Surveillance State*: 206-348.

WEEK 5

February 23rd: Screening of *The Real Glory* (1939)

February 25th: Cinema and the Tropes of Empire

- Shohat, Ella and Robert Stam (1994) *Unthinking Eurocentricism: Multiculturalism and the Media*. Routledge: pgs. 100-177.
- Issac, Alan (2006) *American Tropics: Articulating Filipino America*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press: Chapter 4.

WEEK 6

March 1st: Anti-Colonial Nationalism

- Césaire, Aimé (2000) *Discourse on Colonialism*. Monthly Review Press: Selections.
- Fanon, Frantz (1947) *The Wretched of the Earth*, Grove: 1-62.

March 3rd: Defining National Culture

- Fanon, Frantz (1963) *The Wretched of the Earth*. Grove Press: 97-180.

WEEK 7

March 8th: Screening of *The Battle of Algiers* (1963)

- Armes, Roy (1987) *Third World Film-Making and the West*. University of California Press: 51-100.

March 10th: CLASS CANCELLED **Mid-Semester Paper Due by 4:00 PM.**

Week 8: SPRING BREAK

WEEK 9

March 22nd: The Bandung Moment

- Speech by Prime Minister Nehru to the Bandung Conference (1955): <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1955nehru-bandung2.html>
- Lee, Christopher (Editor) (2010) *Making a World After Empire: The Bandung Moment and its Political Afterlives*: Chapters 1 & 2

March 24th: The Postcolonial State and Modernization

- Lee, Christopher (Editor) (2010) *Making a World After Empire: The Bandung Moment and its Political Afterlives*: Chapter 3.
- Latham, Michael (2011) *The Right Kind of Revolution*. Cornell University Press: 36-92.

WEEK 10

March 29th: Media and Afro-Asian Solidarity

- Lee, Christopher (Editor) (2010) *Making a World After Empire: The Bandung Moment and its Political Afterlives*: Chapters 4 & 5.

March 31st: Third Worldism and the Cold War

- Lee, Christopher (Editor) (2010) *Making a World After Empire: The Bandung Moment and its Political Afterlives*: Chapters 6 & 8.

WEEK 10

April 5th: Philippines and the Aftermath of Empire

- McCoy, Alfred (2009) *Policing America's Empire: The United States, the Philippines and the Rise of the Surveillance State*: 372-451

April 7th: Counterinsurgencies and the War on Terror

- McCoy, Alfred (2009) *Policing America's Empire: The United States, the Philippines and the Rise of the Surveillance State*: 498-540.
- Grandin, Greg (2007) *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism*. Holt Paperbacks (11-86).

WEEK 11

April 12th: Economics of Imperialism

- Harvey, David (2003) *The New Imperialism*. Oxford: Chapter 5.

April 14th: Screening of *Control Room* (2004)

- Mamdani, Mahmood (2002) "Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: A Political Perspective on the Culture of Terrorism," *American Anthropologist*, 104: 766-775.
- Mahmood, Saba (2005) "Feminism, Democracy and Empire: Islam and the War on Terror," in Anna Herzog and Ann Braude, *Gendering Religion and Politics: Untangling Modernities*. Boston: Palgrave MacMillan: 193-215.

WEEK 12

April 19th: Screening of short documentary *Wounds of Waziristan* (2013)

- Butler, Judith (2010) *Frames of War: When is Life Greivable?*: 33-136.
- (April 20th: Gallatin Distinguished Faculty Lecture by Professor Al McCoy, 6:30-8:00)

April 21st: Digital Militarism: Israeli Occupation

- Kuntsman, Adi and Rebecca Stein (2015) *Digital Militarism: Israel's Occupation in the Social Media Age*. Stanford University Press: Selections.

WEEK 13

April 26th: Screening of *Iraq in Fragments* (2006)

- Butler, Judith (2010) *Frames of War: When is Life Greivable?*: 137-184
- Alper, Meryl (2014) "War on Instagram: Framing Conflict Photojournalism with Mobile Photography Apps," *New Media and Society*. 16 (8): 1233-1248.
- Cost of War Project: <http://costsofwar.org/>

April 28th: Surveillance and Empire: *Citizen Four* (2015)

- Bayoumi, Mustafa (2015) *The Muslim American Life: Dispatches from the War on Terror*: 1-22, 48-74.

WEE 14

May 3rd: Racializing Islam: Guest Lecture by Professor Mustafa Bayoumi

- Bayoumi, Mustafa (2015) *The Muslim American Life: Dispatches from the War on Terror*. New York: 99-139.

May 5th: Muslim American Everyday Lives

- Bayoumi, Mustafa (2015) *The Muslim American Life: Dispatches from the War on Terror*. New York: 169-258.

Final Papers Due May 14th