

Imperial America

English 40663: Transnational American Literature | Fall 2020

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Course Overview

“Our flag,” Mark Twain reflected in 1901. “We have worshipped it so; and when we have seen it in far lands—glimpsing it unexpectedly in that strange sky, waving its welcome and benediction to us—we have caught our breath, and uncovered our heads, and couldn’t speak, for a moment, for the thought of what it was to us and the great ideals it stood for.” But he wondered, as the United States waged an imperial war in the Philippines, a war that would overthrow the short-lived Philippine Republic, what flag it would raise on the Pacific islands. Twain suggested a modified American flag: “our usual flag” but “with the white stripes painted black and the stars replaced by the skull and cross-bones.”

This course asks how American authors, including Twain, have written with and against (and more often ignored) that pirate flag. From nineteenth-century westward expansion to the turn-of-the-century annexation of Hawai‘i, Guam, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and other overseas territories to the post–World War II construction of some eight hundred military bases in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East, the United States has struggled to reconcile a republican ideal with an imperial reality—the stars and stripes with the skull and cross-bones. This course looks to the literature of imperial America, including the writing of Yellow Bird (John Rollin Ridge), Lili‘uokalani, and W. E. B. Du Bois, to explore how the United States built an empire and hid it from itself.

Required Texts

Du Bois, W. E. B. *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept*. 1940. Oxford UP, 2014.

Lili‘uokalani. *Hawaii’s Story by Hawaii’s Queen*. 1898. Mutual, 1990.

Yellow Bird (John Rollin Ridge). *The Life and Adventures of Joaquín Murieta: The Celebrated California Bandit*. 1854. U of Oklahoma P, 1955.

Readings on Course Website

Byrd, Jodi A. “American Indian Transnationalisms.” *The Cambridge Companion to Transnational American Literatures*, edited by Yogita Goyal, Cambridge UP, 2017, pp. 174–89.

Cumings, Bruce. “Archipelago of Empire: An American Grid for the Global Garden.” *Dominion from Sea to Sea: Pacific Ascendancy and American Power*, Yale UP, 2009, pp. 388–423.

- Getachew, Adom. "A Political Theory of Decolonization." *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination*, Princeton UP, 2019, pp. 14–36.
- Goeman, Mishuana. "Gendered Geographies and Narrative Markings." *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations*, U of Minnesota P, 2013, pp. 1–40.
- Immerwhar, Daniel. "Looking beyond the Logo Map." Introduction. *How to Hide an Empire: A History of the Greater United States*, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2019, pp. 3–20.
- Kaplan, Amy. "The Imperial Routes of Mark Twain." *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture*, Harvard UP, 2002, pp. 51–91.
- Kramer, Paul. "Race, Empire, and Transnational History." Introduction. *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines*, U of North Carolina P, 2006, pp. 1–27.
- Rankin, William. "Territory and the Mapping Sciences." Introduction. *After the Map: Cartography, Navigation, and the Transformation of Territory in the Twentieth Century*, U of Chicago P, 2016, pp. 1–16.
- Said, Edward W. "Empire, Geography, and Culture." *Culture and Imperialism*, Knopf, 1993, pp. 3–14.
- Saranillio, Dean Itsuji. "A Future Wish: Hawai'i at the 1893 Chicago World's Columbian Exposition." *Unsustainable Empire: Alternative Histories of Hawai'i Statehood*, Duke UP, 2018, pp. 31–66.
- Silva, "The Queen of Hawai'i Raises Her Solemn Note of Protest." *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism*, Duke UP, 2004, pp. 164–203.
- Streeby, Shelley. "Joaquín Murrieta and the American 1848." *Post-Nationalist American Studies*, edited by John Carlos Rowe, U of California P, 2000, pp. 166–96.
- Twain, Mark. "As Regards Patriotism." Ca. 1900. *Europe and Elsewhere*, Harper and Brothers, 1923, pp. 301–03.
- . "On Board Steamer Ajax." *Sacramento Daily Union*, 16 Apr. 1866, p. 5.
- . *Roughing It*. American Publishing, 1872.
- . "A Salutation-Speech from the Nineteenth Century to the Twentieth, Taken Down in Short-Hand by Mark Twain." *New York Herald*, 30 Dec. 1900, p. 7.
- . "To the Person Sitting in Darkness." *North American Review*, vol. 172, no. 531 (1901): 161–76.
- . "The War Prayer." 1904–5. *Europe and Elsewhere*, Harper and Brothers, 1923, pp. 394–98.
- Von Eschen, Penny M. "The Making of the Politics of the African Diaspora." *Race against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937–1957*, Cornell UP, 1997, pp. 7–21.

Assignments and Grading

Assignments:

Reading Quizzes	15%
Participation and Preparedness	15%
Presentation	20%
Midterm Paper	25%
Final Paper	25%

Grading Scale:

A	93–100%	C	73–76%
A-	90–92%	C-	70–72%
B+	87–89%	D+	67–69%
B	83–86%	D	63–66%
B-	80–82%	D-	60–62%
C+	77–79%	F	0–59%

Reading Schedule and Deadlines

Date	Readings	Deadlines
Week 1	Where Is the United States?	
Monday, August 17	Syllabus	
Wednesday, August 19	Immerwahr, “Looking beyond the Logo Map”	Presentation assigned
Week 2	Settler Colonial America	
Monday, August 24	Said, “Empire, Geography, and Culture”	
Wednesday, August 26	Byrd, “American Indian Transnationalisms”	
Week 3		
Monday, August 31	Yellow Bird, <i>The Life and Adventures of Joaquín Murieta</i> (publisher’s preface, editor’s preface, 7–50)	
Wednesday, September 2	Yellow Bird, <i>The Life and Adventures of Joaquín Murieta</i> (51–100)	
Week 4		
Monday, September 7	Yellow Bird, <i>The Life and Adventures of Joaquín Murieta</i> (101–59)	Midterm paper assigned
Wednesday, September 9	Streeby, “Joaquín Murrieta and the American 1848”	Midterm paper proposal due Sunday, September 13 at 5 p.m.
Week 5		
Monday, September 14	Conferences	
Wednesday, September 16	Conferences	
Week 6	Mark Twain’s Pirate Flag	
Monday, September 21	Kaplan, “The Imperial Routes of Mark Twain”	

Wednesday, September 23	Twain, <i>Roughing It</i> (“Prefatory,” chapters 1–3 and 79)	
Week 7		
Monday, September 28	Twain, “On Board Steamer Ajax” and <i>Roughing It</i> (chapters 63–65, 76)	
Wednesday, September 30	Kramer, “Race, Empire, and Transnational History”	Midterm paper due at 5 p.m.
Week 8		
Monday, October 5	Twain, “To the Person Sitting in Darkness”	
Wednesday, October 7	Twain, “A Salutation-Speech from the Nineteenth Century to the Twentieth, Taken Down in Short-Hand by Mark Twain,” “As Regards Patriotism,” “The War Prayer”	
Week 9	Empire in Paradise	
Monday, October 12	Saranillio, “A Future Wish”	
Wednesday, October 14	Silva, “The Queen of Hawai’i Raises Her Solemn Note of Protest”	
Week 10		
Monday, October 19	Lili‘uokalani, <i>Hawaii’s Story by Hawaii’s Queen</i> (chapters 1–15)	
Wednesday, October 21	Lili‘uokalani, <i>Hawaii’s Story by Hawaii’s Queen</i> (chapters 16–30)	
Week 11		
Monday, October 26	Lili‘uokalani, <i>Hawaii’s Story by Hawaii’s Queen</i> (chapters 31–45)	
Wednesday, October 28	Lili‘uokalani, <i>Hawaii’s Story by Hawaii’s Queen</i> (chapters 46–57)	
Week 12	Color Lines	
Monday, November 2	Von Eschen, “The Making of the Politics of the African Diaspora”	
Wednesday, November 4	Getachew, “A Political Theory of Decolonization”	
Week 13		
Monday, November 9	Du Bois, <i>Dusk of Dawn</i> (“Apology,” chapters 1–3)	Final paper assigned
Wednesday, November 11	Du Bois, <i>Dusk of Dawn</i> (chapters 4 and 5)	

Week 14		
Monday, November 16	Du Bois, <i>Dusk of Dawn</i> (chapters 6 and 7)	
Wednesday, November 18	Du Bois, <i>Dusk of Dawn</i> (chapters 8 and 9)	
Week 15	New Imperial Cartography	
Monday, November 23	Cumings, "Archipelago of Empire" Rankin, "Territory and the Mapping Sciences" SPOTs	Final paper due Sunday, December 6 at 5 p.m.
Wednesday, November 25	No class (Thanksgiving break)	