

How to Rule the World:
Empire and Global Governance from Greece to America
Clst 277 | Ethics 365 | Polsci 337
Duke University | Spring 2023 | WF 8:30AM – 9:45AM (Allen 103)
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Office Hours:

Monday: 11am-12:30pm (Zoom [[link](#)] and at Bryan Center)

Wednesday: 9:30am-10:30am (Perkins coffee shop)

Friday: 3:30pm-4:30pm (East Duke 106; office shared w/ John Rose)

(Also very happy to meet by appointment!)

Course Description: From Babylon and Persia to Greece and Rome, empires have risen and fallen, but they always seem to make a comeback. Their defenders point to the stability and peace they bring in a chaotic world. Their detractors point to the despotism and cruelty involved in their maintenance. This course will begin by exploring arguments for and against empire, drawing on history, philosophy, and political theory, with a special focus on the Greeks and Romans. Classical authors will include Homer, Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Plato, Caesar, Cicero, Sallust, Virgil, Tacitus, and Augustine. Later writers will include Dante, Machiavelli, and Nietzsche. Questions we will ask are: What is power? For what reasons do people and nations pursue power? Is this pursuit reasonable and practical, or disastrous for one's character? Why does the quest for power sometimes lead nations to pursue empires? What is an empire? What conceptions of the good do they embody? How do they rise and fall? Are they consistent with democratic government? Are they overall beneficial or harmful?

In light of the parallel problems of empire and global governance, we will then ask what we can learn for international affairs today, drawing on illustrations from 20th-century American policy. For example, in view of the lessons of history, should superpowers like the US take a broad role in shaping global developments, or a restrained one? What are the humanitarian and ethical implications of different approaches to geopolitics? What role do values like liberal democracy and human rights play in determining current foreign policy? Are these worthy goals? And what part is simply power politics? What are the levers of global power? What role do international organizations, economic institutions, and monetary arrangements play? How should we think about alliances like NATO, and recent developments in the Middle East, Europe, and East Asia? Does the US-led international order constitute an "empire"? And what impact does all of this have on our lives as citizens, and on the democratic character of our domestic life? The goal of this course is to bring ancient history and political theory into dialogue with contemporary thought on these questions.

Course Goals and Objects

- Students will gain a familiarity with ancient Greek and Roman history and political theory relevant to an understanding of global governance.
- Students will learn to address issues in contemporary national and global politics by thinking about broader principles from history, political theory, ethics, economics, etc.
- Students will practice writing tightly argued, analytical response papers, as well as longer, research length papers on abstract subject matters.
- Students will work closely with the professor on the mechanics of paper writing. In particular, they will gain skills related to paper structure, clarity, and writing style.
- Students will be exposed to readings and lines of argument from multiple disciplines, including classics, philosophy, history, literature, political science, international relations, and economics.

Students will become familiar with the particular assumptions and writing styles associated with these disciplines.

General Course Requirements

Course grades will be based on writing assignments (85%) and class participation (15%).

The writing part of the course will include one 5-8 page paper (20%), one 7-10 page paper (30%) and one 13+ page research term paper (35%) (all papers double-spaced). Students will meet at least twice with the professor to discuss a term paper topic, outline and draft.

The participation grade will be based primarily on in-class discussions and/or participation in office hours. Students will be expected regularly to participate in class and to offer their questions and comments on the readings and class topics. You will also be asked most weeks to provide a 1-2 page response to a question on the readings. Completing all of these on time is part of your participation grade. In general, if you participate regularly and actively in class discussion and turn in these responses when prompted, you will get 100% on participation.

Attendance is expected at all class sessions, except for emergencies or with notification of the professor beforehand of a sufficient reason. Failure to attend will result in a significant drop in participation.

Assessment Information

Papers will be assessed for (1) meeting basic requirements (word/page count, spelling/grammar, formatting), (2) clarity of writing, (3) structure/organization, (4) accurately representing the positions of the authors being discussed and (5) the quality of the student's own original argumentation.

Class participation is based on the number of times students participate in class. Students who for various reasons might prefer to speak outside of class can also meet participation requirements by coming to office hours or by meetings with the professor in-person or over Zoom.

Required Texts

Please purchase physical copies of the following books for the class. Especially be sure to have the copy of Homer's *Iliad* by the first day of class:

- Homer: *Iliad* (tr. by Caroline Alexander) ([link](#))
- Thucydides: *The War of the Peloponnesians and the Athenians* (tr. Jeremy Mynott) ([link](#))
- Plato: *The Republic* (tr. by C.D.C. Reeve) ([link](#))

The following textbooks are *strongly recommended*, especially Tacitus and Mearsheimer. But they will also be made available in PDF on Sakai, and you may choose to use the PDF instead if you wish:

- Tacitus: *Agricola and Germania* (trans. by A.S. Kline) (\$5, [link](#))
- Dante: *De Monarchia* (Cambridge, trans. by Prue Shaw) ([link](#))
- Machiavelli: *The Prince* (trans. by Harvey Mansfield) ([link](#))
- John Lewis Gaddis: *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy During the Cold War* ([link](#))
- John Lewis Gaddis: *On Grand Strategy* ([link](#))
- John Mearsheimer: *The Great Delusion: Liberal Dreams and International Realities* ([link](#))

Classroom Expectations

This seminar will rely heavily on discussion, and depends on the active input of all participants. For that reason, it cannot be stressed enough how important respectful and open dialogue is for this class. Therefore, a few simple rules will be in effect:

- All opinions and perspectives on the issues we discuss are welcome, and civil disagreement is encouraged. No one should feel compelled to agree or disagree with the authors we are reading, but I do ask that you honestly and charitably engage with the arguments we discuss and with your peers, and that you back up your views with reasoning.
- Please refrain from interrupting others. Many of the topics we'll discuss are exciting and you may want to respond immediately to a point someone brings up. That is quite understandable, but please raise your hand and I promise you'll be called on. We want to give everybody a chance to speak and express their thoughts.
- Laptops and tablets are permitted, but no cell phones are allowed in the classroom. Put them away, so that others aren't distracted.

Tentative Reading List

Day 1: Friday, 01/13

Sec. 1: What is the Political Good?

Watch Course Intro (~20 mins, go to Zoom Meetings tool on Sakai site)

Aristotle: *Politics*, Book I (selection)

Sec. 2: How to Build an Empire I: The Case of Cyrus

Herodotus: *Histories*, Book I (selection)

Day 2: Wed 01/18

Aristotle: *Politics*, Book III (selection)

Xenophon: *The Education of Cyrus* (selections)

Day 3: Fri 01/20

Sec. 3: Snatching Glory

Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I (selection)

Homer: *Iliad*, Books 1-4 and 6 [Read Bk II only up to p. 39; you may skip pp. 40-52]

Optional (but recommended!): *Iliad*, Book 5

Day 4: Wed 01/25

Homer: *Iliad*, Book 15, pp. 320-333

Homer: *Iliad*, Books 16-19

Day 5: Fri 01/27

Homer: *Iliad*, Books 20-22 and 24

Optional (but recommended!): *Iliad*, Book 23

Sec. 4: How to Build an Empire II: The Case of the Delian League

Thucydides: *History of the Peloponnesian War*, Book I, pp. 14-35

Day 6: Wed 02/01

Lecture: Victor Davis Hanson: "A War Like No Other" (video link)

Thucydides: *History of the Peloponnesian War* (Book I, pp. 35-73)

Thucydides: Pericles' Funeral Oration (Book II, pp. 108-117)

Thucydides: Pericles' Speech on the Spartan Invasion (Book II, pp. 124-130)

Day 7: Fri 02/03

Sec. 5: Justice or Power?: The Soul and the City

Thucydides: Civil Strife in Corcyra (Book III, pp. 206-216)

Thucydides: Melian Dialogue (Book V, pp. 378-386)

Plato: *Republic*, Book I - IIa (pp. 1- 46)

Day 8: Wed 02/08

Plato: *Republic*, Book IIb (pp. 46-66)

Plato: *Republic*, Book III (pp. 66 - 102)

Day 9: Fri 02/10

Plato: *Republic*, Book IV (pp. 103 – 135)

Plato: *Republic*, Book VI (pp. 183 – 200)

Plato: *Republic*, Book VII (489e at p. 208 to 521d at p. 215))

[Optional: Plato: *Republic*, Book V (pp. 158-164)]

[Optional: Plato: *Republic*, Book VI (pp. 201-207)]

Day 10: Wed 02/15

Plato: *Republic*, Book VIII – IX (pp. 238 - 296)

Day 11: Fri 02/17

Thucydides: The Sicilian Expedition, Book VI pp. 389-406, 413-418, 423-444

Nietzsche: "Homer's Contest"

Optional: Thucydides pp. 407-412

Day 12: Wed 02/22

Thucydides: The Sicilian Expedition continued, Book VII pp. 458-462, 475-512

[you may skip secs. 57-58 at pp. 488-491]

Video: "How the Roman Government Worked" (watch first 5 mins only) (link)

Video: "Ancient Rome in 20 minutes" (video, link)

Lecture: Prof. David L. Kennedy: "The Roman Republic" (link; recommend speeding up to 1.25; watch up to 50:10 mins, rest optional)

Day 13: Fri 02/24

Sec. 6: How Not to Coup: The Gracchi, Sulla, and Catiline

Jed Atkins on the Roman Constitution and Polybius (from *Roman Political Thought*)

Lecture: Prof. David L. Kennedy: "The Roman Revolution" (link)

Sallust: *The Conspiracy of Catiline*

Optional: Cicero on the Roman Republic: *De Republica*, Book I Sec. 13-71, Book II Sec. 1-3

Day 14: Wed 03/01

Sec. 7: How to Build an Empire III: The Roman Republic

Video: “Marian Reforms and their Military Effects” ([link](#))

Video: “Rome: From Marius to Caesar” ([link](#))

Video: Clip from HBO’s *Rome* ([link](#))

Cicero on Justice and Just War: *De Republica*, Book III Sec. 8 – 41

Cicero: *De Officiis* Book I Sec. 33-41, Book II Sec. 23-27

Julius Caesar: *Gallic Wars* (selection)

Day 15: Fri 03/03

Sec. 8: How to Coup: The Augustan Revolution

Video: “The Augustan Revolution (pt. 1)” ([link](#))

Video: “The Augustan Revolution (pt. 2)” ([link](#))

Jed Atkins: *Roman Political Thought* (on the Roman Imperial constitution)

Tacitus: *Annals*, Ch. 1

Optional: Virgil: *Aeneid* (selection)

Day 16: Wed 03/08

Sec. 9: Empire, Cosmopolitanism, and the Global Common Good

Jed Atkins: *Roman Political Thought* (on Roman citizenship and Stoic cosmopolitanism)

Selections on Stoicism: Diogenes, Marcus Aurelius, Seneca

Optional: Seneca *On Anger* (selection)

Sec. 10: Empire and *Libido Dominandi* (The “Lust for Domination”)

Tacitus: *Agricola* (Secs. 1-17)

Day 17: Fri 03/10

Tacitus: *Agricola* (Secs. 18-46)

Augustine: *City of God* (selection)

Day 18: Wed 03/22

Sec. 11: Natural Law, Empire and Human Rights

Dante: *De Monarchia* Book 1: secs. i-v, x, xiii-xiv

Dante: *De Monarchia* Book 2: secs. i-ii, iii, v-viii, ix.1-9

Optional: Book 2, secs. x-xi; Book 3, secs. i, x-xi

[Note: Sections below marked with ‘>>’ are ‘focus sections.’ While you should read/watch everything assigned, these ‘focus’ sections are the ones you should devote the most attention and time to. The rest you may read through more quickly if you are pressed for time.]

Day 19: Fri 03/24

Sec. 12: The Return of Republicanism: Machiavelli and Renaissance Political Thought

>> Lecture: Prof. Michael Sugrue: “Machiavelli” (video [link](#))

>> Machiavelli, *The Prince* (pp. 3-11, 20-27, 60-77, 98-101)

Optional: Machiavelli, *The Prince* pp. 101-111

Sec. 13: The American Century: US Cold War Strategy and the Origins of Hegemony

John Lewis Gaddis: *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy During the Cold War*, Prologue: “Containment Before Kennan” pp. 3-15

Day 20: Wed 03/29 – Idealism, Realism, and the Beginnings of Containment

John Lewis Gaddis: *Strategies of Containment*, Ch.1: “Prologue,” pp. 15-23

>> John Lewis Gaddis: *Strategies of Containment*, Ch. 2: “George F. Kennan and the Strategy of Containment,” pp. 24-37, 46

>> John Lewis Gaddis: *Strategies of Containment*, Ch. 3: “Implementing Containment,” pp. 54-60

4 Short Videos:

- Video: “What was the Iron Curtain?” (3 mins, [link](#))
- Video: “The Marshall Plan” (5 min video, [link](#))
- Video: “The Marshall Plan to Rebuild Europe After World War II” (3 mins, [link](#))
- Video: “History of NATO on a Map” (watch up to 8:15 only, [link](#))

Optional: George Kennan: “The Sources of Soviet Conduct” (The “X-Article,” 1947)

Day 21: Fri 03/31 – NSC-68, Flexible Response, and Nuclear Deterrence

>> Gaddis: *Strategies of Containment* Ch. 4: ‘NSC-68 and the Korean War’ pp. 87-93, 96-101, 104-110
CNN Documentary: “The Cold War: MAD” ([link](#))

John Finnis, G. Grisez and J. Boyle: *Nuclear Deterrence, Morality and Realism*, Ch. I & IV.1 (excerpt)

>> Gaddis: *On Grand Strategy*: Ch. 1: “Crossing the Hellespont” (>>: Secs. I-III, V-VI, IX-XII)

Optional: NSC 68: “United States Objectives and Programs for National Security” (1950)

Optional: Finnis, Grisez, and Boyle, Ch. I: “What Threats are Made”

Day 22: Wed 04/05 – Ike’s “New Look”; Coup d’Etat Ethics; Flexible Response and Vietnam

Watch: ‘Eisenhower’s New Look and the CIA: 1951-1954’ (7 min video, [link](#))

Watch: ‘The Cold War: The New Look Policy’ (4 min video, [link](#))

>> Jeane Kirkpatrick: “Dictatorships and Double Standards” (Commentary Magazine) (brief excerpt)

>> Michael Lind: *Vietnam: The Necessary War*, Ch. 2: “Why Indochina Mattered” pp. 31-41, 49-75

>> Gaddis: *On Grand Strategy*: Ch. 2: “Long Walls” (>>: Secs. I-III, VI-VII, XII-XVI)

Optional: CNN Documentary: “Vietnam” ([link](#))

Day 23: Fri 04/07 – Zoom Conversation w/ John Lewis Gaddis, the ‘Dean of Cold War Historians’: On Grand Strategy, Cold War, and the Classics

3 short videos, ~15 mins – The end of the Cold War:

- Video: Ronald Reagan: “Evil Empire Speech” (2 mins, clip)
- Video: ‘Reagan: End of the Cold War’ (8 mins, [link](#))
- Video: Ronald Reagan: “Berlin Wall Speech” (5 mins, clip)

>> John Lewis Gaddis: *On Grand Strategy*: Ch.3: “Teachers and Tethers” (>>: Sec. I-VI, X-XII)

>> John Lewis Gaddis: *On Grand Strategy*: Ch. 4: “Souls and States” (>>: Secs. VI-XIII)

Day 24: Wed 04/12 – The ‘Unipolar Moment’

Sec. 14: American Hegemony: For and Against

Video: Francis Fukuyama: ‘The End of History and the Last Man’ (C-Span; [link](#))

>> Strobe Talbott: ‘America Abroad: The Birth of the Global Nation’ (Time, 4 pp.; [link](#))

>> Charles Krauthammer: ‘Democratic Realism: An American Foreign Policy for a Unipolar World’

>> John Mearsheimer: *The Great Delusion: Liberal Dreams and International Realities*: 1-5, 120-130

Optional: Patrick Clawson: ‘The Clinton Doctrine’ (1997, 10 min read, [link](#))

Optional: Charles Krauthammer: ‘The Clinton Doctrine’ (1999, 5 min read, [link](#))

Day 25: Fri 04/14 – Realism vs. Liberal Institutionalism

Lecture: John Mearsheimer: “The Great Delusion” (watch to 44 mins; [link](#))

>> John Mearsheimer: *The Great Delusion: Liberal Dreams and International Realities*, pp. 130-143; 149-171

>> G. John Ikenberry: *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars* (xi-xxiii)

Optional: John Mearsheimer: *The Great Delusion*, “Liberal Institutionalism” pp. 210-216

Optional: Video: John Mearsheimer: “What is Realism?” ([video link](#))

Day 26: Wed 04/19 – American Empire: For and Against

Niall Ferguson: “Our American Empire” (1 min clip, [link](#))

>> Speech: Max Boot: “Does America Need an Empire?” (short read – 6 pages)

>> Niall Ferguson: “America, an Empire in Denial?” (15 mins, [link](#))

G. John Ikenberry: *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars* (xxiii-xxviii)

>> John Mearsheimer: *The Great Delusion: Liberal Dreams and International Realities*, pp. 210-234

Optional: Niall Ferguson and Ivan Eland: ‘Commanding Heights: American Empire’ (interview, [link](#))

Optional: Edward Luttwak: *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire*: Introduction and Epilogue

Day 27: Fri 04/21 – NATO Expansion and Liberal Hegemony in Eastern Europe

George Kennan: ‘A Fateful Error’ (NYT, 1997) (5 min read, [link](#))

>> Strobe Talbott: ‘Why NATO Should Grow’ (NY Review of Books, 1995) ([link](#))

>> John Mearsheimer: Lecture: ‘Why Ukraine is the West’s Fault’ ([link](#); watch to 46:00, rest optional)

Optional: Strobe Talbott: Speech on NATO Expansion (1997)

Optional: Christopher Miller: Lecture: “Putinomics” ([link](#))

Day 28: Wed 04/26 – The Rise of China and the End of Liberalism?

>> Liu Mingfu: “The Chinese Dream to Overtake America” (The Atlantic, 10 min read, [link](#))

Graham Allison: “The Thucydides Trap: Are the U.S. and China Headed for War?” (Atlantic, [link](#))

>> Interview: John Mearsheimer: “Great Powers, US Hegemony, and the Rise of China” ([link](#))

Optional: Lecture: Michael Hudson: ‘De-Dollarization: Toward the End of US Monetary Hegemony?’ ([link](#); start at 5:00)