

**Oberlin College
Department of History**

**History 451: The French Empire: Colonizers and Colonized
Spring 2012
Wednesdays, 2:30-4:20 PM**

**Instructor: Leonard V. Smith
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**Office Hours: Mondays, 1:30-4 PM; Wednesdays, 9:00 AM-12:00 PM; Thursdays,
11:00 AM-1:00 PM; and by appointment**

This is an advanced course in how to read and write about approaches to the history of the French colonialism. Most of the readings cover the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries—a period through which the French empire expanded and declined, but never really fell. The course will explore the ways in which the history of the French empire itself muddled the categories of "colonizers" and "colonized."

With a few exceptions, the course deals with secondary rather than primary materials. The readings vary widely in their methodological approaches and in their difficulty. The material is quite unforgiving in terms of historical context, which explains why the course has a prerequisite of History 102 or the equivalent. We will also spend some time talking about context in class. Even so, students should expect to spend a considerable amount of time reading about places, events, and people they don't understand very well.

The course addresses two main tasks—obtaining a certain level of proficiency in learning what historians call the “facts” of the history of the French empire, and learning and critiquing approaches to writing that history. Reading and writing in different ways for different purposes is one of the most useful skills one can acquire in college.

Requirements:

The format of the course is discussion. Regular and intensive participation by each member of the class is essential to the success of the enterprise. Though grading remains more an art than a science, approximately 50 percent of each student's final grade will depend on her or his ability to contribute to class discussion.

I. Readings:

The following books have been ordered for purchase at the Oberlin College Bookstore (in alphabetical order):

Jean de Brunhoff, *The Story of Babar, the Little Elephant* (originally published 1933)

Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (1997)

Matthew Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria's Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era* (2000)

Eric Jennings, *Vichy in the Tropics: Petain's National Revolution in Madagascar, Guadeloupe, and Indochina, 1940-44* (2004)

Gregory Mann, *Native Sons: West African Veterans and France in the Twentieth Century* (2006)

Todd Sheppard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (2006)

Daniel J. Sherman, *French Primitivism and the Ends of Empire, 1945-75* (2011)

Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (2000)

If they use the bookstore, students are advised to purchase early, as the bookstore returns unsold books at a certain point in the semester. All of the required books are also on reserve. Many are also available as electronic books through OBIS. A number of other readings will also be made available through Blackboard.

II. Presentations:

Students should expect to make several short (10-15 minute) presentations regularly over the course of the semester. The purpose of the presentations is to lay out the main issues of the assigned readings so as to initiate discussion. The presentations should lay out the methodologies at work in the readings, and begin to critique them. At least two and sometimes three students will present per week. Collaboration among students presenting in a given week is particularly encouraged. Particularly if two or three students are presenting on the same book, they should coordinate the content of their presentations in order to avoid overlap. I am happy to assist in dividing labor among presenters.

For students with an appropriate level of French, the opportunity will be made available to do presentations on supplemental French readings. These readings will be tied in to the readings of a particular week. Students may write papers drawing from these supplemental readings, though the papers must be written in English (quotations excepted). Students presenting on French readings are still expected to have a basic familiarity with the readings assigned for a given week.

Presentations on French readings will need to be worked out in advance following a conference with the instructor.

III. Papers:

The writing component of the course comprises three short (4-5 page) essays. These may be drawn from students' presentations, though this is not a requirement. As with the presentations, the purpose of the papers is to explain and critique methodologies of writing the history of the French empire. Students must write one paper before Spring Break, and at least two by May 1. Students may write about one or both of the films if they wish.

Rewrites will be allowed for the first two papers if students are not satisfied with their grades. Rewrites are due one week after the original paper is handed back. The rewrite grade will be recorded as the final grade for the paper. Students who wish to rewrite their papers may wish to have a conference with me to discuss problems with the original version. There is more to rewriting a paper than changing a sentence here and there.

Schedule of Classes and Readings:

February 8 Introduction: Reading aloud in class and discussion:

Jean de Brunhoff, *The Story of Babar, the Little Elephant* (originally published 1933)

February 15 Ideologies of Empire: Brute Force, Assimilation, and Association

Readings:

Robert Aldrich, *Greater France* (1996), Ch. 3, "Ideas of Empire" (Blackboard)

Douglas Porch, "Bugeaud, Galliéni, Lyautey: The Development of French Colonial Warfare," *The Makers of Modern Strategy* (1986) (Blackboard)

Raymond F. Betts, *Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory, 1890-1914* (1961); Ch. 2, 4, and 6 (Blackboard)

February 22 The Empire and the Third Republic

Readings:

Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (1997)

February 29 Colonialism, Citizenship, and Gender

Readings:

Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (2000)

March 7 Locating the Voice of the Colonized?

Readings:

Joe Harris Lunn, "Kande Kamara Speaks: An Oral History of the West African Experience in France, 1914-1918," from Melvin E. Page, *Africa and the First World War* (1987) (Blackboard)

Tyler Stovall, "The Color Line Behind the Lines: Racial Violence in France during the Great War," *American Historical Review*, Volume 103, No. 3 (June 1998), pp. 737-69. (Blackboard)

Ann Laura Stoler, "Sexual Affronts and Racial Frontiers: European Identities and the Cultural Politics of Exclusion in Colonial Southeast Asia," from Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, eds., *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (1997) (Blackboard)

March 14 Léopold Senghor: Assimilated or Associated?

Readings:

Léopold Senghor, *Black Hosts* (1948) (selected poems TBA, English and French versions on Blackboard)

Janet G. Vaillant, *Black, French, and African: A Life of Léopold Sédar Senghor* (1990), "War Years," Chapter 7 (Blackboard)

March 21 Empire and Crisis in the Metropole

Readings:

Eric Jennings, *Vichy in the Tropics: Petain's National Revolution in Madagascar, Guadeloupe, and Indochina, 1940-44* (2004)

Spring Break!!

April 4 Film: *The Battle of Algiers* (1967)

April 11 The Geopolitics of Empire

Readings:

Matthew Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria's Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era* (2000)

April 18 France and Algeria: Inclusion and Exclusion

Readings:

Todd Sheppard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (2006)

April 25 The "Loose Ends" of Empire?

Readings:

Gregory Mann, *Native Sons: West African Veterans and France in the Twentieth Century* (2006)

May 2 The Empire Domesticated

Readings:

Daniel J. Sherman, *French Primitivism and the Ends of Empire, 1945-75* (2011)

May 9 Film, *Des Hommes et des dieux* (Of Gods and Men, 2010)

THIRD PAPER DUE AT TIME FOR FINAL EXAM
SET BY COLLEGE SCHEDULE
SATURDAY, MAY 19, 9:00 PM

Additional Ground Rules:

1) Due dates and page-limit requirements are to be taken most seriously. I am not in the business of persecuting students if a genuine problem exists, but in principle I strongly dislike giving extensions. Normally, I take off 1/3 of a letter grade for every 24 hours a paper is overdue.

2) Three excuses for requesting extensions will never be acceptable: 1) a self-defined character flaw of procrastination; 2) extracurricular activities, including political activism; 3) work in other classes.

3) Papers must be double-spaced and have 1-inch margins. They must also be typed or word-processed with near letter quality resolution. I will return unread any illegible paper. No written work may be submitted electronically.

- 4) All written work at Oberlin College is covered by the Honor Code. Students are expected to familiarize themselves with its provisions.
- 5) All written work for the course must be completed in order to pass it. That is to say, a student who receives an A on the first two papers and does not write the third will fail the entire course.
6. Computers should be used in class only in matters pertaining to the class. It is remarkably easy to tell when students are fixating on whatever happens to be on their computer screens rather than paying attention in class.
7. Students are advised that they should not engage in any activities in class not related to the class. This includes text messaging.
8. No permission is granted to upload ANY materials from this course on to a third party web site. Such materials are for the use of students in this class only.
- 9) Students with learning or other disabilities are advised to make proper arrangements with the Office of Disability Services at the beginning of the term.