Throughout much of the recent two to three millennia the majority of human population lived under imperial control of one sort or another, and even those beyond the empires’ immediate reaches were immensely influenced by the empires, be it through synchronic or diachronic interaction. Each regional imperial culture established highly distinct patterns of legitimation and rule over the subjugated population; each employed distinctive economic, military, and administrative means to ensure lasting rule over expansive territories. Yet the empires of different parts of Eurasian continent also interacted and influenced each other. Our course intends to analyze the various imperial formations that arose in Asia from the second millennium BCE and up to the 19th century in a comparative framework, highlighting the common features of the empires and their mutual diachronic and synchronic impact. We shall focus on three of the five major civilization centers of the Old World (The Near East, Inner Asia, and China), comparing these with the imperial formations in India and Europe (mostly the Roman Empire and its offspring). Aside from introducing various imperial formations (sometimes with the help of guest lecturers), we seek to identify the common problems faced by continental empires and the distinct ways these problems were dealt with in each of the civilizational centers we have decided to focus on.

**Course requirements:** Redeaing the reading materials **BEFORE** the relevant lecture (usually the reading assignments will be split among students); active participation in the lectures (30 %) presentation on the topic of choice in the classroom (oral + 2-3 pp. written) (40 %); a critical book report on an “imperial” book of your choice or a short (10 pp) comparison of a certain aspect between two or more empires (topics/books to be confirmed by the teachers no later than December 29) (30 %).

Those who are interested in submitting a seminar paper are free of the book report (the seminar paper will influence 30 % of the course’s grade; it will also be graded separately from the course, though). The paper should be submitted no later than March 1 2016 (extensions are possible only **with the teachers’ approval before the end of the course**). Those who intend to write a seminar are requested to submit a proposal, including the topic/research question; a short (ca. 1 page) introduction presenting the topic; preliminary bibliography and table of contents no later than December 29th 2015. The proposal weights 10% of the seminar’s grade. You are welcome to contact us at your earliest convenience with proposed topics
Introduction

1. October 20: The course, its participants, goals, and requirements. Definitions of “empire.” Views of the empire in 20th-21st centuries: “imperialism” and its negative emotive appeal. Imperial periodization: primary, secondary and tertiary empires. The course’s time framework and major actors. Empires and civilizations; world history vs. national history. Main topics of our comparison.

Reading:

Recommended Reading:

Part A: Introducing Empires in Time and Space: Universality and Particularity in Imperial Trajectories

2. October 27: Universality and its limits: Ideology versus praxis in early empires

Reading:

Recommended Reading:

**Reading:**
- Johannes Preiser-Kapeller, “The Medieval Roman Empire of the East as spatial phenomenon: Selected aspects (300-1200 CE),” (forthcoming)


**Reading**
- Michal Biran, “Mongol Imperial Space: Between Universalism and Particularism” (forthcoming)
- Stephen F. Dale, “The Territories and Boundaries of Empires: Ottoman Safavid and Mughal” (forthcoming)

**Recommended Reading:**
- Jane Burbank, “Muscovy Imperial Space” (forthcoming).
Part B: How the Empire Function?


**Reading:**
- Ian Morris, “The Great Athenian State,” in *The Dynamics of Ancient Empires*, 99-178 [focus on pp. 128-154, but try to read the entire article]


**Reading:**
- Benjamin Elman, “Circulation of Ming-Qing Elites,” in idem, *Civil Examinations and Meritocracy in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge MA: Harvard UP, 2013): 95-125

**Recommended Reading:**

7. December 1: The Empire of God: Religions under the imperial control, and empires under religious control. Organized and diffused religions and the imperial power. East-West divide?

**Reading:**


**Recommended Reading:**


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8. December 8: The Empire of the Sword. The Military under the Empire: conscription, mercenaries, tribal and professional armies. The army as a means of expansion and control versus the army as a threat to stability.

**Reading:**


9. December 15: Son of Heaven versus Imperator: The emperor's power in different empires. Power and weakness of “the Only Man”

**Reading:**


**Part C. Imperial Culture and Empires as Cultural Agents**


**Reading:**


Behistun Incription on http://www.livius.org/be-bm/behistun/behistun03.html


**Recommended Reading:**

11. December 29: Representing the Empire: Arts, Literature, Historiography, and Pageantry of the Imperial Rule

**Reading**


Ebba Koch on Moghuls [either in Universal Empires 194-209 or other piece]
Part D: Collapse, Regeneration, and the Afterlife of major empires

12. January 5: Why and how empires collapse?

**Reading** (To be added)
Barkey ch. 8: On the Road out of Empire: Ottomans Struggle from Empire to Nation State.

13. January 12: Lingering empires and *translatio imperii*

**Reading:**