

**Session 18: American Imperialism and the Filipino/a Experience lecture**

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This week: Focus on post 1965 Filipino immigration.

Today: Background overview about the Spanish American War and the origins of US colonialism in the Philippines.

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Let's start with the Spanish American War itself, in 1898. Part of this we talked about before when we were talking about Cuban immigrants.

There was a point in 1899 just after the war was over when ambassador John Hay wrote to Theodore Roosevelt and described the war as a "splendid little war."

It's pretty clear that **intervention in Cuba** was likely to come – we talked about how much conflict there was in 1898. In the spring of 1898 – there's all this unrest in Cuba. Significant numbers of US citizens are in Cuba in the 1890s and they're being affected by this unrest – the USS Maine is sent to Havana to protect US interests. It serves as sign to Cuba that we have our eye on it as well as a sign to Americans that interests were being protected. On February 15, 1898, the USS Maine exploded and 266 people were killed. Since then, studies conclude that it sank because boilers exploded, but the explanation at the time was that the Spanish had actually blown it up – and this prompts the US to declare war against Spain, officially on April 25, 1898. There's very little debate in 1898 about whether to go to war or not. After the USS Maine's explosion and news reports in press about what's going in Cuba – it all led to intervention.

War is declared in April and is over by August – in large part because Cuban rebels had already defeated much of the Spanish army. Almost all of it takes place in Cuba – some in Puerto Rico (the US does invade). When the war is basically over, Admiral George Dewey enters Manila Bay in the Philippines and seizes it for US, and the Spanish surrender fairly quickly. The war comes to an end, but the war itself is imagined as a **Caribbean war** and not a Pacific war – even though the Pacific was an increasing interest to policy makers and traders in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There was also a nationalist movement going on in the Philippines against Spain.

The US starts looking at various **Philippine nationalist movements** – they basically declared their independence in 1896 and tried to write their own constitution and step up own government. The US is in the Pacific looking for allies against the Spanish. They turn to **Emilio Aguinaldo** who agrees to work with US – they arm and train his troops against the Spanish and it works. What was going on in Manila now becomes national.

At this point, some of the questions emerge about what to do with what the Americans at the time called their "**insular possessions**," e.g. the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Cuba. Also in 1898, the US officially annexes Hawaii and Guam. In late 1898/early 1899, there's a big national **debate about whether to annex the Philippines**. There's the story that President McKinley prays for guidance, and God says to take the Philippines. This story seems to show how tortured it was – but really, that was from a speech he gave to a group of visiting Protestant missionaries after the fact when Americans were starting to think about whether this was this actually the right thing to do. At the time of the decision, policy makers and most American elites pushed strongly for annexation of the Philippines. There

was economic benefit – new markets for American goods, new raw materials (lumber, hemp, other fibers and textiles), and it provided a staging ground for access to China.

Trading with China was on people's minds. How did Americans think of China in 1890s? It's similar to the way they speak of China today – a vast, untapped market waiting for American industries. Many argued from the **diplomatic perspective** – although, this is not so much in the national press but certainly in the state dept which says the Spanish empire is collapsing and won't hold onto the Philippines. So, if we leave the Philippines to its own devices, some other empire will come in, and they're especially worried about Germany and Japan. From a **diplomatic perspective**, advice for McKinley was we have to take the Philippines lest someone else will. There was the argument to take the Philippines for a **civilizing mission** – bring western civilization, capitalism, schooling, health. A lot of this argument comes from missionaries who are very active in the Philippines.

The one thing that doesn't seem to be in the record is any thought of whether to ask the Filipinos if they want to be taken. What few voices there are coming out of the Philippines in printed newspapers (mostly in Spanish) are coming from the elite class. The **ilustrados** are the wealthy elite in the know, educated in western institutions mostly in Spain during colonialism, and who'd amassed power and wealth in Philippine society. Some are hoping that the Spanish will stay because they've made their peace with the Spanish, some would welcome the Americans and would want to work with them closely, some become nationalists and want independence. Those are the only voices out of the Philippines reaching Americans, but they're not really being heard. **The debate of whether to annex the Philippines is among Americans in America rather than an international conversation.**

Arguments against annexation:

- **From anti-imperialists.** They saw it as an un-American tradition – the US doesn't have colonies, take over places, keep colonies that won't be states. They distinguished expansion to the west from annexation of the Philippines – “**we are a republic, not an empire**” idea. These voices were most common in the northeast, particularly among liberal intellectuals – the headquarters of Anti-Imperialist Society was in Boston. Their voices were very loud – numerically there just weren't that many. You could find them in newspapers and magazines but they were outnumbered. (For most Americans at the time, there was a more compelling liberal argument for empire. Many saw colonialism through this lens of charity and this civilizing process.) Anti-imperialists included William James and Mark Twain but few in number.
- **Primarily from the south.** The US shouldn't take these colonies, particularly the Philippines, because the people in these colonies weren't Americans and couldn't be Americanized particularly because they were Asian. The US should avoid taking colonies because it would disrupt racial integrity – drawing from **nativism**, particularly Anti-Chinese rhetoric. “We've already let in too many Chinese, we shouldn't make it worse by appropriating Filipinos into American society.” This line of anti-imperialism outnumbered.

**Treaty of Paris in 1899** – US purchases Philippines for \$20 million (Philippine population = 10 million)

Then came efforts by the US government to remake Filipino society – schools, urban city planning. Many of the turn of the century American reformers went to the Philippines –

agriculture, banking, progressive era things experimented with in the Philippines sometimes with success/resistance/reluctance. American institutions aren't immediately transferred but many of them are.

**Filipino legal system** – they keep large aspects of the Spanish system but add more things that are more American. They try to separate church and state (Spain was officially a Catholic country) and start building up legal institutions – courts, judges. One of the places they stumble is trial by jury – they decide that Filipinos aren't "ready" for trial by jury yet so Filipino courts don't have courts and jury trials – judges make all the decisions.

Many of these are transferred in the rhetoric as **preparation for self government**. From the Treaty of Paris onward, much of the rhetoric implies/promises/asserts "at some later date" the Philippines will be independent – or, when the Filipinos are "capable" of self government. Thus, it's imagined as a **developmental process**. European colonies didn't often have such promises/implications in their colonies – but does this make this any different in the day to day experience?

As the US is in this process, they run into something they don't expect. They find out many Filipinos don't want to be colonized – various Philippine national movements weren't trying to get rid of the Spanish to replace with the Americans; they were trying to get rid of everyone and establish an independent Philippine republic. From 1899, **Filipino nationalists** take up armed battle against the US. And who leads it? Agunaldo! He takes his troops trained by the US and turns against the US. (This is an old strategy in American history.)

The war itself turns out to be a gruesome undertaking – one of the most violent episodes in Filipino history, one of the most violent in American history but almost completely forgotten. From 1899 to 1902, 200,000 Americans serve in the Philippines. The highest during any one time is 100,000. (150,000 in Iraq now.) It was a substantial number in the Philippines at that time – 100,000 soldiers in population of 10 million.

When they were fighting in Cuba it was easy with open warfare against the Spanish. In the Philippines, they were dealing with **guerrilla warfare** – from hills, villages, drew on local community resources, secretly armed/fed/transported by civilians in villages. US had very little experience with this – sometimes the Native American wars were fought this way but not often. US defined this warfare as "uncivilized" because it was unfamiliar to European warfare and also because it was undertaken by people they saw as uncivilized.

This became a war of civilizations – **civilized vs. uncivilized**. The rules of civilized warfare don't apply. There were massive campaigns to destroy the hearts and minds of Filipino rebels – attack villages, burn it and its fields. Physical torture was also used toward leaders of guerilla movement. In these three years, 4,300 American troops died – while only a couple hundred die in the war with Spain, mostly from disease. The number of Filipinos who died is unclear – but far greater – lowest reasonable estimate is 30,000, more serious in range of 50,000.

By the time you get to 1902, you have an American public that launched a war for reasons of humanitarian intervention, human liberation, and nation building in the third world which has encountered resistance, insurgency, guerilla warfare, bitterness abroad, division at home. The presidential election of 1900 was in many ways a referendum on the war and by the end of the three years, the US was a nation exhausted and frustrated with a war that didn't work out the way they planned. The best solution would be to declare victory and leave.

So the US declares victory but doesn't leave. They find smarter more intelligent ways to work with the local elite – instead of burning people out of villages, they capture intellectually, economically, politically influential people - they capture the *ilustrado* class. By doing so, the US takes advantage of ethnic divisions, getting the leading figures of all different ethnic groups and co-opting them, bringing them into the American empire and assuring them that on a day to day basis they'll have power in their particular province, that their economic situation won't change so long as they maintain order. Agunaldo lays down arms by 1902 and pledges allegiance to the US; he retires to the hills and lives out life quietly. Eventually he's so attached to the colonial regime, he becomes explicitly pro-American in the 1910s/20s.

The one part of the country that doesn't work is the **southern Philippines** – which is **predominantly Muslim**. Resistance and violent warfare continues to 1913 and in some ways it never goes away. Muslims resented American presence and that of Christian Filipinos in the north – they don't want to be a unified Philippines (they'd be a minority). A rebellion was put down by the young soldier John J. Pershing (a WWI figure later on). [This would be a good paper topic – looking at Muslims in the Philippines as incorporated into American society and how Americans for the first time encounter Muslim society and how they react to it.] The **Bureau of Non-Civilized Tribes** was set up to govern the south.

**Slavery** and polygamy were still practiced in southern Philippines in 1899 – so old debates of the Civil War re-emerge and some say send troops, while others say they're uncivilized so it doesn't matter. At the same time this is occurring, the federal government is sending troops to Utah to stop polygamy. There are all types of cultural contexts going on here!

In intervening decades from 1902, the US runs the empire on the cheap for the next four decades. US removes most of its troops, turning day to day running of the colony to local elites. There are experiments with public health and education and other reforms, but it doesn't develop the Philippines as a settler colony like it does Hawaii. Nor does it look like other European colonies – the US never developed infrastructure like the British did in India. But they *do* build military bases – looking at proximity to Japan and China, increasingly important as WWII begins to approach.

1920s – increasing numbers of Filipinos begin to migrate to the US, particularly after 1924 (the date of the institution of the **Immigration Restriction Act** – so far fewer Europeans are coming). The labor needs continue and Filipinos can migrate in ways that other groups cannot – the first exclusion laws are against the Chinese in 1882, and then there are the Gentlemen's Agreements when Japan agrees to block emigration, and now Europeans can't come – but somebody's got to do the labor. So the Americans start recruiting **Filipino labor**. First they go to Hawaii and then to the west coast – what you see on the west coast in the 1930s is a circular seasonal migration pattern. The first place that a migrant from Philippines goes is to Hawaii (sugar industry) then to San Francisco, arriving in spring and then heading north to spend summers in Alaska (fishing industry). Then in winter he/she comes down to San Francisco/Seattle and hangs out in neighborhoods, "**Little Manilas**," next to or part of Chinatown, thought of and represented in the same ways by the white press. In the fall, it's planting/harvesting season, so you'd head to central California where big farms were. During the in-between time, you'd go back to San Francisco/Seattle. Many of the migrants did return to Manila – not huge numbers, though in large part because the wages that these people were earning were pretty low. In this phase of migration, the gender ratio is 95% men. Later, post 1965, the vast majority are female.

Keep in mind for reading for next time: how is it that patterns of US colonialism in the Philippines set it up so that large numbers of women will pursue careers in health and use that career to immigrate to the US? What kinds of institutions and practices help make it so Filipina women coming as nurses?

Then the Depression hits and exacerbates **tensions over work and labor**, particularly in places like California. There's a lot of tension aimed at Filipinos and there's a move for exclusion, the same kind of rhetoric and tactics as the anti-Chinese and anti-Japanese movements that preceded it. It takes on a different form though – sometimes it's phrased more politely, "it's time to give Filipinos independence." In the 1930s there's a movement to give the Philippines independence. By 1936, the US announces that it will grant the Philippines independence – this would never have happened without the opposition of Americans to Filipinos as immigrants. Filipino nationalists don't want independence and to end up economically weak – they want **rights of migration**, which they don't get.

By 1937, war has begun in the Pacific as Japan was involved in war with China. It becomes increasingly unclear what's going to happen to the Philippines. Secret US planning at the time called for abandoning the Philippines in case of war in Asia. There were the "orange plans" put together by Douglas MacArthur and his assistant – "we can't defend the Philippines, we don't have enough troops, what we really need to protect is Hawaii and let the Philippines go" – and this wasn't revealed to either Americans or Filipinos. After Pearl Harbor, Japan also attacks US air planes in Manila. Early 1942: US troops have withdrawn from the Philippines, and it's under Japanese occupation until the end of war in 1945. The war comes to an end, and US troops are there. 1946: Philippines gains independence when the US officially grants what it had promised in 1936.

But the story doesn't come to an end at all. The US and the Philippines continue to have **deeply intertwined relationships** after 1946 – military, factors of the Cold War (the Philippines was a non-communist country in Asia; US supported dictators like Ferdinand Marcos because of his opposition to communism), economic and military interests. The end of the story comes in 1998 when they're celebrating 100 years since the Spanish American War and there's some ceremony involving lowering the American flag and raising the Philippine flag. It was a windy day and both flags get tied together. This is the Philippine condition – tied up in knots with the US.

US economic relationship with Philippines has been what scholars would call **neo-colonial**. US benefits more from trade with the Philippines than vice versa. Especially in more recent decades, a lot of US outsourcing for factory labor has been to the Philippines. Here the legacy of colonialism is clear – one of the most commonly spoken languages is English. Since about 1970s, the main export is Filipino workers. Filipino labor has contributed enormously to the Filipino economy in the form of **remittances**. A lot comes from domestic work, mostly by women in Japan and Hong Kong, Italy too. Filipino men in smaller numbers are looking for work, in places like Dubai, as they're needed for construction of hotels etc. Another place for male Filipino men is in Iraq – reconstruction undertaken by US hired out to private corporations with contract labor of non-US workers. Because the Philippines is part of the Coalition of the Willing – supporting US war in Iraq – US pumped enormous amounts of aid into the Philippines to convince them to send large numbers of Filipino workers to Iraq.

## Marriage

Filipinos who come to California in the 1930s and what happens to them when they get married....

March 1930 – Stella Robinson petitioned clerk to block daughter's marriage to Filipino migrant. She cited an 1880 statute of California – an **anti-miscegenation** statute that forbade a Mongolian from marrying any white person. Did "Mongolian" incorporate Filipino people or not? 1930: Los Angeles superior court granted petition and Robinson's daughter never married Tony Romero.

1939 – Mariang (we only know her first name) went before the Philippine Supreme Court in Manila. She was a Muslim woman from the southern Philippines who'd fallen in love with David Staples, who had been a soldier but wasn't one at the time they fell in love, instead a civilian working for the colonial government. He came to the Philippines from Kentucky in 1902, and the two were joined in marriage in 1913 by a Mohamadan priest (a Muslim cleric) and they lived together since then. In 1939, Mariang wanted to claim her late husband's estate but was being challenged by her brother in law who argued that since Kentucky law forbade marriage across the color line, their marriage was invalid and the property should pass to him. The court was puzzled. The 14<sup>th</sup> amendment, which says the most about citizenship, affirms that Staples was a citizen of the US and the state in which he resides- the court had to decide was the state Kentucky or the Philippines. Then there's the common law principle of domicile – a woman's legal residence follows that of her husband. As late as the 1970s, as this was the law. Did marriage make Mariang a citizen and resident of Kentucky even though she'd never been there? Citizenship generally follows from marriage but it won't follow from a marriage if the marriage is invalid – and cross-racial marriages are invalid in Kentucky in this period. The court ultimately ruled in her favor and she got half of his estate, \$50,000 in 1939.

These two cases demonstrate the uncertainty that you see when you think about citizenship and the meanings of citizenship as it comes up against the fact of formal imperialism. Certainly, it also highlights the importance of marriage as well as other social institutions, like military service, work, etc. – **public institutions do a lot to shape our understanding of citizenship**. The specific experience of Filipinos in this era – also Hawaiians, Puerto Ricans, and Native Americans – they're insiders and outsiders at the same time. It sheds a lot of light on the meanings of citizenship, what it actually means.

The laws of citizenship and marriage in the Philippines and how it plays out:

Marriage law in the Philippines itself was a subject of contest/controversy after 1899. Colonial administrators come and think they're engaged in something modernizing. Almost all who come from the government are Protestants – coming to a country whose law is Catholic and whose people, many of whom are Catholic, many not – they could be Muslim, animistic, a whole range. One of the first things the administrators do is take on the civil code of marriage – get rid of Catholic laws, add new ones, like the possibility for divorce that didn't exist in the Philippines before 1849. Very few Filipinos take advantage of marriage or divorce laws – most marriages are conducted in Catholic churches. In the countryside, local village traditions continue outside of any Catholic/Protestant churches.

Usually when people talk about laws of intermarriage and racial restrictions, they put it in context of the US color line, particularly white/black and white/Asians/Mexicans. Part of the story has to do with what's going on with marriage in the Philippines.

## Citizenship

Complexity and murkiness – where do citizens fit as citizens in US government? There was a whole series of court cases in 1899 that read the Supreme Court and came to be known as the “**insular cases**” (1903 or so) having to do with questions where’s it’s unclear whether Filipinos are citizens or not. Courts look to Native American law for precedents – the closest thing that Filipinos are like are Native Americans, “foreign in a domestic sense.” The same rulings in insular cases apply to Puerto Ricans as well.

This establishes a **three tier system**:

- Citizens
- Nationals (Filipinos and Puerto Ricans)
- Aliens

This matters because laws refer to citizens and aliens. If we think about aliens, go back to Asian immigrants – laws from 1874 say Asian immigrants are ineligible to citizenship because they’re not free white/black persons.

**Naturalization** is one thing – can Filipinos not be naturalized because they’re Asian? Or can they be naturalized because they’re not aliens?

**Alien land laws** – persons ineligible for citizenship cannot buy/sell land, and this was targeted at Asian immigrants. Court cases that emerge surround whether Filipinos can be naturalized. Some say no because they’re Asian and ineligible, others say the law is phrased for aliens and the Filipinos aren’t alien.

In addition to statutes of **anti-miscegenation**, you also have **marital alienation**: A US woman who marries a non-American man loses her citizenship, but not vice versa. When a US man marries a foreign woman, she is essentially naturalized. This was the case from 1907 into the 1930s. You can imagine this gets extra complicated when an American woman marries a Filipino man and especially if the American woman is of a different race than Filipino man she’s marrying. For example, a landowning white American woman marries a migrant Filipino man. She can either lose her citizenship and property, or her marriage is invalidated and she’d be subject to prosecution.

Timothy Yatko – 21 year old Filipino migrant waiter in Los Angeles (LA). 1925. Married to white American woman, Lola. Lola is in bed with another man and he kills the other man. State charges him with murder and then the state actually invokes the anti-miscegenation statute that Lola and Timothy’s marriage is invalid. Now she could testify against him during the trial. The state invokes this, gets marriage invalidated, Lola testifies, he’s found guilty in 1925. 1930 and 1940 – his name is in the prison roster at San Quentin.

Ruth Salas comes to US from Mexico in 1913 and in 1931 she goes to the LA county clerk to ask for a marriage license to marry a Filipino man. The clerk refused on the grounds of an inter-racial marriage. The Filipino community in LA gets organized – these marriage cases are the first cases Filipinos organize around in the 1930s and do so with collaboration with other immigrant groups. They eventually do succeed – they go from clerk to court petition, and the judge agrees in a backhanded way. Since neither of them is white, he doesn’t care if they marry each other. Anti-miscegenation statute is about a white person and someone of another race, so it doesn’t apply in their case. The Filipino community isn’t sure if this a victory or not.

Salvador and Marjorie Rogers want to get married and went to the same clerk and were refused. They hire a lawyer, a prominent LA lawyer that takes their case to the California Supreme Court that hears testimony from anthropologists about the differences between Mongolian and Malay. The court rules in their favor. They're about to get married but a couple of weeks later the California legislature rewrites the statute to include persons of the Malay race (a racialized term to refer to Filipinos). The law is a response to this case.

In 1948, California becomes the first state in the union to strike down laws of inter-racial marriage. In 1948, 46 of 48 states have anti-miscegenation laws (not Vermont and Maine). *Perez v. Sharp* is over the marriage between an African American woman and a Mexican American man. It was the first case that overturned these intermarriage laws. Filipinos active in activism around this – carrying out their own concerns from the 1930s court cases.

WWII – Filipino American men drafted into war wanted to marry their sweethearts, so their commanding officer rented a bus and sent them and their girlfriends to New Mexico where they could marry. It was called the Honeymoon Express.

We're interested in what this says about citizenship and what it says about our various understandings about law and how it operates and how the legal system can be accessed by people who are seen as outsiders but not entirely as outsiders. They're coming to the states with some familiarity of the legal system since institutions were being established in the Philippines.