

XBC 199Y

**First Year Seminar
IMPERIALISM AND NATIONALISM**

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Hours T 2-4, Th 1-3

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THEMES: This course examines the concepts of empire and imperialism, and state sovereignty and nationalism. Are nations and states synonymous, or do most states contain more than one nation or people? Are all multinational states empires? Does an international economic order require a dominant nation to police trade and investments, and to preclude piracy?

A theme in the first semester is the manner in which technology conditions our sense of belonging? George Grant argued that commercial, productive, reproductive and communications technology undermines fixed loves and loyalties, and concludes that liberalism is the doctrine of imperial expansion. Marco Andria indicates how communications technologies have shaped both Canadian and regional identities, and predicts how the internet will fragment loyalties to modern nation states. In the second term, we shall examine Niall Ferguson's argument that the British Empire was a boon to those subjected to its power and advocates that the Americans espouse such an imperial role for the world. Chalmers Johnson also compares American and British imperialism but advocates American withdrawal from overseas military bases.

Some question we shall be asking are: is empire diffused through multinational corporations and international institutions, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and agreements, such as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, such that a dominant nation or superpower is no longer essential to maintain international capitalism. What is the difference between capitalism and imperialism? If we understand imperialism as the domination of one nation or people over another, how are divided societies (e.g. by race, class, religion, or language) sufficiently unified to dominate others or resist domination? How is imperialism distinct from nation-building, continental expansion, or cosmopolitanism? What is the role of nation-states in a globalized economy?

REQUIRED TEXTS: George Grant, *Technology and Empire: Perspectives on North America*; Marco Adria, *Technology and Nationalism*; Niall Ferguson, *Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power*; Chalmers Johnson, *Nemesis: The Last Days of the American Republic*.

RECOMMENDED BUT NOT REQUIRED

Edward Andrew, *Imperial Republics: Revolution, War and Territorial Expansion*.

Lloyd Kramer, *Nationalism in Europe & America: Politics, Culture and Identities since 1775*.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Four two page papers on each of the required texts **Due Oct 23, Nov 18, Feb 5, Mar 12** (5% each), one seminar presentation some theme selected from the syllabus (about twenty minutes oral presentation and then five page written summary taking into account seminar response) (15%), midterm paper roughly eight pages, **due Dec 4** (20%), final paper roughly twelve pages **due April 2** (30%), seminar participation 15%.

The Academic Integrity Statement and Checklist: Academic integrity is fundamental to learning and scholarship at the University of Toronto. Participating honestly, respectfully, responsibly, and fairly in this academic community ensures that the U of T degree that you earn will be valued as a true indication of your individual academic achievement, and will continue to receive the respect and recognition it deserves.

Familiarize yourself with the University of Toronto's *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>). It is the rule book for academic behaviour at the U of T, and you are expected to know the rules. Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

In papers and assignments:

- Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement.
- Copying material word-for-word from a source (including lecture and study group notes) and not placing the words within quotation marks.
- Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor.
- Making up sources or facts.
- Including references to sources that you did not use.
- Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment including
 - working in groups on assignments that are supposed to be individual work,
 - having someone rewrite or add material to your work while "editing".
- Lending your work to a classmate who submits it as his/her own without your permission.

On tests and exams:

- Using or possessing any unauthorized aid, including a cell phone.
- Looking at someone else's answers
- Letting someone else look at your answers.
- Misrepresenting your identity.
- Submitting an altered test for re-grading.

Misrepresentation:

- Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including doctor's notes.
- Falsifying institutional documents or grades.

To remind you of these expectations, and help you avoid accidental offences, I will ask you to include a signed Academic Integrity Checklist with every assignment. If you do not include the statement, your work will not be graded.

The University of Toronto treats cases of academic misconduct very seriously. All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following the procedures outlined in the *Code*. The consequences for academic misconduct can be severe, including a failure in the course and a notation on your transcript. If you have any questions about what is or is not permitted in this course, please do not hesitate to contact me. If you have questions about appropriate research and citation methods, seek out additional information from me, or from other available campus resources like the [U of T Writing Website](#). If you are experiencing personal challenges that are having an impact on your academic work, please speak to me or seek the advice of your college registrar.

Sept 11 Introduction to seminar requirements and to basic terms. Forms of association and polities: city-states, nation-states, multinational states. Is Weber's definition of a state—that which has a legitimate monopoly of force in a given territory—applicable to pre-modern and post-modern states, or just to nation-states? Is a world-state possible or desirable? How are the rules of an international economic order enforced?

Sept 18 Theoretical and historical background to ideas of imperialism: Aristotelian anti-imperialism and Machiavellian imperialism, Locke's mercantilism and Smith's free trade, Marx's praise of capitalist internationalism and hopes for working class internationalism, and Lenin's view of imperialism and national self-determination.

Sept 25 Read preface and "In Defence of North America" in *Technology and Empire*. What did Grant mean by saying that North America is essentially a Protestant civilization? Do First Nations regard the land in the same way as immigrants (as real estate to be developed)? Is Grant's view of WASP North America obsolete in multicultural Canada? Was his form of nationalism anti-Americanism? Is it true that North Americans are homeless, uprooted from traditions that give meaning to their lives? Are we just resources to be exploited for capitalist accumulation, consumed by our galloping consumption? Is nature (including human nature) that which is to be mastered for technological innovation and destruction? Does nature (God's creation) provide a standard by which we can judge human creations? Is Grant right to say that conservatism is impossible in a technological civilization?

Oct 2 Read “Canadian Fate and Imperialism” in *T and E*. In what sense are we fated to be part of the American empire? What did Grant mean by saying (68) that Canadian founders had “a clearer and firmer doctrine of the common good than that at the heart of the liberal democracy to the south”? What did Grant mean by referring to “the homogenizing and universalizing power of technology” (69) that “must undermine all particularisms”? Assess the tension between a love of one’s own and a love of a universal good. Is Grant’s distaste with our complicity in the Vietnam war applicable to our part in the war in Afghanistan and Iraq?

Oct 9 Read “Tyranny and Wisdom” in *T and E*. What is meant by “the universal homogeneous state”? Does homogeneity mean equality? Why did Strauss and Grant think philosophy suffers in egalitarian times? What is the relationship between philosophy and religion?

Oct 16 Read “The University Curriculum” and “A Platitude”. What did Grant mean by liberalism? Definition on 114. How does this link up with Grant’s contention that the only public purpose of technological societies is mastery of nature? That pluralism is confined to private activities, the activities of a consumer rather than the activities of a citizen? Is it true that we are political animals, deprived of our humanity if not citizens of some polity? Are we users of technology or used by technology? What did Grant mean (137) by asserting that “technique is ourselves”? **Two page paper on Grant due.**
(Either answer one of the questions in this or three preceding seminars or choose a topic that interests you more but, if the latter, check with me that the subject is doable in two pages).

Oct 23 Read introduction and ch 1 of *Technology and Nationalism*. What are the symbols of Canadian nationhood? How do communications technologies shape identities? Does the internet foster “glocal” identities, that is both more global and local than national? What were the communications technologies that built Canada? Do the CPR, Canadian Wheat Pool, CBC and CRTC cease to be binding agents in contemporary Canada? Has nationalist modernity been superceded by postmodern “glocalism”?

Oct 30 Read Ch 2-3 of *T and N*. Assess Adria’s account of the role of technologies, and especially the printing press, in the emergence of nation-states? What is meant by “imaginary communities” and “invented traditions”? Is Adria right to call Grant “idealist” in calling for some non-technological standards to judge technological societies? Was Grant’s nationalism antithetical to Quebec Nationalism and Albertan regionalism? Is Canada better described as a confederation of regions than as a nation-state?

Nov 6 Read ch 4-6 of *T and N*. Assess Adria’s account of the use of radio to foster Canadian and Albertan identities. Was E. A. Corbett’s educational use of the radio similar to, or different from, that of Premier “Bible Bill” Aberhardt? Why does Adria think “talk radio” undermines deliberative democracy? What differences are there in the mandates of commercial and non-commercial broadcasting? Has Alberta lost its “redneck” cowboy image in an era of big oil? How has the internet altered Canadians

self-image? Has it provided an alternative to bilingual nationalism? Relate the “hyperpluralistic and fragmented” identities of our postmodern age to the internet and new social media.

Two page paper on Adria due. Same instructions as for Grant on Oct 16.

Nov 20 How would Grant respond to Adria’s view that communications technologies can serve both nationalist and imperialist projects? Does Grant’s view that we are technique help self-understanding within the wired world of new social media?

Nov 27 Why does Adria concentrate more on communications than productive, reproductive or military technologies? Is “chat” more central to who we are than how we work, mate or fight?

Dec 4 Review of first term. Compare Adria and Grant on nationalism and imperialism. Can local and distinctive cultures survive with common capitalist economies? Do the imperatives of productivity and profit allow multiple ways of life? Are science and technology compatible with religion? Or does the control of nature and human nature violate the sacred, or an affirmation that God’s creation is good?

Term Essays Due. Suggested Topics. Students may choose an alternative topic **but only after consultation with me.**

1. Was Grant right to compare “the American empire” with earlier empires or with the former Soviet empire and the Chinese empire?
2. Is technology homogenizing cultures? Discuss in terms of Grant’s and Adria’s arguments.
3. What did Grant mean by identifying ourselves with technique? Are our most innermost selves shaped by the technologies we use and use us?
4. Do you agree with Grant that liberalism is the fitting ideology for technological progress and imperial expansion?
5. Is nationalism obsolete? (Use Grant and Adria in answering this question).

Jan 8 Read Ferguson’s introduction to *Empire*. Can we have free trade without imperial gunboats and armies? How do you rate the achievements of the British Empire listed on xxv? What is the difference between British colonialism and American imperialism? Does Ferguson add the poetry of glory and romance to more prosaic defences of empire (in terms of international security or production of wealth)?

Jan 15 Read ch 1-2 of Ferguson’s *Empire*. Is it significant that Ferguson begins his account of the British Empire with 17th century British pirates attacking Spanish galleons rather than with English conquests of Wales, Ireland and Scotland? Imperial rivalry for sugar in the West Indies and spices in the East Indies; the slave trade and the Maroons. Is there any validity in the claim that only Africans can work in tropical climates? The American Revolution: was Samuel Johnson right in claiming that the loudest yelps for liberty come from the drivers of Negroes? Why is there no account of the Quebec Act of 1774 (granting Catholics civil rights) in Ferguson’s account of the causes of the American Revolution? Did the French win Americans independence (79-81)? The evolution of the convict colony in Australia and responsible government in the Canadas.

Jan 22 Read ch. 3-4 of Ferguson's *Empire*. The acquisition and Christianization of Africa. The abolition movement and racism; the symbolism of cannibalism for Christians. Civilizing and Christianizing missions in India. Can an imperial people improve others? Suttee, thuggee, female infanticide, genital mutilation. Effects of industrial and communications technologies on India's way of life. Forcing opium on China to finance East India Company. Assess benefits of British imperialism in India listed on pp. 215-218.

Jan 29 Read ch 5-6 of Ferguson's *Empire*. The building of the Suez Canal and the Cape to Cairo railway. Who said "you cannot have omelettes without breaking eggs" and what does it mean? (Johnson in *Nemesis* (83) attributes it to Lenin.) Victorian racial imperialism, genetics and Social Darwinism. Boy Scouts and team sports. The Boer War and British anti-imperialism. WWI as imperialist war and national identities. Is nationalism based on common interests or shared sacrifices? Assess self-interest and sense of service in capitalist imperialism? WWII and the decline of the British Empire. Would Gandhi's passive resistance have succeeded against Japan and Germany?

Feb 5 Read conclusion of Ferguson's *Empire*. **Two page essay due.** Assess the costs and benefits of the British Empire and the costs and benefits of de-colonization. Does Ferguson emphasize pride in national liberation? Is it better to be killed by one's own leaders than foreigners (i.e., Chinese by Chinese rather than Japanese, Arabs by Arabs rather than Israelis, Indians by Indians rather than British)?

Feb 12 Read Prologue and ch 1 of Johnson's *Nemesis*. What does Johnson mean by 'blowback'? Illustrate with respect to Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan. What did Osama bin Laden say, and what did George W. Bush say, was the reason for al-Qaeda's attacks on the west? Why does Johnson think empires and republics are incompatible? Does empire extend the power of the executive branch and limit the power of Congress? Assess the role of the Central Intelligence Agency in the American empire and why Johnson thinks it undermines the American constitution. What does Johnson think to have been the errors and crimes of the two wars against Iraq?

Feb 26 Read ch. 2-3 of Johnson's *Nemesis*. Is Johnson's comparison of American with Roman and British imperialism cogent? What do you make of Parenti's argument that the Roman republic was aristocratic and Caesar was egalitarian? Were the Federalists as aristocratic as the Roman senators? What is the American equivalent of Roman tribunes? Assess the comparison of George Bush and Augustus Caesar. Compare Johnson's view of imperialism with that of Ferguson (and Ignatieff). Is it impossible to have freedom at home and oppression abroad and thus imperialism must lead to tyranny or free states must abandon imperialism? Do you accept Johnson's account of the CIA's production of distorted information and of covert operations in Chile, Pakistan and Afghanistan?

March 5 Read ch. 4-5 of Johnson's *Nemesis*. Compare American overseas bases with those of the British and Roman Empires (138-39). What are the functions of the different

kinds of military bases? Are Japan and Taiwan dependent on American bases to prevent invasion from China?

Mar 12 Finish reading Johnson's *Nemesis*. **Two page essay due.** Is the control of space indeed the ultimate imperial project? Are communications technologies militarized? What does Johnson mean by military Keynesianism and how is it different from the Keynesianism of the New Deal? Is it possible to repatriate all American military bases back to the USA and have Americans pay market (or cartel) prices for essential commodities?

Mar 19 Compare Johnson and Ferguson on the costs and benefits of empire. Is empire an alternative to class warfare? What would be the repercussions of cutting military expenditures and increasing health care costs and welfare benefits?

Mar 26 Where is there resistance to empires? Does resistance have to take a national form? Or do "anti-globalization" and "occupy" movements have a subnational and supranational character? Are there anti-imperial sentiments in Canada now, as in the time of the Vietnam War? Or is Canada too divided on linguistic, regional, class and urban/rural lines to have patriotic loves and loyalties? Has Canadian multiculturalism strengthened or fragmented Canada?

April 2 Final Essays due. Conclusion. Are imperialism and nationalism interrelated terms? That is, can there be imperial domination without national pride, and can there be resistance to imperialism without nationalism? Can our "postmodern era" become post imperial and post national?

Suggested Essay Topics. Again students may choose other topics from the required texts **but only after consultation with me.**

1. Is international anarchy the alternative to empire?
2. Is Johnson wrong to think the USA was not imperialistic from the outset? What was the difference between Jefferson's "empire of liberty" and Bush's imperial presidency?
3. Can one people "civilize" another? Or are imperial powers simply catalysts to national liberation and "self-improvement"?
4. Was Machiavelli right in thinking that successful imperialism depends on keeping the plebeians poor (as in "the sun never sets on the British Empire and the wages never rise.") Is a Lockean low-wage economy more expansionary than a Smithian high-wage economy?
5. Is a (conscripted) citizens' army or a professional army more effective in extending empire?
6. Does Grant, Ferguson or Johnson provide a more convincing account of empires?