



Adam and Eve by Lucas Cranach the Elder 1472 - 1553 [Courtauld Institute of Art Gallery]

Department of History
Spring 2025
Secil Yilmaz (yilmazse@upenn.edu)
Monday and Wednesday 12-1:30pm

Sex and Empire

This course explores the historical narratives surrounding modern empires and colonialism, with a specific focus on the role of sex and gender. Modern empires as complex political and social structures built upon and operated based on difference—racial, religious, sexual. Colonial encounters not only produced unequal and uneven conditions for the colonized, but also in the construction of racialized and gendered structures in the formation of modern capitalism, market economies, political regimes, citizenship, everyday violence and so on. This course examines the historical literature at the intersections of power and historical experience in the framework of a variety of themes including modern family, marriage, property, labor, incarceration, sex trafficking, displacement, and reproduction as they relate to sexuality, race, and religion categories in imperial contexts. The course spans the early nineteenth century to the present and framed around global and cross-cultural perspective to analyze how scholars have engaged with sexuality and gender to explore broader themes pertaining to formation of modern empires and colonialism.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING

Attendance, Participation	15%
Discussion Post & Questions	30%
First Paper	15%
Second Paper	20%
Final Paper (Exam Week)	20%

Course Content

Week 1	Introduction: What is Sex? What is the History of Sex and Empire?
Week 2	Victorian Morality, Sexual Difference, and Gender
Week 3	Defining Sex: Body, Race, and Medicine in the 19th Century.
Week 4	Feminism and the Feminists
Week 5	Hysteria/Hormones in the time of Freud
Week 6	Sex between the Wars
Week 7	Spring Break
Week 8	Population Bomb and Reproductive Technologies
Week 9	Third World Feminisms
Week 10	Sex Revolution
Week 11	AIDS
Week 12	Gay Marriage
Week 13	Trans/Imaginaris
Week 14	Porn for Sale
Week 15	Conclusion