Comparative Empires
Nov. 2011

Answer one question from each section for a total of three (3) questions. Be sure each essay has a clear line of argument, addresses as many dimensions of the question as possible, and offers relevant, persuasive evidence from a wide array of readings from your list. Good luck!

Part I:
How does the historiography, theory, and methods of comparative empire help you to conceptualize the interactions between colonizing forces and indigenous groups in the areas that became northern Ontario? How do conclusions about colonization from other parts of the world help you conceptualize this specific time and space? Why are these comparisons important, and how are they problematic?

Describe how you would structure an undergraduate class on comparative empires. What would you choose for the main themes, readings, and assignments and why? What are the major debates with which you would want your students to be familiar? How would you make the class comparative? And finally, would you teach the class differently depending on whether it were offered by a History department or an Indigenous Studies program, and if so, how?

Part II:
How has the concept of "borderlands" changed over time, including in relation to other concepts such as "frontier", "middle ground", and "transnationalism"? In answering this question be sure to address not only the meanings of these terms, but also the times, places, and politics associated with them and their applicability to fields other than U.S. history.

How has the literature on gender and colonialism intersected with that on sovereignty, if at all? In what ways might scholars working on these topics benefit from engagement with each others' methodologies and insights?

Part III:
Empires grow and expand in order to enrich the national and commercial interests of the core. How have historians conceptualized the movement of peoples – both forceful and voluntary – to fill the labor requirements necessary for extractive imperial projects? How has labor come to engage (or not) with newer historiographical trends and categories of analysis such as gender, race, slavery, and empire?

Colonizing regimes attempt to establish order over spaces through legal apparatuses that frequently legitimate colonizing regimes while subordinating colonized peoples to the colonizer’s sovereign authority. However, this process is never linear, simple, and uncontested. How have historians treated the colonizing impulse for order in relation to the blurry realities often found on the ground?