

Failed Empire: Sweden in the Early Modern World

HIST BC 3130

Spring 2022

TR 12:10-2:00 PM

Professor Carl Wennerlind

Brief Description:

The geopolitical map of the world was in flux during the seventeenth century. As Spain was losing its control over Europe and the Atlantic world, a number of ambitious small states on the periphery of Europe set their sights on achieving imperial glory. By mid-century, The Dutch Republic, England, and Sweden were the primary contenders. Each nation developed a sense of manifest destiny and dedicated scarce resources to establish an imperial presence, from which they could conquer the world. While the former two nations succeeded in creating vast empires, the latter enjoyed only a brief stint as a world power. This failure had nothing to do with a lack of effort or moral considerations. This course explores Sweden's imperial efforts and investigates its failures. It examines how military, political, religious, commercial, and scientific endeavors contributed to Sweden's quest for riches and prominence. The seminar begins by discussing Sweden's sudden military success during the Thirty Years' War and the consequent formation of a Baltic empire. We next investigate Sweden's presence on the west coast of Africa, where it built fort Carlsborg, and the east coast of North America, where it founded New Sweden. While these ventures failed relatively rapidly, Sweden continued to pursue a colonial presence through trade and the acquisition in 1784 of St. Barthélemy, a colony from which they engaged in trade, including the slave trade.

Learning Objectives:

Students will gain the facility to think critically about the relationship between empire, science, religion, and commerce. Students will also develop the ability to compare different early modern empires and gain an understanding of why some empires thrived and others failed. Lastly, students will also acquire insights as to how "unsuccessful" empires nevertheless contributed substantially to the imperialism and colonization that gave rise to modern capitalism.

Assignments:

The seminar will be organized around discussions and short-response papers (6x3-page papers). Students will also write a ten-page term-paper, based (if possible) on primary sources. If a topic is chosen for which primary sources are impossible to access, students are allowed to base their work on secondary sources. The final grade is based on participation (30%), term-paper (30%), and short-response papers (40%).

Readings:

Books marked with * should be purchased at Book Culture. The rest of the readings are available through Canvas/Courseworks.

Use of Electronics:

Students are not permitted to use laptops or cellphones during class sessions.

Honor Code:

The Barnard Honor Code (Approved by the student body in 1912 and updated in 2016, the Code states):

We, the students of Barnard College, resolve to uphold the honor of the College by engaging with integrity in all of our academic pursuits. We affirm that academic integrity is the honorable creation and presentation of our own work. We acknowledge that it is our responsibility to seek clarification of proper forms of collaboration and use of academic resources in all assignments or exams. We consider academic integrity to include the proper use and care for all print, electronic, or other academic resources. We will respect the rights of others to engage in pursuit of learning in order to uphold our commitment to honor. We pledge to do all that is in our power to create a spirit of honesty and honor for its own sake.

Wellness Statement:

It is important for undergraduates to recognize and identify the different pressures, burdens, and stressors you may be facing, whether personal, emotional, physical, financial, mental, or academic. We as a community urge you to make yourself--your own health, sanity, and wellness--your priority throughout this term and your career here. Sleep, exercise, and eating well can all be a part of a healthy regimen to cope with stress. Resources exist to support you in several sectors of your life, and we encourage you to make use of them. Should you have any questions about navigating these resources, please visit these sites:

- <http://barnard.edu/primarycare>
- <http://barnard.edu/counseling>
- <http://barnard.edu/wellwoman/about>
- [Stressbusters Support Network](#)

CARDS Statement:

Center for Accessibility Resources & Disability Services (CARDS) Statement If you believe you may encounter barriers to the academic environment due to a documented disability or emerging health challenges, please feel free to contact me and/or the Center for Accessibility Resources & Disability Services (CARDS). Any student with approved academic accommodations is encouraged to contact me during office hours or via email. If you have questions regarding registering a disability or receiving accommodations for the semester, please contact CARDS at (212) 854- 4634, cards@barnard.edu, or learn more at barnard.edu/disabilityservices. CARDS is located in 101 Altschul Hall.

Themes and Readings

1. Introduction and Overview

2. Types of Empire

Jane Burbank and Fred Cooper, "Oceanic Economies and Colonial Societies," in *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton)

Niv Horesh, "Analysis of the Comparative Scholarly Literature on Empire in the Early Modern and Modern Ages," in *Empires in World History: Commonality, Divergence, and Contingency* (Palgrave)

Geoffrey Parker, *Global Crisis* (Yale), Chapter 2.

Magdalena Naum and Jonas Nordin, "Introduction: Situating Scandinavian Colonialism," in *Scandinavian Colonialism and the Rise of Modernity* (Springer)

Gunlög Fur, "Colonialism and Swedish History: Unthinkable Connections?" in *Scandinavian Colonialism and the Rise of Modernity*

3. Sweden in the 17th Century – An Overview

*Paul Lockhart, *Sweden in the Seventeenth Century* (Routledge)

4. Baltic Empire

*Michael Roberts, *The Swedish Imperial Experience, 1560-1718* (Cambridge)

Michael North, *The Baltic: A History* (Harvard), Chapter 5

Gunnar Eriksson, *The Atlantic Vision: Olaus Rudbeck and Baroque Science* (Watson), Chapters 1, 2.

5. Science, Magic, and Progress

Susanna Åkerman, *Queen Christina of Sweden and Her Circle* (Brill), selections.

Hjalmar Fors, *The Limits of Matter* (Chicago), Chapter 1-3

David Dunér, "The Language of Cosmos: The Cosmopolitan Endeavour of Universal Languages," in *Sweden in the Eighteenth-Century World* (Routledge)

Mats Morell, "Swedish Agriculture in the Cosmopolitan Eighteenth Century" in *Sweden in the Eighteenth-Century World*

Sven Widmalm, "Instituting Science in Sweden" in *The Scientific Revolution in National Context* (Cambridge)

6. Swedish Colonialism

Stellan Dahlgren, "New Sweden: The State, The Company, and Johan Risingh," in *The Rise and Fall of New Sweden* (Almqvist)

Carl Wennerlind, "The Political Economy of Sweden's *Age of Greatness*: Johan Risingh and the Hartlib Circle" in Philipp Rössner, ed., *Economic Growth and the Origins of Modern Political Economy: Economic Reasons of State, 1500-2000* (Routledge)

György Nováky, "Small Company Trade and the Gold Coast: The Swedish Africa Company, 1650-1663," in *Itinerario*.

7. New Sweden I

"Risingh's Journal" in *The Rise and Fall of New Sweden*

Thomas Holm, *Description of the Province of New Sweden*

8. New Sweden II

Hans Norman, "The Swedish Colonial Venture in North America, 1638-1655," in *The Rise and Fall of New Sweden*

Fredrik Ekengren et al., "Sweden in the Delaware Valley: Everyday Life and Material Culture in New Sweden," in *Scandinavian Colonialism and the Rise of Modernity*

Lu Ann De Cunzo, "Borderland in the Middle: The Delaware Colony on the Atlantic Coast," in *Scandinavian Colonialism and the Rise of Modernity*

Jonas Nordin, "There and Back Again: A Study of Travelling Material Culture in New and Old Sweden," in *Scandinavian Colonialism and the Rise of Modernity*

9. Science and Settler Colonialism

*Lisbet Koerner, *Linnaeus: Nature and Nation* (Harvard), Chapter 1-7.

Daniel Lindmark, "Colonial Encounter in Early Modern Sápmi," in *Scandinavian Colonialism and the Rise of Modernity*

Magdalena Naum, "Between Utopia and Dystopia: Colonial Ambivalence and Early Modern Perception of Sápmi," in *Itinerario*

Sverker Sörlin, "Ordering the World for Europe: Science as Intelligence and Information as Seen from the Northern Periphery," in *Osiris*.

Linda Andersson Burnett, "Translating Swedish Colonialism: Johannes Schefferus's Lapponia in Britain c. 1674-1800" in *Scandinavian Studies*

10. Swedes Traveling Abroad in the Service of Science and Commerce

Colin Campbell, *A Passage to China: Colin Campbell's Diary on the First Swedish East India Company Expedition to Canton* (Royal Society of Arts and Sciences)

Pehr Kalm, *Pehr Kalm's Travels in North America* (Dover)

Pehr Kalm, *Kalm's Account of his Visit to England* (Macmillan)

11. Empire in the Age of Liberty

Göran Rydén, "Provincial Cosmopolitanism: An Introduction" in *Sweden in the Eighteenth-Century World*

Chris Evans and Göran Rydén, "From Gammelbo Bruk to Calabar: Swedish Iron in an Expanding Atlantic Economy," in *Scandinavian Colonialism and the Rise of Modernity*

Victor Wilson, "Gustavia in the Atlantic and Regional Slave Trade," in *Commerce in Disguise* (Åbo)

Holger Weiss, "A Divided Space: Subjects and Others in the Swedish West Indies during the late-Eighteenth Century," in *Sweden in the Eighteenth-Century World*

Erik Schnakenbourg, "Sweden and the Atlantic: The Dynamism of Sweden's Colonial Projects in the Eighteenth Century," in *Scandinavian Colonialism and the Rise of Modernity*

Holger Weiss, "The Danish Gold Coast as a Multinational and Entangled Space, c. 1700-1850" in *Scandinavian Colonialism and the Rise of Modernity*

12. Political Economy and the Northern Enlightenment

Tore Frängsmyr, "The Enlightenment in Sweden," in *The Enlightenment in National Context* (Cambridge)

Sophus Reinert, "Northern Lights: Political Economy and the *Terroir* of the Norwegian Enlightenment" in *Journal of Modern History*

Fredrik Albritton Jonsson, "Rival Ecologies of Global Commerce: Adam Smith and the Natural Historians," *American Historical Review*

Lars Magnusson, "Comparing Cameralisms: The Case of Sweden and Prussia," in Marten Seppel and Keith Tribe, *Cameralism in Practice* (Boydell)

13. Imperial Aftermath/Amnesia

Audrey Horning, "Insinuations: Framing a New Understanding of Colonialism" in *Scandinavian Colonialism and the Rise of Modernity*

James Symonds, "Colonial Encounters of the Nordic Kind" in *Scandinavian Colonialism and the Rise of Modernity*

Lill-Ann Körber, "Sweden and St. Barthélemy: Exceptionalisms, Whiteness, and the Disappearance of Slavery from Colonial History," in *Scandinavian Studies*.

14. Fast-Forward to Modern Sweden

Lena Sawyer and Nana Osei-Kofi, "'Listening' With Gothenburg's Iron Well: Engaging the Imperial Archive Through Black Feminist Methodologies and Arts-Based Research" in *Feminist Review*

Roger Blomqvist, "Swedish Colonialist Neutrality," in *Uneven Earth*

Johan Palme, "Revisiting Sweden's Colonial Past," in *Politics*

Michael McEachrane, "Universal Human Rights and the Coloniality of Race in Sweden," in *Human Rights Review* Fredrik Thomasson, "The Caribbean Scorpion: The Saint-Barthélemy Archive and Swedish Colonial Amnesia," in *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism*