Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman earned a Ph.D. in American history at Stanford University, and now holds an endowed chair at San Diego State University. Her books have won four literary prizes, two for American history and two for fiction. Elizabeth has been a Fulbright scholar in Ireland and a Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, D.C, and is currently a National Fellow at Stanford University’s Hoover Institution. From 1999 to 2005, she served on the Historical Advisory Committee of the U.S. State Department, advising on transparency in government and the declassification of top secret documents. Hoffman’s most recent book, American Umpire (Harvard University Press, 2013), represents a stirring and controversial reimagining of both the history and future of America’s role in the world. She is also author of The Rich Neighbor Policy: Rockefeller and Kaiser in Brazil (Yale, 1992), which won the Allan Nevins Prize and the Stuart Bernath Award, and All You Need is Love: The Peace Corps and the Spirit of the 1960s (Harvard, 1998). Her next project is a novel based on the remarkable life of Alexander Hamilton and his courageous wife Eliza Schuyler, who survived his tragic death and raised their seven children alone.

In this lecture Hoffmann expects to challenge much of the prevailing scholarship on American foreign relations in claiming that “empire” is a misnomer when applied to the United States, which she argues, has been far more devoted to establishing laws and customs meant to level the international playing field.

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