In much of social science as well as in popular conceptions, the nation-state is regarded as the central unit of historical activity. Yet even during most of the last two centuries, the idea of a "nation" was only one way of representing political affiliation. An analysis of empire--both in the present and the past--opens up possibilities for examining a wider range of social linkages, imaginations, and behaviors. This course will focus on the comparative study of empires from ancient Rome and China to the present, and upon the variety of ways in which empire-states have established and constrained claims to rights, belonging, and power. The study of empire expands our debates over rights, citizenship, economic regulation, and accountability without letting them fall into an assumed gap between the nation-state and the global.

Each week's class will consist of a discussion based on assigned reading. Students will write a short (1 page) reaction to the reading and post it to the Blackboard site for this class by 8:00 am on Monday before each class. The other writing assignments are an exploratory essay (6-8 pages, due October 28) and a final paper (12-14 pages, due December 19), reviewing the literature on a topic to be chosen in consultation with the instructors and, for most students, coordinated with the follow-up seminar described below.

There will be a follow up course to this one taught in spring 2012 by Professors Benton, Burbank, and Cooper. The spring semester course will be a research seminar on empires and will presume that students have either taken the fall course or have equivalent preparation. Students continuing in this course should use the second of the two required papers to work toward defining the topic for research the following semester. The final paper should include a review of the existing historiography relevant to the chosen topic, a statement of the problem to be investigated, and a preliminary list and discussion of primary sources to be used. In the event that the fall course is oversubscribed, we will give priority to students who intend to take the research seminar in the spring. All students should consult with an instructor about the focus and content of their final papers before November 15.

Where to Find Readings:
Four books are available for purchase at the NYU Bookstore. Copies of these books are also on reserve at Bobst library. All other readings will be posted on the Blackboard site of this course.

Books to Purchase:


**Contact Information**

Jane Burbank: 8-8628 or jane.burbank@nyu.edu. Office hours, Mondays, 1:00 to 2:00 in room 603, KJCC, 53 Washington Square South or by appointment.

Fred Cooper: 8-8606 or fred.cooper@nyu.edu. Office hours, Tuesdays, 11:00-12:00 in room 708, KJCC, 53 Washington Square South or by appointment.

Lauren Benton: 8-3407 or lauren.benton@nyu.edu. Office, 5 Washington Sq. No., second floor, by appointment.

**Schedule of Course Meetings, Due Dates, Readings**

September 12  Introduction

September 19  Theories and Questions
Readings:
Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History* *History: Power and the Politics of Knowledge*, chapter 1, 1-22

September 26  Rome and China
Readings:


Recommended reading:
Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*, chapter 2, 23-60.

October 3
Mongol Empires
Readings:
Recommended reading:

Oct. 10
No class (NYU holiday)

October 17
Imperial Mixing: Byzantine and Ottoman Empires
Readings:
Recommended reading:

October 24
Land, Sea, and Imperial Expansion
Readings:
Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*, chapter 6, 149-84.

**October 28 (Friday)**  
**Essay due in instructor's mailbox at 4:00 pm**

Oct. 31  
China as an Empire-State  
Readings:  

November 7  
Revolutions, Empires, and Citizenship  
Readings:  

November 14  
Empires on the Eurasian Continent  
Readings:  
Recommended reading: Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*, chapter 9, 251-86.

**November 21**

Expansion, Territory, and Rule
Readings:
Recommended reading: Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*, chapter 9, 251-86.

**November 28:**

Empire and Reform
Readings:

Recommended reading:
Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*, chapter 11, 331-68.

December 5:

Civilizing Missions
Readings:
Bruce Grant, “Empire and Savagery: The Politics of Primitivism in Late Imperial Russia,” in *Russia’s Orient*, pp. 292-310.

December 12:

Decolonization and Political Imagination
Readings:
Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History*, chapters 13, 413-42.

Recommended reading:
December 14 (Wednesday): Final discussion
Reading:

December 19 (Monday): Final paper due in instructor's mailbox