

AS 100.702  
**European Empires in the Indian Ocean**  
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**Professor**

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This is a graduate reading seminar on the history of European empire (Portuguese, Dutch, British, French, and a bit of the U.S. presence) in the Indian Ocean. Although smaller than the Atlantic in surface area, the Indian Ocean was historically a far more complex place than the Atlantic, and for a simple reason. Unlike in the Atlantic, where Europeans were the first to sustain transoceanic navigation, trade, and (mostly westward-running) colonization, the Indian Ocean was a region where indigenous people from around the entire ocean's rim navigated, traveled, traded, and even migrated for more than a millennium before the maritime entry of Europeans at the end of the fifteenth century. Unlike those in the western Atlantic, the people of the Indian Ocean rim and its interior did not experience population decline with the arrival of Europeans. And while Africans navigated the Indian Ocean and also entered it as captives, European empire in the Indian Ocean did not employ enslaved African labor to nearly the same degree as it did in the Atlantic, this perhaps? due to a *relative* focus on trade rather than settlement and production. While "Atlantic History" as a discipline and historiography has been fundamentally about European empire (whether or not it *ought* to be), "Indian Ocean History" as a historiography comprises far more than European empire. In this seminar, then, we will be focusing on one subset of Indian Ocean history. The merit of a focus on European empire in the Indian Ocean, however, is that it helps to contextualize those expansive oceanic empires by more fully and critically assessing their reach and internal connections across the oceans in order to more fully grasp the nature, economy, and impacts of European expansion. It also confronts the notion, common in Indian Ocean historiography, that the Indian Ocean was so fundamentally different from the Atlantic that no commonalities can be found between them.

This seminar is probably the only, or one of the only, graduate courses ever offered on this particular subject (European empires in the Indian Ocean—in the plural—rather than Indian Ocean history more broadly). It is therefore experimental, and the questions to be asked, and their answers, remain open. There is no obvious syllabus for the topic, and there is less literature on the Indian Ocean than the Atlantic. Language is another challenge: much excellent work on European empires in the Indian Ocean is in respective European languages: this is especially true for the French East India Company. Despite these challenges, it is impossible to comprehensively cover the broad topic of this seminar, even with English language readings, in the twelve course meetings allocated to it. We will be sample reading.

I have selected readings that will help us to ask and at least partially to answer the following sorts of questions (we will be raising more questions, in part given the various interests of professor and students):

- What was the nature, timing and impact of various European empires in the Indian Ocean, whether on societies of the Indian Ocean or on metropolitan societies?
- How did European empires of the Atlantic and Indian Ocean differ with respect to trade, acquisition of territory, European settlement, forms of colonial rule, race, and gender? In what ways were they similar?
- What were the connections and disconnections between the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic Ocean branches of European empires? How did this differ among empires?
- What kinds of interactions took place between Europeans and their colonies, on the one hand, and indigenous polities and commerce in the Indian Ocean, on the other? How did they change or reinforce each other? What were the forms and implications of interaction and mutual influence?
- What was the nature of European slave trading in the Indian Ocean? What were its patterns, volume, and interaction with “indigenous” slave trades? How do these dimensions of slaving compare to the Atlantic or are connected with it?
- What was the nature of the abolition of slavery and rise of Indenture in the Indian Ocean, and how was this related to the Atlantic?
- What are the major existing and emerging debates in the historiography on European empire and colonization in the Indian Ocean?

### Reading Schedule

September 5: Introductions

September 12

- Stuart B. Schwartz, "The Economy of the Portuguese Empire," in Francisco Bethencourt and Diogo Ramada Curto, eds., *Portuguese Oceanic Expansion, 1400-1800* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 19-48.
- Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Portuguese Empire in Asia, 1500-1700: A Political and Economic History* Second edition (Oxford, Eng.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012). [Book available electronically via MSEL.]

September 19

- Om Prakash, "The Dutch East India Company in the Trade of the Indian Ocean," in Ashin das Gupta and Michael Naylor Pearson, eds., *India and the Indian Ocean, 1500-1800* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987), 185-200.
- Jaap R. Bruijn, "Between Batavia and the Cape: Shipping Patterns of the Dutch East India Company," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 11,2 (1980), 251-266.
- Kerry Ruth Ward, *Networks of Empire: Forced Migration in the Dutch East India Company* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

## September 26

- H. V. Bowen, Elizabeth Mancke and John G. Reid, eds., *Britain's Oceanic Empire: Atlantic and Indian Ocean Worlds, c. 1550-1850* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 45-65, 98-129, 130-150, 249-281, 311-339 [book available electronically from MSEL].
- Bowen, H. V. "The Consumption of British Manufactured Goods in India: A Prologue, 1765-1813," in Douglas E. Haynes, Abigail McGowan, Tirthankar Roy and Haruka Yanagisawa, eds., *Towards a History of Consumption in South Asia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 26-50.
- Larry Neal, "The Dutch and English East India Companies Compared: Evidence from the Stock and Foreign Exchange Markets," in James D. Tracy, ed., *The Rise of Merchant Empires: Long-Distance Trade in the Early Modern World, 1350-1750* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 195-223.
- Peter Coclanis, "Atlantic World or Atlantic/World?" *William and Mary Quarterly* 63 (October 2006), 725-742.
- Om Prakash, "The Portuguese and the Dutch in Asian Maritime Trade: A Comparative Analysis," in Sushil Chaudhury and Michel Morineau, eds., *Merchants, Companies and Trade: Europe and Asia in the Early Modern Era* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 175-188.

## October 3

- Philippe Haudrère, "The French India Company and its Trade in the Eighteenth Century," in Sushil Chaudhury and Michel Morineau, eds., *Merchants, Companies and Trade: Europe and Asia in the Early Modern Era* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 202-211.
- Megan Vaughan, *Creating the Creole Island: Slavery in Eighteenth-Century Mauritius* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005).

## October 10

- Ulbe Bosma and Remco Raben, *Being "Dutch" in the Indies: A History of Creolisation and Empire, 1500-1920* Translated by Wendie Shaffer (Athens, Oh.: Ohio University Press, 2008).

## October 17

- Jane Hooper, *Feeding Globalization: Madagascar and the Provisioning Trade, 1600-1800* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2017).

## October 24

- James R. Fichter, *So Great a Proffit: How the East Indies Trade Transformed Anglo-American Capitalism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010).

October 31

- Jeremy Prestholdt, *Domesticating the World: African Consumerism and the Genealogies of Globalization* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2008).

November 7

- Thomas R. Metcalf, *Imperial Connections: India in the Indian Ocean Arena, 1860-1920* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2008).

November 14

- Allen, Richard. *European Slave Trading in the Indian Ocean, 1500-1850* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2015).
- Pier M. Larson, "Fragments of an Indian Ocean Life: Aristide Corroller between Islands and Empires," *Journal of Social History* 45,2 (Winter 2011), 366-389.

November 28

- Sunil S. Amrith, *Crossing the Bay of Bengal: The Furies of Nature and the Fortunes of Migrants* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2013).

December 5

- Fahad Ahmad Bishara, *A Sea of Debt: Law and Economic Life in the Western Indian Ocean, 1780-1950* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2017).