Histories of photography tend to account for the medium’s development in technological and aesthetic terms. By contrast, recent critical scholarship has urged us to address photography’s entanglement with histories of nation-building, conquest, and exploitation. This course will explore photography’s role in the consolidation of empire (broadly construed), from nineteenth-century colonial visual cultures to the image networks of capitalist globalization. How has photography served to naturalize, legitimize, critique, and contest imperialist expansion and the erasure of indigenous sovereignties? What role does it play in the construction of social categories of citizenship, race, gender, and class? And what strategies of assimilation or resistance does it permit? Drawing insight from case studies spanning vernacular and art historical practices, we will consider these questions from a global perspective. Major themes include portraiture, landscape photography, mass media, and the global image economy. Class discussions will focus on theories of the image, the archive, visibility, and modes of spectatorship, among other concepts.