

Carleton University  
 Department of Political Science  
<https://carleton.ca/polisci/>

Winter 2026

PSCI 3105 A  
**Imperialism and Decolonization**  
 Tuesday 2:35-5:25  
*(Check Carleton Central for class location)*

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 Office Hours: Tuesday 1-2 in person

**Course Description:** This course is designed to introduce students to the complex phenomena of imperialism. We will begin by exploring some of the theories for, of, about and behind imperialism. Then, to test some of these theories we will look at the history of the waves of Western European expansion and contraction, examining how one small corner of the globe conquered all, and then watched as it all melted away and vanished. Then we will be using the understanding we have gained to ask is the current world system just another Empire, an American Empire in its two forms of Fordism and then Globalization. Then we will examine our current situation to ask is this the end of the American Empire, not because the subalterns revolted, but by suicide? Have the ideological, economic and political contradictions of globalization led to its ugly collapse as expressed in the discourse of President Trump?

**Pedagogy, expertise and listening to our fellow students.**

Here, in Canada, we are the descendants of empires past and present. The old Imperial ideas, ideals, myths and legends shape the very world from within which we think and act. These ideas are bred in our bones in ways we can find difficult to admit, to recognize. Yet because we are the descendants of various diasporas, we can look at our own family histories and begin to understand how empires past and present affect us all. By listening to each other, by thinking about how empire has affected us each differently we can begin to understand how empire has shaped us all. Participation is central to our learning.

For example, I am the descendant of Loyalists, refugees for the Empire, the loyal Orange lodge, the United States and the German Empire. My brother witnessed a civil war in Sri Lanka, and then spent time during the end of empire in Northern Ireland in the troubles, a neighbour was sent into exile from Chile by the American Empire, and my wife's family fled the Russian Empire after a pogrom. My point is we are all the products of the backwash of empires.

**Learning outcomes.**

This is a third-year lecture course on the subject of Imperialism and decolonization, delivered live and in person.

This course is designed to impart a series of critical thinking skills while also delivering ideas, questions and knowledge about Imperialism and the waxing and waning of political regimes. The assignments are designed to cumulatively teach critical thinking skills.

**Participation:** Learning how to use your knowledge, experience and expertise to contribute to our mutual understanding.

Posing questions to elicit further clarification of the information and ideas being presented. We use questions to dig deeper, look further and travel farther into understanding politics. I have danced the dialectic to explain how wars break out.

**Proposal:** How do I pose a series of questions to get at the crux of the issue or event I am trying to understand. How do I propose a clear research question. A good proposal will provide a clear map to guide your research in what happened and theory a clue as to why it happened.

**Final paper:** How to construct an argument that answers your research question and then explains why what happened, happened. You will learn how to formulate a clear thesis, and then use that thesis to structure a clear, logical argument that answers your own research question.

**Cultural critique:** One of the central lessons of this course is that the ideas of empire affect, infect and shape us in weird vestigial ways. How does the novel, song or film reflect, reify, deify the contradictions of empire? Noticing how we are being manipulated is a useful skill to have, for resistance and or to learn how to impose control.

**Final Exam:** Take all the history we have learned, understand its significance, and apply it to the great questions we have debated and discussed. Why did empires rise and then inevitably fall. Are we witnessing the death rattle of the American empire?

In summary, the learning outcome for this course is to teach how to understand the processes of the rise and fall of empires.

**Brightspace content.** Students will find 4 useful sections on the web site

1. Power point slides: These contain:
  - A) A list of concepts, terms and people.
  - B) Quotations that are used in the lecture,
  - C) Learning outcomes for the lecture.
  - D) Images used to illustrate the subject.
  - E) Summary of the central points and ideas raised in the lecture. However, since any good lecture (and lecturer) will have more to say than just the power point slides do come and have fun thinking.
2. A list of literature and film suggestions pertaining to imperialism.
3. **Instructions** and helpful hints for the assignments.
4. Readings. Are now all available online through the Library link. Does not include the course textbook.

**Course Textbook:** David B. Abernethy, *The Dynamics of Global Dominance: European Overseas Empires 1415-1980* (Yale University Press, 2000) \$54.01  
Available at Carleton University Bookstore.

### **Course Requirements and Assignments:**

**Participation:** 10%

**Proposal:** 15% Due February 10th.

**Empire in Film and fiction:** 15% Due March 10th

**Final Research Paper:** 30% Due April 7th.

**Final Exam:** 30% During Final exam period.

**Participation:** While attendance will be noted at the discretion of the lecturer, participation requires thoughtful and learned contributions to class discussions that reflect course readings. Attendance is required to understand the course. Those who are silent even if usually present will not achieve high marks for this component. **Due: every lecture and all weeks.**

**Proposal:** must include: two double-spaced pages (essay and paragraph format) explaining the proposed essay. The two page length does not include the bibliography. The proposal must include 1) a clear research question or what is it you are going to examine 2) a description of what issues you are going to examine in order to answer your question, and 3) a tentative thesis statement which is essentially the one sentence answer to your question and also 4) a bibliography with at least 8 academic sources including at least one book. Warning: a research paper proposal is not an outline. **Due February 10<sup>th</sup>.**

**Imperialism in fiction and film:** must be 4-6 pages, double spaced and paginated. Imperialism can be understood through its role in popular culture. Examine one of the films or pieces of fiction and ask yourself what is the author or director trying to explain about imperialism. What can we understand about this particular kind or period of Imperialism as expressed in this film or piece of fiction? Are there any rules or codes of conduct expressed through the actions of the characters? How does the work support or subvert the project of imperialism? This assignment does not require academic sources, just critical thinking. **Due March 10th.**

**Final Research Essay:** Take one of the theories examined in the course and apply it to a specific case. Or examine how ideology or economic systems or state structures led to the rise and fall of empire in a specific case. A case is defined by a specific time or era, place or location and an imperial power. The purpose of the assignment is not to provide a narrative account of an example of imperialism, but rather to apply one of the theories about imperialism to a specific place, to discover how useful that theory is at explaining the rise and fall and rise of imperialism. **Due April 7<sup>th</sup>.**

**Final Exam:** During the official exam period. The purpose of an exam is to give the student an opportunity to apply what one has learned to searching questions, not attempt to discover what a student has missed reading.

### **Course Outline**

Note as the course progresses there may be new readings becoming available. They will be listed on Brightspace.

**January 6th Week 1 Lecture 1 : Introduction to the Course**

Welcome to the course, an introduction to the themes and issues we will be examining as well as a run through of the syllabus, course text and assignments.

### **Theories of, about and for Imperialism**

#### **January 13th. Week 2 Lecture 2: Classic Theories about Imperialism**

Classic early political economic theories that sought to explain the second wave of Empires. Hobson and Lenin on the economic roots of late 19<sup>th</sup> century imperialism.

J.A. Hobson, "Underconsumption and Imperialism." In Ronald H. Chicote ed. *Imperialism* (Amherst, Humanity Books, 2000) Chpt.2

V.I. Lenin, "Imperialism: the Highest Stage of Capitalism." In Ronald H. Chicote ed. *Imperialism* (Amherst, Humanity Books, 2000) Chpt. 5.

J.S. Mill, "A few Words on Non-intervention." In H.E.Baber and Denise Dimon ed. *Globalization and International Development* (Toronto, Broadview Press, 2013). Pg 260-272.

#### **January 20th Week 3, Lecture 3: Dependency theory, Political Economy and Imperialism**

Dependency theory explains how the underlying economy of imperialism is reflected in the social formations of the periphery.

Required Readings: David F. Ruccio and Lawrence H. Simon, "Radical Theories of Development, Frank, The Modes of Production School, and Amin." in Charles K. Wilber ed. *The Political Economy of Development and Underdevelopment* (New York: Random House, 1988) pp.174-202

#### **January 27th Week 4 Lecture 4: The Culture of Imperialism and the Post colonial critique**

How the ideas of the time justified and legitimated imperialism. How the subaltern culture also helped support the Imperial state.

Barbara Bush, *Imperialism and Postcolonialism*. (Harlow, Pearson Longman, 2006) Chapter 4. 115-145

#### **February 3<sup>rd</sup> Week 5 Lecture 5 Older empires: Ideologies, economic and political structures: Rome.**

How was this previous version of empire organized? How did the Roman empires integrate subjugated populations? What was the ideology and the economy underneath  
Peter Garnsey and Richard Saller, *The Roman Empire* (Berkley, University of California Press, 1987). Chapter 2, pp 20-40

### **The long history of European Imperialism 1415-1980**

**February 10th Week 6 Lecture 6: Why was it Europe that explored, expanded and conquered?**

What were the factors behind European expansion across the globe beginning in 1415? Beyond guns, germs and steel there were missionaries, merchants and marines.

David B. Abernethy, *The Dynamics of Global Dominance: European Overseas Empires 1415-1980* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2000). Chapter 8,9, 10.

**Research Proposal due**

**February 17<sup>th</sup>, Week 7 Reading week, no office hour but contact by phone or email.**

**February 24th Week 8 Lecture 7: Case studies of successful conquest and colonization: Spanish Empire and British settler colonies.**

**Critique of the Culture of Imperialism Due**

How did they organize and develop their colonies? How did their differences reflect underlying ideological and economic structures?

Abernethy: Chapter 1, 3.

**March 3rd Week 9 Lecture 8: The first contractions of empires: Independence movements in the Americas. 1775-1824**

Why did colonists rebel, and the mother countries fail to suppress rebellions? The cases of Latin America and the United States.

Abernethy: Chapter 4, 15

**March 10th Week 10 Lecture 9: The second wave of empires: Expansion throughout Asia and the Scramble for Africa. 1815-1919**

**Critique of the Culture of Empire Due**

Why and how did the Europeans seek to expand their control beyond settler colonies in the nineteenth century? How did *la mission civilisatrice* drive the expansion of empire and how did economic interests also motivate the enterprise of empire?

Abernethy: Chapter 5.

**March 17th Week 11 Lecture 10: The British Raj and the Heart of Darkness. 1759-1919**

Empires in all their glory and horror as exemplified in the cases of the British in India and the horror of the Belgian Congo.

Jeff D. Bass, "Imperial Alterity and Identity slippage: the Sin of Becoming "Other" in Edmund Morel's King Leopold's Rule in Africa." *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* Vol. 13 No.2 Summer 2010.

**March 24th Week 12 Lecture 11: Decay and collapse: Uneasy stability to decolonization. 1919-1980.**

From 1919 to 1980 European empires first stabilized, then after WWII quickly moved into a phase of decolonization.

Abernethy Chapters 6, 7.

**March 31st Week 13 Lecture 12: The forgotten dawn of the American Empire. American participation in the global scramble for colonies. 1898 -1945. Imperial Ambitions: Cold War to the present day.**

Does the American mission and experience with colonies and interventions in Mexico and Central America before the US became a superpower, mark the imperial roots of the American foreign policy or does it mark what makes the American system different from the age of empires? Is the American military experience in Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan part of the dangers of falling into imperialism?

John Ikenberry, "America's Imperial Ambition" *Foreign Affairs* (Sept-Oct 2002): 44-60.

Thomas Bender, "The American Way of Empire." *World Policy Journal* (Spring 2006).

**April 7th Week 14 Lecture 13:**

**Empire without imperialism? The Day of the American Transnational Corporation 1945-1980 and the neoliberal era: 1980-present day.**

**Two moments of empire: Coca cola versus fast fashion. The collapse of Empire in a temper tantrum.**

End of Fordism and the rise of a global economy. How does globalization with its new ideology of neoliberalism change everything? Is this an Empire of the US or the WTO? Does the Age of Trump mark an end of Empire? Does the end of the never-ending savage wars of peace mark an end of American order? Does his tariff war on the World end the reign of the WTO and globalized capitalism? Can the Global system survive when it is the US that breaks all the rules?

**Final Paper Due**

**Late Penalties and extensions:** Courses and time in the term, sprint upon us all Extensions are given out at the discretion of the instructor for personal, family or health reasons. You must request extensions by email as well as in person. Otherwise, papers will be penalized at the rate of 2% a day. **Note that while the instructor is compassionate about late papers, university regulations require all course work be submitted by the end of classes.**

**AI Policy:**

The pedagogical purpose of this course is teach students how to think critically for themselves, analyse and formulate a clear, succinct and logical answer to their own questions. We learn this through the arduous process of learning how to research, analyse and then construct our own well organized and coherent arguments in the form of a paper.

To use AI to generate papers to fulfil assignments is to escape the very process of learning how to think by ourselves.

Therefore any use of AI to create assignments is expressly prohibited. If the instructor determines that a student has used AI or purchased a paper, the student will receive a zero on the paper and will be deemed to have failed to fulfil the requirements of the course.

## Political Science Course Outline Appendix

### **REQUESTS FOR ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION**

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

#### **Student Mental Health**

As a university student, you may experience a range of mental health challenges that significantly impact your academic success and overall well-being. If you need help, please speak to someone. There are numerous resources available both on- and off-campus to support you. Here is a list that may be helpful:

#### **Emergency Resources (on and off campus):**

<https://carleton.ca/health/emergencies-and-crisis/emergency-numbers/>

#### **Carleton Resources:**

Mental Health and Wellbeing:

<https://carleton.ca/wellness/>

Health & Counselling Services: <https://carleton.ca/health/>

Paul Menton Centre: <https://carleton.ca/pmc/>

Academic Advising Centre (AAC):

<https://carleton.ca/academicadvising/>

Centre for Student Academic Support (CSAS):

<https://carleton.ca/csas/>

Equity & Inclusivity Communities:

<https://carleton.ca/equity/>

#### **Off Campus Resources:**

Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region: (613) 238-3311 or TEXT: 343-306-5550, <https://www.dcottawa.on.ca/>

Mental Health Crisis Service: (613) 722-6914, 1-866-996-0991, <http://www.crisisline.ca/>

Empower Me: 1-844-741-6389,

<https://students.carleton.ca/services/empower-me-counselling-services/>

ood2Talk: 1-866-925-5454, <https://good2talk.ca/>

The Walk-In Counselling Clinic:

<https://walkincounselling.com>

#### **Academic consideration for medical or other**

**extenuating circumstances:** Students must contact the instructor(s) of their absence or inability to complete the academic deliverable within the predetermined timeframe due to medical or other extenuating circumstances. For a range of medical or other extenuating circumstances, students may use the online self-declaration form and where appropriate, the use of medical documentation.

This policy regards the accommodation of extenuating circumstances for both short-term and long-term periods and extends to all students enrolled at Carleton University. Students should also consult the [Course Outline Information on Academic Accommodations](#) for more information. Detailed information about the procedure for requesting academic consideration can be found [here](#).

**Pregnancy:** Contact your Instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For accommodation regarding a formally-scheduled final exam, please contact Equity and Inclusive Communities (EIC) at [equity@carleton.ca](mailto:equity@carleton.ca) or by calling (613) 520-5622 to speak to an Equity Advisor.

**Religious obligation:** Contact your Instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details [click here](#).

#### **Academic Accommodations for Students with**

**Disabilities:** The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or [pmc@carleton.ca](mailto:pmc@carleton.ca) for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, please request your accommodations for this course through the [Ventus Student Portal](#) at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (*if applicable*). Requests made within two weeks will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. For final exams, the deadlines to request accommodations are published in the [University Academic Calendars](#). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally scheduled exam (*if applicable*).

**Survivors of Sexual Violence:** As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and its survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services



available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit:

<https://carleton.ca/equity/sexual-assault-support-services>.

**Accommodation for Student Activities:** Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation will be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist.

#### PETITIONS TO DEFER

**Students unable to write a final examination because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control may apply within **three working days** to the Registrar's Office for permission to write a deferred examination. The request must be fully supported by the appropriate documentation. Only deferral petitions submitted to the Registrar's Office will be considered. [See Undergraduate Calendar, Article 4.3](#)**

### INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Student or professor materials created for this course (including presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the author(s). They are intended for personal use and may not be reproduced or redistributed without prior written consent of the author(s). Permissibility of submitting substantially the same piece of work more than once for academic credit. If group or collaborative work is expected or allowed, provide a clear and specific description of how and to what extent you consider collaboration to be acceptable or appropriate, especially in the completion of written assignments.

#### WITHDRAWAL WITHOUT ACADEMIC PENALTY

Please reference the [Academic Calendar](#) for each term's official withdrawal dates

#### OFFICIAL FINAL EXAMINATION PERIOD

Please reference the [Academic Calendar](#) for each term's Official Exam Period (may include evenings & Saturdays or Sundays)

For more information on the important dates and deadlines of the academic year, consult the [Carleton Calendar](#).

### GRADING SYSTEM

The grading system is described in the Undergraduate Calendar section [5.4](#).

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

### ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity is an essential element of a productive and successful career as a student. Students are required to familiarize themselves with the university's [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

#### PLAGIARISM

The University Senate defines plagiarism as "*presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one's own.*" This can include:

- any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else, including the unauthorized use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT);
- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else's published or unpublished material, and presenting these as one's own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another's data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another's works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in "*substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs.*"

Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course's instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of "F" for the course.

RESOURCES (613-520-2600, phone ext.)

<b>Department of Political Science (2777)</b>	<b>B640</b>
<b>Loeb</b>	
<b>Registrar's Office (3500)</b>	<b>300 Tory</b>
<b>Centre for Student Academic Success (3822)</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> floor</b>
<b>Library</b>	
<b>Academic Advising Centre (7850)</b>	<b>302 Tory</b>
<b>Paul Menton Centre (6608)</b>	<b>501</b>
<b>Nideyinàn</b>	
<b>Career Services (6611)</b>	<b>401 Tory</b>