

**HIS 300.01**  
**Modern Empires**

Satisfies: GLO, SBS+

Thematic Categories: "Arts, Ideas & Culture,"  
"Empires, Violence & Global Connections," "Race, Religion, Gender & Sexualities"

Th/Th 11:30am-12:50pm

Professor Eric Beverley

This course is an examination of major territorial empires from 1500 to the present. The course focuses not only on expanding empires, officials, and colonists but emphasizes the experiences the diverse populations and polities across world regions that grappled with the fact of imperialism, as well as ideas and commodities that circulated through expanding global networks. The class begins by developing a framework of key concepts and broad trends, and a brief survey of ancient and medieval empires and their legacies, and then proceeds to a broad chronological and geographical exploration of major imperial formations over three periods. First, we examine empires of the early modern period (c. 1500-1750) in Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas, emphasizing parallel and divergent trends among a diverse array of expanding imperial states. Second, we turn to the period from the mid-eighteenth century to the Second World War when European empires increasingly established global dominance and developed a repertoire of shared political strategies. Third, we consider global decolonization beginning in the mid-twentieth century, legacies of European imperialism, and new forms of empire from the Cold War era to the present. Case studies will be drawn from early modern Muslim and Catholic imperialism (Mughal, Iberian), modern overseas (British, French) and land-based (Russian, Chinese) empires, and US imperialism in the twenty-first century. Key themes include accommodation of cultural difference, centralizing and decentralizing tendencies, ideas of race and social hierarchies, technological change and environmental impact, imperial economic systems and inequality, and colonial and anti-colonial violence. Course requirements include active participation in class discussions, a geography project or quiz, and take-home essay assignments.