

**Empire and Nation in Eastern and Western Europe: comparisons, challenges,
interpretations and legacies**

Course Syllabus

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General Overview of the Course's Tasks and Requirements

The present course has been conceived in the framework of the broader program aiming at the reform of the historical education in the Republic of Moldova and at its synchronization with the most recent international scholarly trends. In this context, the comparative dimension (both in the field of methodology and subject matter) has been granted a special attention.

The overall **goal** of the course is oriented towards the introduction within the university's MA program of certain key elements that would allow the overcoming of the customary conceptual grid circumscribed by national and narrowly regional narratives and approaches that constitute a characteristic and salient feature of the teaching and learning tradition in the field of history in the East and South-East European region. In this sense, on the one hand, a theoretical "rehabilitation" and reevaluation of the imperial phenomenon at the macro-level of the European continent will be attempted. A special emphasis will be put upon the uncovering and explanation of the complex relationship between nation-states and the multi-national empires that largely dominated European politics and society in various forms prior to World War I. On the other hand, the course will seek to provide a framework for the discussion and analysis of the interdependence between the process of "modernization" and the evolution of the relations between the "national states" and the continental and maritime empires created by European "composite polities" throughout the modern period. A final aim of the course will focus on the assessment of the impact of "imperial traditions" on the construction and articulation of the contemporary projects of the "European Community" in their various guises. In this context, the problem of "imperial legacies" as structuring and defining elements of the system of European states in the modern and recent periods will also be discussed. The entanglement of "national" and "imperial" elements in this picture will be of special interest and will treat these subjects as closely connected rather than separate or even antagonistic processes. The course will be organized in the form of two distinct but related „modules" that would presumably allow students to become familiar both with the rich and thriving theoretical controversies and discussions that have been particularly intense in this field in recent years (Lectures 1-4- „module I") and with the possible application of various conceptual and analytical models to the concrete cases of the "multinational" empires situated either on the periphery or in the central regions of the European continent (lectures 5-11- „module II".) A fundamental question that will be addressed and will structure the discussion within this module will deal with the dilemmas and multiple difficulties that the imperial states of the European East and West had to face (in highly differing circumstances) in the "age of nationalism." The ultimate objective of the course presupposes the learning and acquiring of relevant research skills and methods, as well as the accumulation of basic information and source material. This theoretical and empirical basis appears indispensable in order to further conceive and develop possible MA projects and research agendas in the fields mentioned above or in other, closely connected areas of investigation. These projects will of course mostly represent applied and empirical studies with special relevance for the Romanian and Bessarabian case.

The methodology of the course, as the title and the above discussion should clarify, is based on an explicitly comparative approach. Such a methodology is directed towards the contextualization of the "imperial experience" within a well-defined and clearly structured explanatory scheme. Aside from the insights and suggestions offered by the narrower tradition of "comparative studies" of empires, the relevant observations from the fields of sociology (in particular with reference to the theoretical discussions concerning the nature of empires as distinct state and social formations), "cultural studies" (with a special emphasis on the various imperial ideologies and their impact on state policies) and political science will be extensively used. Despite the conventional "functional" division between the "theoretical" and "empirical" aspects within the course syllabus, one of the course's most ambitious methodological aims is to close (or at least narrow) the "gap" between abstract and "general" theories and their application to the concrete phenomena that will be studied in a detailed and more "empirically-oriented"

manner. From a methodological point of view, the importance and relevance (but also the drawbacks) of the “imperial” framework as a possible unit of macro-regional comparative research will be one of the major conceptual questions discussed by the students and the instructor.

The selected bibliography was designed specifically to reflect, as much as possible, the main currents and tendencies that dominate the present debates from the specialized area of *empire studies*. The structure of the bibliography aimed at providing a certain balance between works with a more general-theoretical thrust and concrete “case studies.” The foreign language abilities and proficiency of the students are of fundamental importance, due to the specificity of the scholarly preoccupations in the area of our interest. Though the use of certain materials available in Romanian is encouraged and stimulated (possibly also through the translation of a number of important short works or excerpts from the course reader), the bulk of the empirical and theoretical sources originate in non-Romanian academic traditions (among which the English-, Russian-, French- and German-language scholarly works hold pride of place). Thus, the course participants should (ideally) display an acceptable reading proficiency in at least two of the above-mentioned languages in order to actively take part in the course discussions and acquaint themselves with the required readings. .

The evaluation and grading of the students’ academic performance will be organized according to the scheme presented below. The course will be held in the form of two weekly sessions, one of which will consist of a lecture (in which the instructor will give an overview of the topic and introduce the students to the relevant scholarly debates), while the other will be a discussion section devoted to an in-depth analysis of the readings and to students’ questions and presentations. The final grade will be determined on the basis of three criteria: 1) active participation in the seminar discussions held during the second part of the course sessions (20%); 2) two shorter papers (5-10 pages), to be submitted, respectively, in the middle (at the end of Week 5) and at the end of the semester, after the last lecture during Week 11 (each paper counts for 20% of the overall grade; it is to be taken into consideration that the first paper will have to discuss a theoretically relevant issue, analyzed during the first module, while the second paper will be devoted to a concrete case, according to the students’ choice, with the provision that they would have to produce an original text and apply the theoretical background acquired during the course in the process)- 40% overall; 3) the final examination (40%), consisting of 2 parts: a) an oral evaluation of the students’ familiarity with the issues previously discussed; and b) a written paper on a fixed topic, determined by the instructor (according to the course syllabus). This scheme will take into account both the student’s ability to undertake independent research and to express specific opinions and points of view and the degree of assimilation of the relevant information and skills that the course participants presumably gained during the semester sessions.

Course Description (topics)

1. General Introduction. The Presentation of the Course’s Priorities and Basic Sources.

Readings: Lieven, 2000, Bibliography (pp. 445-476); Eisenstadt, 1992, Introduction.

2. “Empire:” Concept, Evolutions, Conflicting Interpretations. Empire in the “Western” and “Eastern” Intellectual Traditions: Essential Features, Differences and Similarities.
 - a. Is an “objective” definition of the concept of “empire” feasible?
 - b. The Roman “imperium” and its legacies
 - c. European variations on the “imperial” theme in the Middle Ages and their significance
 - d. Can one identify an “Eastern” tradition of empire?

Readings: Duverger, 1980; Eisenstadt, 1992, cap.1.,2; Muldoon, 1999; Doyle, 1986; Pagden, 1995; Armitage, 1998; Lieven, 2000, cap. 1.

3. “Continental” and “Maritime” Empires. The Relationship between “Metropole” and “Colony” within These Polities: Common and Special Features. Is the “Colonial” Paradigm Valid in the Case of “Contiguous” Empires?

Readings: Doyle, 1986; Eisenstadt, 1992; Lieven, 2004; Fieldhouse, 1982.

4. Frontiers, Borderlands, Contested Zones and “The System of Continental Empires:” A New Approach in Empire Studies?
 - a. Frontiers, Boundaries, Borderlands: A Terminological Maze or Distinct Categories?
 - b. The Eurasian Continental Empires between Interaction and Competition: Contested Borders and “Borderland Communities”
 - c. The Predicament of the Steppe: Challenges and Responses
 - d. The Geopolitical Dimension and the “Complex Frontier Regions:” A New Research Agenda?

Readings: Rieber, 2003; Rieber, 2004; Lattimore, 1951; Khodarkovsky (empires.ru); McNeill, 1964

5. Between Nation and Empire: Great Britain in a Global Context (From the “Dominion of the Seas” to the “British” Commonwealth)

Readings: Canny, 1973; McKettrick, 1997; Lieven, 2000; Colley, 1992; Kearney, 1989.

6. Nationalism, Imperial Decline, and the Birth of Modernity on Europe’s Periphery: The “Spanish Problem” During the XIX Century

Readings: Balfour, 1995; Blinkhorn, 1980; Balfour, 2003 (empires.ru); Balfour, 1997; Costelloe, 1986.

7. Between “the Crusade” and the Crescent: The Imperial Phenomenon and the Dilemmas of National Movements in the European South-East (from the Ottomans to the Habsburgs)

Readings: Inalcik, Quataert, 1994; Sugar, 1993; Findley, 1980; Somel, 2004; Ingrao, 1994; Evans, 1979; Rieber (see above); Jaszi, 1977.

8. The Russian Empire: Geopolitics, Multi-Ethnicity and the Challenges of Modernity

Readings: Kappeler, 1992 [1997]; Seton-Watson, 1967; Ragsdale, 1993; LeDonne, 1997; Bassin, 1999; Khodarkovsky, 2001; Hosking, 1997 [2002]; Riasanovsky, 1976; Walicki, 1975. [etc.].

9. „The Ukrainian Question:” The Birth of an “Improbable Nation” and Inter-Imperial Competition

Readings: Miller, 2000; Kohut, 1988; Saunders, 1988; Himka, 1999; Szporluk, 1993.

10. „The Romanian Case” and “Imperial Legacies:” Mythologized Stereotypes or Historical Facts? Bessarabia- A Peculiar “Borderland:” Multiplicity of Significations and Consequences

Readings: Chirot, 1976; Jowitt, 1976; Antohi, 2002; Mitu, 1997; Cioranescu, 1983; Manoliu-Manea, 1983; Dima, 1991; King, 2000; Negru, 2000; C. and B. Jelavich, 1977 [etc.]

11. Was the Soviet Union “The Last Empire”? Considerations on the Applicability of the “Imperial Model” to the Soviet Experience

Readings: Martin, 2001; Martin, 2002; Simon, 1991; Suny, 1993; Slezkine, 1994; Pipes, 1964; Kotkin, 1998.

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