

Global Histories of Revolution and Empire: New Perspectives and Views from the Margins (1760s–1990s).

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This seminar course investigates the entangled nature of two significant features of the global history of the modern world: revolutionary politics and the transformation and expansion of forms of imperial power. People across the globe – whether they were African farmers in the Cape Colony, government ministers in European capitals, or trade-unionists in Java – understood revolutionary change as a concrete possibility. Yet both those who advocated such change and those who opposed it worked to imagine and enact forms of institutional normativity that could stabilize post-revolutionary moments. One of the paradoxes of revolution was its tendency to produce or reinforce forms of imperial rule.

The course takes a chronological and thematic approach to trace the different ways in which revolutionary events in various worldwide locations challenged, transformed, and reinforced imperial structures from the late eighteenth to the late twentieth centuries. It begins by interrogating interpretations of the period between the 1760s and the middle of the nineteenth century that historians have come to call the ‘Age of Revolutions.’ It then examines what continuities existed with this period in the later nineteenth century, and how the complex entanglement of revolution and empire evolved into the second half of the 1900s. The course outline has been designed to decentre predominant narratives focused on Europe and the North Atlantic, and to highlight the dynamic interactions between revolution and empire worldwide.

The course will help students to reflect critically on the geographies and periodizations of revolution and empire-building; to compare, connect and contrast processes taking place at different times and locations across the globe; and to discuss the relevance of such processes in the construction of the contemporary world. Each session revolves around an in-depth discussion of the reading materials, facilitated by the tutor, with the aim of reflecting critically, in a collective manner, on the different authors’ approaches, their contributions to the course’s themes, and potential connections with the seminar participants’ own research. To this end, starting in session 3, students will take turns in preparing a short introductory presentation (c. 5-10 mins) including a critical review of the session’s materials and some questions for general discussion (one presentation per session). A final paper (c. 5,000 words) on a topic agreed on with the tutor, ideally in December, will be due at the end of January 2026. Two sessions in the second half of February will be dedicated to collective feedback on student papers.

I. 19 November 2025 – Introduction: The Age of Revolution(s).

What do historians mean when they talk about an Age of Revolution or Revolutions? What are the spaces, moments, and processes they associate with the concept? How do they associate revolution and empire? How have mainstream interpretations changed over the past 60 years? This session is a chance to engage in collective reflection on the course's main themes and questions.

- Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution: Europe 1789–1848*. (New York: Vintage, 1996 [1962]) “Introduction” and “Conclusion”, pp. 1–7, 297–309.
- Christopher Alan Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), “Chapter 3. Converging Revolutions”, pp. 86–120.
- David Armitage and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Introduction: The Age of Revolutions, c. 1760–1840 – Global Connection, Causation and Comparison”, in David Armitage and Sanjay Subrahmanyam (eds.), *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context, c.1760-1840* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), xii–xxxii.

II. 26 November 2025 – The Revolutionary Atlantic and Latin America.

This session focuses on the Atlantic World and Latin America as fundamental contact zones for generating and sustaining revolutionary activity at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. At the same time, it interrogates the intersections between revolution, abolitionism, and the imperial dimension of state-building and the newly-independent polities of the Americas.

- Julius S. Scott, *The Common Wind: Afro-American Currents in the Age of the Haitian Revolution* (London: Verso Books, 2018), “Chapter Four. “Ideas of Liberty Have Sunk So Deep”: Communication and Revolution, 1789–1793”, pp. 118–158.
- Ada Ferrer, “Haiti, Free Soil, and Antislavery in the Revolutionary Atlantic”, *The American Historical Review*, 117, 1 (2012), pp. 40–66.
- Jeremy Adelman, “An Age of Imperial Revolutions”, *The American Historical Review*, 113, 2 (2008), pp. 319–340.

- **Optional:** Peter Linebaugh and Markus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), “Chapter Seven. A Motley Crew in the American Revolution”, 211–247.

III. 3 December 2025 – The Age of Revolutions in the Pacific and Indian Ocean Worlds

What did the Age of Revolutions look like in the eastern portion of the Southern Hemisphere? How was it connected to the revolutionary Atlantic? How did people who moved through, and lived along, the shores of the Pacific and Indian Oceans interpret and try to enact changes in their ways of life and in imperial power structures? How did empires respond? Through a discussion of cases from South Africa to New Zealand and Peru, the session will encourage reflections on the importance of actors and spaces far removed from better-known revolutionary hubs.

- Sujit Sivasundaram, *Waves Across the South: A New History of Revolution and Empire* (London: William Collins, 2020), “Chapter Two. In the South Pacific: Travellers, Monarchs and Empires”, pp. 40–78, **and/or** “Chapter Three. In the Southwest Indian Ocean: Worlds of Revolt and the Rise of Britain”, pp. 79–122.
- Linda Colley, *The Gun, the Ship and the Pen: Warfare, Constitutions and the Making of the Modern World* (London: Profile Books, 2021), “Chapter Six: Those Not Meant to Win, Those Unwilling to Lose”, pp. 253–305.
- **Optional:** Sinclair Thomson, “Sovereignty Disavowed: the Tupac Amaru Revolution in the Atlantic World”, *Atlantic Studies*, 13, 3 (2016), 407–431.

IV. 10 December 2025 – New Orders and Revolutions in Restoration Europe.

The great upheavals of the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century brought with them a desire to order and manage the world’s rapidly changing societies and institutions in ways that could create stability. The most famous attempt to create a “New World Order” in the early nineteenth century was the Congress of Vienna. What were the contours of this new imagined order? How did revolutionaries in Europe counter such initiatives with their own attempts at ordering? And how did these attempts drive imperial

expansion? This session examines these questions by looking at better- and less-well-known revolutionary and counterrevolutionary moments in Europe between the 1810s and the 1830s.

- Glenda Sluga, *The Invention of International Order: Remaking Europe after Napoleon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), “Introduction”, pp. 1–10, and “Epilogue. Paradoxes”, pp. 269–282.
- Maurizio Isabella, *Southern Europe in the Age of Revolutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023), “Introduction. Southern Europe and the Making of a Global Revolutionary South”, pp. 1–17, and “Chapter 5. Crossing the Mediterranean: Volunteers, Mercenaries, Refugees”, pp. 218–254.
- Beatrice de Graaf and Erik de Lange, “The Revolutions that Consolidated Empire: A Reconsideration of 1830”, *Past and Present*, Advance Access, published online 11 August 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtaf016>.

V. 17 December 2025 – Revolution and Empire in 1848

The 1848 Revolutions are often described as one of Europe’s quintessential revolutionary moments, and as the last in a cycle that began in Paris in 1789. This session focuses on work that revises such an interpretation, while connecting what happened on the European barricades during the “Springtime of the Peoples” to wider processes of imperial re-definition and policy change. Its goal is to investigate how the mid-century crisis drove changes in local and imperial repertoires of power.

- Miles Taylor, “The 1848 Revolutions and the British Empire”, *Past & Present*, 166, 1 (2000), pp. 146–180.
- Jennifer Sessions, “Colonizing Revolutionary Politics: Algeria and the French Revolution of 1848”, *French Politics, Culture & Society*, 33, 1 (2015), pp. 75–100.
- Christopher Clark, *Revolutionary Spring: Fighting for a New World, 1848–1849* (London: Allen Lane, 2023), “Introduction”, pp. 1–14.
- **Optional:** Matthias Middell and Meghan Maruschke, “Les mouvements révolutionnaires au milieu du XIXe siècle et l’émergence de la condition globale” in *Les Mondes de 1848. Au-delà du Printemps des peuples*, edited

by Quentin Deluermoz, Emmanuel Fureix and Clément Thibaud (Ceyzérieu: Champ Vallon, 2023), pp. 28–44.

VI. 7 January 2026 – Revolutionaries, Settlers and Abolitionists after the Mid-Century Crisis.

The interrelation of revolutionary upheaval and imperial reconfiguration continued after 1848. In the Atlantic world, the civil wars and revolutions of the 1860s and 1870s revolved around questions, such as the abolition of slavery, that had been in the air since the end of the eighteenth century. At the same time, the movement of exiles from European revolutions drove the expansion of settler colonialism from Argentina to Australia. Even a quintessentially “local” revolution, the Paris Commune, affected complex webs of imperial entanglement. This session interrogates the continuation and transformation of themes from an earlier ‘Age of Revolutions’ into the second half of the nineteenth century.

- Alessandro Bonvini and Stephen Jacobson, “Democratic imperialism and Risorgimento colonialism: European legionnaires on the Argentine Pampa in the 1850s”, *Journal of Global History*, 17, 1 (2022), pp. 89–108.
- Samantha Payne, ““A General Insurrection in the Countries with Slaves”: The US Civil War and the Origins of an Atlantic Revolution, 1861–1866”, *Past & Present*, 257, 1 (2022), pp. 248–279.
- Quentin Deluermoz, “The Worlds of the Paris Commune”, in *Revolutionary World: Global Upheaval in the Modern Age*, edited by David Motadel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), pp. 92–110.
- **Optional:** Angela (formerly Andrew) Zimmermann, “Guinea Sam Nightingale and Magic Marx in Civil War Missouri: Provincializing Global History and Decolonizing Theory”, *History of the Present*, 8, 2 (2018), pp. 140–176.

VII. 14 January 2026 – World War One: End of an Era? Turning Point? Catalyst?

The end of the nineteenth century marked a moment of rupture in which new forms of imperialism and new forms of nationalism combined with increasing global interdependence to set the stage for the great shock of the First World War, an event that traditionally marks the end of the “Long Nineteenth Century”. This session looks beyond

narratives of rupture to examine how some of the ideas and practices associated with the Age of Revolutions transformed and persisted into the twentieth century.

- Ilham Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism, 1860–1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), “Chapter 1. The Late Nineteenth-century World and the Emergence of a Global Radical Culture”, 15–34. **Optional:** “Chapter 4. The Construction of Two Radical Networks in Beirut and Alexandria”, 94–134.
- Christina Heatherton, *Arise!: Global Radicalism in the Era of the Mexican Revolution* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2022), “Introduction. How to Make a Rope”, pp. 1–20.
- Tim Harper, *Underground Asia: Global Revolutionaries and the Assault on Empire* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2021), “Foreword”, xxvii–xxx, and “Chapter 9. Victory! (1917–1919)”, pp. 317–362.

VIII. 21 January 2026 – Revolution and Empire in the Twentieth-Century World.

This final session serves as a forum to examine whether the themes that have been discussed throughout the seminar are helpful for analyses of events taking place up until the later twentieth century, whether the patterns of entanglement between revolution and empire have changed as we get closer to the present day and how. **Please note: the readings for this session are provisional. We can discuss alternative materials and themes for the final session during the course of the seminar, based on input and recommendations from seminar participants.**

- Martin Conway and Robert Gerwarth, “Revolution and counter-revolution”, in *Political Violence in Twentieth-Century Europe*, edited by Donald Bloxham and Robert Gerwarth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 140–175.
- Martin Thomas, *The End of Empires and a World Remade: a Global History of Decolonization* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2024), “Chapter 10. Hiding Wars”, pp. 188–220.
- Paul Betts, “1989 At Thirty: A Recast Legacy”, *Past and Present*, 244, 1 (2019), pp. 271–305.