

EUH 3931 – Empires in History and Myth

Fall 2025

Keene Flint Hall 101

Tuesdays, 10:40 - 11:30 AM; Thursdays, 10:40 AM – 12:35 PM

Instructor: Professor Christopher Goodwin

Keene-Flint 221

cgoodwin1@ufl.edu

(352) 392-0271 (office phone, no texts)

Office Hours: In-person: Tuesdays, 11:30 AM – 1:30 PM

Zoom: By appointment

Grading: Letter, 3 credit hours

I. Course Description

This course offers a critical examination of “empire” as both a world-historical institution and a potent cultural fantasy. We will trace the rise and fall of key empires across the globe, analyzing their strategies of rule, ideological justifications, and lasting legacies. In parallel, we will investigate the fictional afterlives of empire in literature and film, from the Roman Empire to the Third Reich, from Sir Gawain of Camelot



to the Galactic Empire of Star Wars. By placing historical accounts in direct conversation with their fictional counterparts, we will explore how storytelling both shapes and is shaped by the realities of imperial power. Through this comparative lens, students will deconstruct how narratives of conquest, civilization, and resistance are constructed and contested. The course will equip students to critically assess the complex relationship between historical fact and fictional representation, and to identify the enduring influence of imperial logics in contemporary society.

II. Course Goals

- Provide you a broad overview of major world empires throughout history and their enduring influence in contemporary culture
- Develop your analytical skills through the comparative analysis of historical documents, literary texts, and cinematic works
- Grow your ability to lay out and support an argument through writing

- Acquire critical media literacy skills to better understand how historical narratives are constructed and represented across different genres.

III. Course Requirements

Course Readings

- Roth, Joseph. *The Radetzky March*. Overlook Press. 2002. ISBN: 9781585673261.
- Armitage, Simon. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Norton. 2008. ISBN: 9780393334159.

Films For You to View Outside of Class

- *Gladiator* (2000)
- *300* (2006)
- *Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014)
- *Star Wars* (1977)
- *Downfall* (2004)

Technology

A laptop, desktop computer, or a tablet that can do word processing of nearly any age, make, or model is necessary for this course.



Attendance

Attendance is a crucial component of this course for our productive classroom discussions. Each unexcused absence will lower your grade as a proportion of the attendance grade. A fourth unexcused absence will result in the loss of the entire attendance portion of your grade. A sixth unexcused absence results in failure of the course.

According to the Office of the University Registrar, “acceptable reasons for absence from class include illness, serious family emergencies, special curricular requirements (e.g., judging trips, field trips, professional conferences), military obligation, severe weather conditions, religious holidays and participation in official university activities such as music performances, athletic competition or debate. Absences from class for court-imposed legal obligations (e.g., jury duty or subpoena) must be excused.”

Late Work Policy

Except for approved late submissions, 5% will be deducted from the assignment’s final score for each 24-hour period beyond the due date and time. After 72 hours, the submission will not be accepted. Exemptions are permitted for serious illnesses, family emergencies, and university-approved functions, but students must notify me before the deadline. For unforeseen emergencies, contact me as soon as possible.

Accommodations

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center. [Click here to get started with the Disability Resource Center.](#) It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

IV. Assignments and Grading

The current cumulative grade you see on the course website is not reflective of your actual grade. To calculate your cumulative (and final) grade, calculate it using the weights below.

Assignments and Weighting

Attendance and Participation	10%
Quizzes (4 @ 5% each)	20%
Book/Film Analysis	20%
Film Analysis Papers (2 @ 15% each)	30%
Final Project	20%

Grading Scale

93-100	A
90-92	A-
87-89	B+
83-86	B
80-82	B-
77-79	C+
73-76	C
70-72	C-
67-69	D+
63-66	D
60-62	D-
59 and below	F

V. Course Schedule

Week One (8/21) – What is Empire?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Course Introduction• Syllabus
Week Two (8/25 – 8/29) – Imperial Origins and Meta-Narratives
<u>What is Empire?</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Michael Doyle, <i>Empires</i>, Preface and Chapter 1• Charles Maier, <i>Among Empires</i>, pg. 1-23
<u>Ancient Empires: Egypt and Assyria</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• William Y. Adams, “The First Colonial Empire: Egypt in Nubia, 3200-1200 B.C.”• Avraham Faust, <i>The Neo-Assyrian Empire in the Southwest</i>, Chapter 10
<u>Historical Narratives</u>

- Percy Shelley, “Ozymandias” (1818)
- Hayden White, “The Fictions of Factual Representation,” *Grasping the World*
- Michael Rice, *Egypt’s Legacy*, Chapter 15

Week Three (9/1 – 9/5) – Rome

The Roman Empire

- Clifford Ando, *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire*, Introduction and Chapter 2
- Watch: *Gladiator* (2000)

The Roman Legacy

- Marshall Poe, “Moscow, the Third Rome: The Origins and Transformations of a ‘Pivotal Moment’”
- Johann P. Arnason and Kurt A. Raaflaub, *The Roman Empire in Context*, Chapter 16

Week Four (9/8 – 9/12) – Progress and Civilization

Due: Film Analysis for *Gladiator* (2000) – Thursday, September 11 at 11:55 PM

The British Empire

- Kevin Luginbill, “Penny Post Imperialists”
- Berny Sèbe, “Exhibiting the Empire in Print,” *Exhibiting the Empire*

The Progress Narrative

- Nathan Rotenstreich, “The Idea of Historical Progress and Its Assumptions”
- Christopher Dawson, *Progress and Religion*, Chapter 2

Week Five (9/15 – 9/19) – Gender and Empire

Greece and Persia

- Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones, *King and Court in Ancient Persia*, Chapters 3 and 4
- Polly Low, *The Athenian Empire*, Chapter 1
- Watch: *300* (2006)

Masculinity and Gender

- Ryan Balot, “The Freedom to Rule,” *Enduring Empires*
- Beverly Lemire, “A Question of Trousers”

Week Six (9/22 – 9/26) – Diversity in Imperial Spaces

No Class – Thursday, September 25

Due: Film Analysis for *300* (2006) – Thursday, September 25 at 11:55 PM

The Ottoman and Habsburg Empires

- Suraiya Faroqhi, *Subjects of the Sultan*, Chapter 2
- R.J.W. Evans, *Austria, Hungary, and the Habsburgs*, Chapter 6

Diversity in Empire

- Joseph Roth, “The Emperor’s Bust” (1934)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suraiya Farooqi, <i>Subjects of the Sultan</i>, Chapter 11 • Daša Ličen, “Reinventing Habsburg Cuisine in Twenty-First Century Trieste”
Week Seven (9/29 – 10/3) – Imperial Nostalgia
<u>Late Habsburg Empire</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steven Beller, <i>The Habsburg Monarchy</i>, Introduction • R.J.W. Evans, “Remembering the Fall of the Habsburg Monarchy One Hundred Years on” • Watch: Grand Budapest Hotel (2014) <u>Nostalgia</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joseph Roth, <i>Radetzky March</i> (1932)
Week Eight (10/6 – 10/10) – The Great Man Theory
<p>Due: Book/Film Analysis for Grand Budapest Hotel and Radetzky March – Thursday, October 9 at 11:55 PM</p> <u>Napoleon’s France</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Philip G. Dwyer, “Napoleon and the Foundation of the Empire” • Ute Planert, <i>Napoleon’s Empire</i>, Chapter 22 <u>The Golden Era and Great Men</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Janice Jaye Best, “Power and Propaganda: Theatrical Representations of Napoleon Bonaparte during the Second Empire” • Helen Young, <i>Fantasy and Science Fiction Medievalisms</i>, Chapter 6
Week Nine (10/13 – 10/17) – Political Narratives
<u>Nazi Germany</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hitler, “Proclamation of the Reich Government to the German People” (1933) • “Decree of the Reich President for the Protection of the People and State” (1933) • “The Enabling Act” (1933) • Benjamin Carter Hett, <i>The Death of Democracy</i>, Chapter 5 <u>From Republic to Empire</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rulebook, <i>Secret Hitler</i> (2016) • Tony Keen, “I, Sidious,” <i>Star Wars and History</i> • Johann Chapoutot, <i>Greeks, Romans, and Germans: How the Nazis Usurped Europe’s Classic Past</i>, pgs. 229-256
Week Ten (10/20 – 10/24) – Literary Tropes
<u>Historical Literature</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ames, <i>An ABC for Baby Patriots</i> (1899) • M. Daphne Kutzer, <i>Empire’s Children: Empire and Imperialism in Classic British Children’s Books</i>, Chapter 1 • Ali Capar, “Creating the image of ‘the greatest sultan’: indoctrination of children through children’s periodicals under the Hamidian regime (1876-1908)” • Watch: Star Wars (1977)

Space Empires and Contemporary Literature

- Peter Krämer, "Fighting the Evil Empire," *Sex, Politics, and Religion in Star Wars: An Anthology*
- George A. Gonzalez, *The Politics of Star Trek: Justice, War and the Future*, Chapter 5

Week Eleven (10/27 – 10/31) – Morality, Imperial Ideology, Center and Periphery

Due: Film Analysis of Star Wars (1977) – Thursday, October 30 at 11:55 PM

Moral Systems and the Distant Past

- Armitage, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

Week Twelve (11/3 – 11/7) – Subjecthood and Citizenship

The British Empire, Part II

- Roy Douglas, *Liquidation of Empire: The Decline of the British Empire*, Chapters 1 and 12
- Priyamvada Gopal, *Insurgent Empire: Anticolonial Resistance and British Dissent*, Introduction

Imperial Subjects and Resistance

- Saadat Hasan Manto, "An Episode from 1919"
- Priyamvada Gopal, *Insurgent Empire: Anticolonial Resistance and British Dissent*, Chapter 1

Week Thirteen (11/10 – 11/14) – Narratives of Decline

No Class – Tuesday, November 11 – Veterans Day

The Late Roman Empire

- Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Excerpts (1776 – 1789)
- "Review Article: The Return of the Fall of Rome"
- "The Fall of Rome – an author dialogue"
- Watch: Downfall (2004)

Decline and Fall

- Edward J. Watts, *The Eternal Decline and Fall of Rome*, Chapter 17 and Conclusion
- Julia Hell, *The Conquest of Ruins: The Third Reich and Rome*, Introduction and Chapter 18

Week Fourteen (11/17 – 11/21) – Presentations

Due: Film Analysis for Downfall (2004) – Thursday, November 20 at 11:55 PM

- Student Presentations

Week Fifteen (12/1 – 12/5) – Presentations and Course Conclusion

Due: Final Project – Tuesday, December 2 at 11:55 PM

- Student Presentations

VI. Other Information

This course complies with all UF academic policies. For information on those policies and for resources for students—especially concerning disability services, course evaluations, the University Code of Conduct, and In-Class Recording policies—please see [this link](#).

