

POLS 740: Seminar on Postcolonialism

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Office Hrs: T-W-R 1– 3 pm
Fridays 9 to 11:30 am

Course Description: Over the last three decades, Postcolonialism has emerged as, depending on who is doing the describing, an epistemological framework to understand world history after 1492; a means by which to coopt the oppositional political energy of minority groups within western societies; a literary movement that seeks to elevate the status of provincial Englishes to that of England; a derivative and mimetic variant of postmodernism and poststructuralism from third world scholars; and in a number of other variants. This graduate seminar offers a particular ‘take’ on Postcolonialism that emphasizes three central characteristics: (a) its inextricable origins in histories of colonial resistance to occupation, underdevelopment, racism and imperialism and the consequent need to be relentlessly global and contrapuntal in our understanding of the present; (b) its frequently contradictory but explicit commitment to both anti-essentialism and a humanist project of emancipation; and (c) the continued, indeed increased, salience of Postcolonialism as a framing epistemology to understand the planetary crisis we face in terms of development, the environment and global neoliberalism.

This is a graduate seminar which means informed class participation is an integral aspect of the course. While I will drop into a lecture-style monolog on occasion, for the most part students will lead and be part of discussions of the material that we cover each week. Students will volunteer to lead the discussion for the various readings, which entails preparing a one-page summary of the central ideas of that reading and raise provocative questions regarding the same. These summaries will be circulated to your seminar colleagues at the outset of class. Each student will volunteer for roughly the same number of such summaries by the end of the semester. Such summaries and class participation account for 25% of your final grade. The remaining 75% will come from a research paper on some aspect of third world development that you will write for this seminar (more on the research paper in class).

Important: (a) I generally do not assign an ‘incomplete’ for a course except under the most compelling circumstances. So please plan your work accordingly. (b) Please read the attached document on academic honesty carefully. As far as plagiarism goes, my policy is very simple: I will explain very clearly what plagiarism is at the beginning of the course, and tell you precisely what the consequences will be if you engage in it. Thereafter, one strike and you are out: an ‘F’ for the course and handing the case over to the Office of Judicial Affairs for further punitive action. I will go over this in class as well.

Course Readings: We begin with a few background readings that introduce various ‘takes’ on Postcolonialism. These have all been uploaded onto the Lulima website for this course. From about the end of February onwards, we will be reading a book-a-week for the remainder of the semester. All the books bar one are available as Kindle editions and that will be the primary medium through which we’ll be reading them. In thematic terms, the early readings offer exemplars of ur-postcolonial texts; in the middle section we look closely

at the intersection of postcolonial and indigenous politics; and in the last part of the course we look at the relevance of Postcolonialism for the planetary crisis of sustainability and survivability we face today.

You may want to order the books as soon as you've decided you are doing the course. They are:

Frantz Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks (Grove, rev. ed. 2008 – Kindle)

Jodi Byrd, The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism (Minnesota, 2011-Kindle)

Glen Coulthard, Red Skin, White Masks: Rejection the Colonial Politics of Recognition (Minnesota, 2014-Kindle).

Sven Lindqvist, The Dead Do Not Die: "Exterminate all the Brutes" and "Terra Nullius," (New Press, 2014-Kindle).

Julie Chu, Cosmologies of Credit: Transnational Mobilities and the Politics of Destination in China (Duke, 2010-Kindle).

Rob Nixon, Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor, (Harvard 2013 – Print).

Sven Beckert, Empire of Cotton: A Global History (Knopf, 2014 – Kindle).

Course Schedule:

Jan 16th: Introduction to the course; course readings; participants; seminar rules and expectations; policy on academic honesty; and self-introduction by participants. To set the tenor for the course, we will read the following essay (and the comments that follow) by Mahmood Mamdani, "Beware Bigotry- free speech and the Zapiro cartoons" accessible at: <http://kafila.org/2010/05/31/beware-bigotry-free-speech-and-the-zapiro-cartoons-mahmood/>

Jan 23rd: Background: multiple approaches to the study of Postcolonialism; histories of Eurocentrism, Colonialism, Imperialism, Underdevelopment, Modernization etc.

Read: Krishna, Globalization and Postcolonialism: hegemony and resistance in the 21st century (Rowman and Littlefield, 2009) – entire book PDF on Lulima; Krishna, "How does Colonialism Work?" from Jenny Edkins and Maja Zehfuss (eds.) Global Politics (Routledge, 2013) – essay available on Lulima; and George Orwell's essay "Shooting an Elephant," from his book Burmese Days: available at: <http://www.online-literature.com/orwell/887/>

Jan 30th: One of the most influential texts that inaugurated Postcolonialism was Edward Said's Orientalism (1978). For today, we will read excerpts from that book as well as its

sequel, Culture and Imperialism (1994) and another essay in which Said elaborates on his humanist ethic of political engagement. (all on Laulima).

Feb 6th: How does one think about the past when what we know of our past has come to us through disciplines intertwined with imperialism and Eurocentrism? Is it possible to write decolonial or non-Orientalist histories of the past? Two influential meditations: we will read excerpts from Dipesh Chakrabarty, Provincializing Europe: postcolonial thought and historical difference (Princeton, 1999), and Partha Chatterjee, Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: a derivative discourse (Oxford, 1986).

Feb 13th: Postcolonial nationalism: Liberatory discourse? Neocolonial trap? Casteist hegemony? How does the discourse of the nation limit our historiographic and political imaginations? Read: Shahid Amin, “Gandhi as Mahatma,” excerpts from Prasenjit Duara, Rescuing History from the Nation, and M.S.S. Pandian, “One Step Outside Modernity,” (all available on Laulima).

Feb 20th: Movie: Battle for Algiers (discussion self-moderated by students as instructor will be out of town for this class).

Feb 27th: Along with Said’s work, Frantz Fanon’s is widely considered foundational to Postcolonialism. We read his enormously rich and complex book Black Skin, White Masks for today’s meeting.

Mar 6th: More from Fanon, this time on the “Pitfalls of Nationalist Consciousness” (excerpted from his The Wretched of the Earth), excerpts from David Macey’s Fanon: A Biography (Verso, 2000) and Homi Bhabha’s introduction to a recent edition of Black Skin White Masks (all available on Laulima).

Mar 13th: We move towards recent works that engage Postcolonialism and Indigenous politics. For today we will read Glen Coulthard, Red Skin, White Masks: Rejection the Colonial Politics of Recognition (Minnesota, 2014-Kindle).

Mar 20th: Jodi Byrd, The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism (Minnesota, 2011-Kindle)

Mar 27th: Spring Break

Apr 3rd: Good Friday – Holiday.

Apr 10th: Sven Lindqvist, The Dead Do Not Die: “Exterminate all the Brutes” and “Terra Nullius.” (New Press, 2014-Kindle).

Apr 17th: Julie Chu, Cosmologies of Credit: Transnational Mobilities and the Politics of Destination in China (Duke, 2010-Kindle).

April 24th: Rob Nixon, Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor, (Harvard 2013 – Print).

May 1st: Sven Beckert, Empire of Cotton: A Global History (Knopf, 2014 – Kindle).

May 8th: final class – presentations of their research papers by seminar participants.

May 15th: Final drafts of research papers due to me by e-mail at 4:00 pm.

Academic Honesty

The department holds its graduate students to the highest standards of academic integrity. Examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to:

n Using the same paper for more than one class without explicit permission from the instructors.

n Cutting and pasting directly from a website or other source without attribution.

n Using sources or referring to sources without directly referencing the materials.

n Passing off work done by other students as your own.

n Cheating on tests.

No forms of academic dishonesty will be tolerated. If a student is found to have engaged in a form of academic dishonesty, consequences will range from failure in the course to suspension from the program. Evidence of academic dishonesty within a course will be forwarded first to the graduate chair and then, following the procedures for the University of Hawaii system, to the Office of Judicial Affairs. A record of charges will be kept in the student's file. More information regarding this subject can be found on the Office of Student Affairs' website in the student conduct code.

Source: Graduate Student Guide, Department of Political Science, University of Hawaii at Manoa. Accessible at: <http://www.politicalscience.hawaii.edu/3-working/grad-documents/gradguide12011.pdf> p. 28