

University of Florida
Honors Program – UnCommon Reads
IDH2930 (Class #27125)

The present state of empires:
Reading Empires by Krishan Kumar

Spring 2026

Thursday, 5th period (11:45am-12:35pm)

Instructor: Yehoshua Ecker
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381 Dauer Hall (352-273-5555)
Office hours: Wednesday 4:30pm-5:30pm and by appointment
Zoom meeting also available

Course description

Empires have been shaping human history for millenia, and have shaped the world we live in today. Krishan Kumar, who has worked extensively on the history, nature and impact of empires, attempts to present and distill in this concise book the ways he and other scholars understand the concept of “empire”, imperial patterns, the varying experiences of living in empires, the afterlife of empires, and the links between empire, nation and nation-state. We will put these under scrutiny and ask what is an empire, how is it born, how does it act, how does it die, does it ever die completely, why have empires gone out of fashion, what various forms can empires take, can we still find them around us today?

Student learning outcomes / course objectives

- Gain familiarity with the history of empires and their impact.
- Develop the ability to read, interpret and anticipate imperial behaviour.
- Identify patterns of imperial expansion, contraction and transformations.
- Gain knowledge of imperial structures and variations.

Main Text

Krishan Kumar, *Empires: A Historical and Political Sociology* (Polity, 2020).

Weekly course schedule

Week	General Topics and Themes	Reading
1	<i>Introduction</i>	
2	Empires in Time and Space ❖ <i>Defining empires</i>	Preface + Ch. 1 (pp. viii-xi, 1-23, 151-153)
3	Traditions of Empire, East and West ❖ <i>Categories of empires</i>	Ch. 2 (pp. 24-48, 153-155)
4	Rulers and Ruled ❖ <i>Imperial societies</i>	Ch. 3 (pp. 49-71, 155-156)
5	Empires, Nations, and Nation-States ❖ <i>Forging identities</i>	Ch. 4 (pp. 72-93, 157-159)
6	Decline and Fall ❖ <i>Imperial cycles</i>	Ch. 5 (pp. 94-116, 159-162)
7	Empire after Empire ❖ <i>Imperial legacies</i>	Ch. 6 (pp. 117-140, 162-165)
8	The Future of Empires ❖ <i>New imperial structures</i>	Ch. 6 (pp. 140-150, 165-166)
9	<i>Building blocks of empires: patterns, structures</i>	
10	< Spring Break >	
11	<i>Thinking like an empire: the imperial playbook</i>	
12	<i>Writing about empires</i> ❖ <i>Group work</i>	
13	<i>Reading empires</i> ❖ <i>Group work</i>	
14	<i>Conclusion</i>	

Please come to class prepared to answer questions and discuss the readings.

Weekly assignments

Weekly assignments will be discussed in class and a list will be available on Canvas. Choose one every week from the list. Detailed instructions for the assignments will be provided in class / on Canvas.

Assignment submission dates

Weekly, the day before class. Please submit by Wednesday evening.
See specific details on Canvas.

Grading

Attendance: 30-33

Participation: 30-40

Weekly assignments:

- ❖ 10 individual assignments: 60-70

- ❖ 2 team assignments / group work: 20-30

(the grade range indicates possible extra points for excellent contributions and work)

Credits

This Honors course carries one credit and entails one contact hour per week.

Syllabus Changes

The syllabus is subject to change. Changes will be announced in advance as much as possible. Changes and adjustments are to be expected.

Class Policies

Attendance: Attendance is required and will be taken at every class meeting: please write your name and sign the dated attendance sheet. Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies and require appropriate documentation. Read the university attendance policies here:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>. *When possible, please let me know in advance if you will not be attending a class session.* You are allowed up to 1 undocumented absence, after which any unexcused absence will affect your grade. Excused absences include documented medical emergency, family crisis, military service, university sanctioned or official activities.

Email: As a matter of policy, UFL related communications are delegated to your UFL email. Information concerning the course, especially changes in venue, readings, assignments, etc., will be disseminated via Canvas announcements. Please make sure that your contact information is updated and that you are signed up to receive notification of course announcements. Email or Canvas messages are the preferred form of communication (I am usually away from the phone). I will usually see your message within 2 working days.

Turning in assignments: Students are required to provide all assignments in digital form, by the date and time they are due (extra time in case of documented emergencies or extreme circumstances will be considered).

Late Papers and Tests: Tests and papers will not be accepted late without medical documentation or review of specific circumstances.

Electronic devices: All electronic devices are allowed, as long as you use them for class purposes or for other necessary purposes (emergency calls and updates, essential time sensitive communications). Please make sure they do not interfere with the class or disturb other students, do not emit high volume sounds, and are set to reasonably silent mode.

Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code: The University of Florida holds its students to the highest standards. Students are encouraged to read the University of Florida Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code (Regulation 4.040), so they are aware of these standards. The University principles address respect for people and property, for fairness, for Laws and Regulations, and for academic integrity. Any violation of the Student Honor Code will result in a referral the Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution and may result in academic sanctions and further student conduct action.

The University of Florida Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code (UF Regulation 4.040) can be found at these links:

<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>
<https://policy.ufl.edu/regulation/4-040/>

<https://policy.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/UF-Regulation-4.040.pdf>

The processes of applying the codes can be found at the Dean of Students Office website:

<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-honor-code/>

<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-conduct-code/>

Academic Honesty: Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University. UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Students commit to holding themselves and their peers to the high standard of honor required by the Student Honor Code. Any Student who becomes aware of a violation of the Student Honor Code is encouraged to report the violation to the appropriate University Official. Click the links above to read the Conduct Code. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is defined in the University of Florida's Student Honor Code as follows: “A Student must not represent as the Student’s own work all or any portion of the work of another person or Entity.” To avoid plagiarism students must give proper attribution to any source used or consulted (oral or written materials, published or unpublished), and clearly mark and attribute direct quotes. Students should follow their faculty's policy on collaboration, should understand how to properly cite sources, and should not give nor receive an improper academic advantage in any manner through any medium. Plagiarism on any assignment will automatically result in a failing grade.

Honors Grading Requirements

A minimum grade of B is required to earn Academic points towards Honors Completion Requirements. Once you have earned your final grade in this course, please upload the course information and final grade from your Unofficial Transcript into your Honors Canvas Cohort: Honors Requirements module to earn Honors Milestone / Completion credit.

Grading Policies and Scale

Current university grades and grading policies are explained here:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

The grading scale used for this class:

		A	93-100+	A-	90-92
B+	87-89	B	83-86	B-	80-82
C+	77-79	C	73-76	C-	70-72
D+	68-69	D	63-67	D-	60-62
F	<60				

Honors Program Information

- Honors Program contact information: Honors Program, Honors Village Complex #4, 352-392-1519
- Quick questions for an Honors advisor? Email advisor@honors.ufl.edu
- Need an Honors advising appointment? Schedule via Microsoft Bookings: <https://bit.ly/UFHonorsAdvising>
- Honors Program Event Calendar: <https://www.honors.ufl.edu/news--events/calendar-of-events/>

UF academic policies and resources

<https://syllabus.ufl.edu/syllabus-policy/uf-syllabus-policy-links/>

Technical issues

To resolve technical issues visit the UF helpdesk website: <https://it.ufl.edu/helpdesk/>, or call 352-392-4357.