Has the United States Become an Empire?
Fall semester, 2020
Thursday, 10am-12pm
Class Location: Zoom
Offered by the University of Arizona
Instructor: David N. Gibbs, Professor of History, dgibbs@arizona.edu

Since the ending of the Cold War, the United States has been widely viewed as an imperial power, in the sense of having a truly global level of influence, with no peer. Instead of colonies, the United States possesses hundreds of military bases throughout the world, whether for better or worse. The "imperial" characterization is now accepted by both supporters and critics of official policy. This class will evaluate the genesis of the US empire, beginning with the Cold War in the late 1940s and extending through more recent conflicts with Serbia, post-communist Russia, and elements of the Islamic world.

Throughout the class, there will be an emphasis on conflicting interpretations of US policy, particularly with regard to the motives of US policymakers. In the section on the Vietnam War, for example, students will be encouraged to consider why the United States acted as it did; to evaluate several potential explanations for U.S. actions in Vietnam; and to decide which of these possible explanations seems most plausible.

**Required text:**

Available from Amazon in paperback, [click here](#).

**Class Announcements**

October 1
Interpreting International Relations

October 8
Competing Perspectives on the Origins of the Cold War

October 15
NSC-68 and the Korean War

**October 22**
Covert Operations and the Cold War

**October 29**
Vietnam and the Politics of Defeat

**November 5**
The "Vietnam Syndrome" during the 1970s

**November 12**
The Reagan Doctrine

**November 19**
The Rise of Humanitarian Intervention

**December 3**
The War on Terror

**December 10**  
**US Relations with Post-Communist Russia**  
John J. Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis is the West's Fault," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October, 2014. For full text, [click here](#).  
Uwe Kluffmann, Matthias Schepp, and Klaus Wiegrefe, "NATO's Eastward Expansion: Did the West Break its Promise to Moscow?" *Der Spiegel International*, November 26, 2009. For full text, [click here](#).