

Dear Colleagues and Students,

You are kindly invited to the seminar entitled as “Empire on the Line: Governing the Sea Lanes of French Colonialism in the Age of Steam” organized by the Department of History.

Date: 03 April 2025, Thursday

Time: 16.30

Avenue: A-130 FEASS Seminar Room

Title: Empire on the Line: Governing the Sea Lanes of French Colonialism in the Age of Steam

Speaker: Charles Fawell, Yale University

Abstract:

This lecture explores the routes that connected France to its 19th and 20th-century colonies in Asia and Africa. Sea lanes of this period are often imagined essentially as pipelines of imperial power; spaces, in other words, where politics were being subsumed by logistics. Yet the oceanic corridors leading 'east of Suez' were also remarkably tough places to govern. This lecture considers some of the ways in which seemingly routine mobility across the French Empire gave rise to problems of everyday governance and enduring political conflicts, from the transnational labor movements of seafarers to the capture of state capacity by shipping corporations. While state actors would make ever-greater claims to rule the routes of the French Empire, the lecture proposes that ultimately, they could not prevent the fractious politics of maritime highways from washing onto Europe's shores.

Bio:

Charles is a Postdoctoral Associate at Yale University's Jackson School of Global Affairs, and Assistant Director of its Maritime and Naval Studies initiative. His research explores the politics of mobility between Europe and its Indo-Pacific empires in the 19th and 20th centuries. He is currently finishing his first book, *Empire on the Line: Mobility, Politics, and the Ocean Corridors of French Colonialism, 1850-1950*, under contract with Cornell UP. He is also co-editing a volume on economic planning and strategic coordination in the First World War, now in preparation with Georgetown UP. Before coming to Yale, Charles earned his PhD from the University of Chicago, where he taught as a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Social Sciences Division.