

**History 3797F**  
**Selected Topics in International or Comparative History:**  
**Guns, Slavery, and Steel: Networks of Power**

**Fall 2023**

Instructor: **Michael Feagan**

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This is a **draft** syllabus. Please see the course site on OWL for a final version.

**Course Description**

How did some parts of the world, primarily in Europe, come to dominate and subject much of the rest of the world? This course examines how this process happened and argues that it was primarily done through specific tools and technologies including the technology of race science. This course is a general international tour of case studies in how systems of empire, technology, and race have influenced non-western nations. This course will cover a wide range of time and space in a loose chronological order beginning with the first contact between Europeans and Indigenous Americans to the decolonization of Africa in the twentieth century. This course is about the ways in which diverse groups of people internationally were affected by imperialism, foreign technological systems, and ideologies of race. These ideas will be explored by examining histories that foreground the experiences, lives, and choices made by colonized peoples and placing their experiences in the context of larger systems of technology and imperialism that shaped their experiences. Some of the important questions this course will explore include: how have different people and places experienced imperialism? What role did certain technologies and ideas about race play in establishing colonialism? How were colonized bodies connected to larger imperial networks?

**Course Syllabus**

This course will follow the structure of a two hour seminar discussion held once weekly.

Students who complete this course will be able to:

- Understand and articulate major developments in the history of imperialism and colonialism and the impacts it had on a diverse array of international places and peoples.
- Explain the historical causes, motivators, tools, and justifications for international systems of imperialism and colonialism.
- Express familiarity with multiple theories and methodological contributions to understanding networks of imperialism and their impacts on colonized peoples.
- Identify and engage with the main arguments and evidence of historical writing in the form of academic research, fiction, and primary sources.
- Compare cases of imperialism and colonialism to identify shared features and historical patterns.
- Express understanding and familiarity with the historiography of a particular research area.

- Analyse and evaluate primary sources and place them in their historical context.
- Strengthen reading, writing, and oral communication skills.

### **Methods of Evaluation**

Students will be assessed based on their participation in seminar discussion, an essay proposal and bibliography, a presentation, and a final essay which will be either an essay focused on scholarly sources debates in a specific field or a research essay focused on primary sources. Seminar journals will consist of informal weekly writing containing a student's notes and thoughts on that week's readings and in-class discussion.

Seminar Participation: 20% (Evaluated each week of class)

Seminar Presentation: 20% (Student presentation schedule TBD during the first week of class)

Proposal & Bibliography: 15% (Due Sept. 28 through OWL, 1-2 pages or about 300-500 words)

Final Paper: 30% (Due Week 8 Nov. 10, about 12 pages or 3,000-3,500 words)

Seminar Journal: 15% (Due Week 12 Dec. 8)

Make-up tests, midterms, and exams can only be approved by Academic Counselling. Please see [https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program\\_module\\_information/policies.html](https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html) for department procedures and requirements involving make-up tests and exams.

**Late Assignments:** assignments submitted late will receive a 2% grade deduction per day over the due date.

**Absences and Late Marks:** consideration for **short-term absences** that do not have a major impact on a student's grades (a course component worth less than 10%) such as missing a week of seminars will be excused if the absent student sends the course instructor an email explaining when they will be absent and the reason for the absence. All students will also be allowed to miss one week of seminar discussion and participation without academic penalty and without approval from the instructor. All future absences must be excused.

**Long-term absences** for any reason, such as illness which effects the completion of a major course component such as your seminar presentation or Final Paper, should be acquired through consultation with Academic Counselling. Students must see the Academic Counsellor and submit all required documentation in order to be approved for certain accommodation. Once this is done, the student should contact the instructor to set up new deadlines or alternative assessments.

**Students who are in emotional or mental distress** should refer to Mental Health Support at [Western's Health & Wellness Services](#) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

**Students must attend at least seven seminars in order to pass the course, regardless of grades received for other assignments.**

**Students must submit all course assignments in order to pass the course.**

### **Course Materials**

All course materials and readings will be made available to students through OWL. This includes the three novels to be read for Week 6 which can either be found on OWL or at Western Libraries.

- Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness*. 1899.
- Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*. 1958.
- Getz, Trevor R. *Abina and the Important Men: A Graphic History*. 1st ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

### **Course Schedule and Readings**

#### **Week 1 Sept. 8**

Introduction to the course: Foucault's Biopolitics and Latour's Networks

#### **Week 2 Sept. 15**

Guns, Germs, and Horses? Technological and biological exchange: Early Contact and colonization in the Americas

#### **Week 3 Sept. 22**

Slave transportation and energy regimes: Atlantic slavery, West Africa, and the Caribbean

**[Proposal and Bibliography Due Sept. 28]**

**No Class – Truth and Reconciliation Day**

#### **Week 4 Oct. 6**

Company Colonialism: Shipping and trade post networks in India and South Asia

#### **Week 5 Oct. 13**

Addiction, Consumption, and Imperialism: Asian Networks of trade and the Opium Wars

#### **Week 6 Oct. 20**

Resource Extraction: African experiences of colonization in literature

**[Choose ONE of the novels to read before seminar. Notes and thoughts on the chosen book should be included in your Seminar Journal.]**

#### **Week 7 Oct. 27**

Telegraphs, railroads, and colonial control: The Indian Rebellion of 1857 and British control over India

**Reading Week Oct. 30-Nov. 5**

**Week 8 Nov. 10**

**Final Paper Due**

Japanese Colonialism: Technological and bodily administration of Korea and Taiwan

**Week 9 Nov. 17**

Administration of Lands and Bodies: Colonial legal regimes in Australia, New Zealand, and Hawaii

**Week 10 Nov. 24**

American Surveillance: Biopolitics in the Philippines and on Indigenous Bodies

**Week 11 Dec. 1**

Imperial Energy Regimes of Fossil Fuel Extraction in the Middle East

**Week 12 Dec. 8**

**[Seminar Journal Due]**

Decolonization or the Beginnings of a New Techno-Colonialism?

### **Communication policy**

Students can contact me over email at my address [mfeagan@uwo.ca](mailto:mfeagan@uwo.ca). Response times will generally be within 24 business hours. Response times to emails sent on Fridays may be longer. Students wishing to communicate in-person outside of regular office hours (drop-in meetings at my office) can email and request an office hours meeting during a time that works for both the student and instructor.

### **Classroom behavior**

The history covered in this course often contains topics of a serious and sometimes distressing nature, such as slavery. For this reason it is expected that all students conduct themselves in class in a manner which is respectful and kind to their fellow students as some students may have personal or generational trauma associated with many of the topics presented in this course. Students who feel overwhelmed or disturbed during our weekly discussions are encouraged to take a break by leaving the classroom to help reorient themselves and to return

when they feel comfortable. Students are also allowed to take a break and leave the classroom when needed for other reasons such as for a bathroom break.

### **Use of Generative AI Tools**

The use of generative AI tools like ChatGPT is permitted in this course for activities such as brainstorming and refining your ideas, drafting an outline to organize your thoughts, or checking grammar and style. Any use of such tools should be properly documented and cited. Students may be asked for drafts of their written work for verification, particularly in the event of suspected plagiarism. If in doubt, please ask me for clarification.

Please review the Department of History's shared policies and statements for all undergraduate courses at: [https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program\\_module\\_information/policies.html](https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html) for important information regarding accessibility options, make-up exams, medical accommodations, health and wellness, academic integrity, plagiarism, and more.

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