

POLS 740: Seminar in Comparative Politics
Genealogies of Race, Violence, and Capital in Global Modernity

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640D Saunders Hall

Fridays: 9:30 – 12 noon

Friedman Room, Saunders

Office Hrs: MW 9:30-10:30 am

Course Description: The subfield of Comparative Politics is often premised on an implicit nationalist cartography of the world: the units that are subject to comparison and analysis are nation-states. In this seminar, we begin from the view that while the nation-state remains an extraordinarily salient category (not in the least because of its role in constraining the movement of labor and authorizing the expenditure of enormous sums of money in quest of security) it often obscures flows and processes that are central to the construction of national, racial, class, gender and queer identity; the valorization of capital and the exploitation of labor; and the trajectories of political and social movements that are simultaneously national, sub-regional, and global. Inspired by Edward Said's notion of contrapuntality, i.e., the need to understand the inter-related and global nature of capitalism, racism, violence, and identity as they have evolved in the last two centuries of liberalism, empire and resistance, our readings will range over the globe even as they remain attendant to the ways in which the idea of national identity animates our politics and visions for the future. These works complicate territorially circumscribed understandings of culture, national belonging, economic processes, racial identity and ethnic, gendered and sexualized violence, and the politics of resistance to all of these. They are written by authors with capaciously inter- and multi-disciplinary orientations and whose interests, scholarship and ideational and empirical sources trace pathways across continents. They are all acute in understanding the ways in which borders and ideas of bounded territorialities, or embodied and encapsulated identities, can draw our eyes away from interconnections and disable a politics of a genuinely international and resistant knowledge. We begin from the premise that such globally contrapuntal approaches to Comparative Politics are perhaps more than necessary than ever in these times of imminent global fascisms.

Course Readings: The seminar is anchored around the following books. You may buy the print edition or use the Kindle version.

Lisa Lowe – [The Intimacies of Four Continents](#) (Duke, 2015).

Jasbir Puar – [The Right to Maim: debility, capacity, disability](#) (Duke, 2017).

Inderpal Grewal – [Saving the Security State: exceptional citizens in 21st century America](#) (Duke, 2017).

Nikhil Pal Singh – [Race and America's Long War](#) (California, 2017).

Lisa Parkes and Caren Kaplan (eds.) – [Life in the Age of Drone Warfare](#) (Duke, 2017).

Iyko Day – Alien Capital: Asian Racialization and the Logic of Settler Colonial Capitalism (Duke, 2016)

Steven Salaita- Inter\Nationalism: Decolonizing Native America and Palestine (Minnesota, 2016)

Pankaj Mishra – Age of Anger: a history of the present (Juggernaut, 2017).

Course Requirements: This is a graduate seminar. As such, your informed and animated participation is indispensable for its success. We are expected to have completed the readings prior to the meetings and to come to these with questions, comments, critiques, and ideas to discuss. The extent and quality of your participation in the seminar will account for 30% of your final grade. You will write a research paper on a theme or topic of your choice which will account for the remaining 70% of your grade. Begin discussing your topic and possible trajectory of research etc with me from the outset of the course. So long as it converges with the themes of this seminar, broadly defined, I am open to any topic. Your final paper is due on Friday, May 11th – and you will present an oral version of it to your colleagues in the seminar during our final meeting on May 4th.

Seminar Reading Schedule:

Jan 12th: Introduction

Jan 19th: Mishra, Age of Anger, entire.

Jan 26th: Lowe, Intimacies of Four Continents, chapters 1-2

Feb 2nd: Lowe, Intimacies, chapters 3-5

Feb 9th: Day, Alien Capital, Introduction, chapters 1-2

Feb 16th: Day, Alien Capital, chapters 3-4, and Epilog

Feb 23rd: Salaita, Inter\Nationalism, entire

Mar 2nd: Puar, Right to Maim, Preface, Introduction, chapters 1-2

Mar 9th: Puar, Right to Maim, chapters 3-4, Postscript

Mar 16th: Singh, Race and America's Long War, entire.

Mar 23rd: Parkes and Kaplan, eds., Life in the age of drone warfare, Introduction and chapters 1-7.

Mar 30th: Holiday – spring break

Apr 6th: no class – instructor out of town. (Make up class on May 4th).

Apr 13th: Parkes and Kaplan, Life in the age of drone warfare, chapters 8-15.

Apr 20th: Grewal, Saving the Security State, Introduction, chapters 1-3.

Apr 27th: Grewal, Saving the security state, chapters 4-5 and Coda.

May 4th: Class presentations of final research papers.

May 11th: Final drafts of research papers due by 4:00 pm via email.

Plagiarism

An important consideration when writing papers is plagiarism. For your information, the University of Hawai'i Student Conduct Code defines plagiarism as follows:

Plagiarism includes but is not limited to submitting, in fulfillment of an academic requirement, any work that has been copied in whole or in part from another individual's work without attributing that borrowed portion to the individual; neglecting to identify as a quotation another's idea and particular phrasing that was not assimilated into the student's language and style or paraphrasing a passage so that the reader is misled as to the source; submitting the same written or oral or artistic material in more than one course without obtaining the authorization from the instructors involved; or "drylabbing", which includes obtaining and using experimental data and laboratory write-ups from other sections of a course or from previous terms.

Any student found guilty of plagiarism in this course will immediately receive a failing grade and will be referred to the Dean of Students. One easy rule of thumb to keep out of harm's way in this area: if you're not sure, cite it! (More on citations below).

Interpreting a Text and Making an Argument

Political science is a "social science," which means that it is difficult, if not impossible, to "prove" one person's point of view or "falsify" another's. Given this, you have every right to expect that your viewpoint or your interpretation of a text is just as valid as anyone else's. However, you should also be aware that some interpretations are much weaker than another either because they are not supported by the acceptable academic norms of a discipline ["rotting fruits produce life-forms such as insects and maggots" would not go over too well in any university department] or because there is not enough persuasive evidence to support such an interpretation ["I believe most Americans are democratic because my parish priest told me so"] or the logic is simply wrong ["Julius Caesar's Rome was greatly weakened by the bubonic plague"]. Weak interpretations are often seen as opinions, whereas political science most often validates good arguments. In this course, while I am interested in your opinions, I am more interested in how you marshal evidence to support your opinions and how you structure your arguments to persuade me that your opinion is logical, plausible and worthy of taking seriously.

The difference between an argument and an opinion, then, lies in the evidence which must be provided. Arguments are sustained by evidence and examples, rather than guesses, hunches or intuition, even though the latter may be critical components of the creative process and invaluable at the initial stages of any inquiry. You are expected to advance an argument in your papers. Since we are not scientists in a strict sense, this does not mean that you have to "prove" beyond doubt what you are saying. Rather, you must support your argument with evidence from texts, logic and further research if you deem it necessary. To use texts persuasively, you should provide quotations of major points in the author's argument, and sustain those quotes with your interpretation and then your support or disagreement. This allows the reader to see that you understand the text, that you have evaluated it according to apparent standards of review, and that you can use it in a sustained argument. You certainly do not have to agree with the authors you read; on the contrary, your quotations might show how the author is unfair, inconsistent, illogical, unpersuasive, or just plain wrong. In short, you must always say why you think what you think and provide appropriate support.

Your paper grades will derive partly from how well you support your argument and how skillfully you build it. An argument without evidence is little more than an opinion, and while it may be a valid opinion, and you have every right to hold it, it is not adequate for the purposes of writing a paper. I will also grade you on such things as spelling, grammar, syntax, sentence structure, and elegance or style. It is important that you review your papers carefully for these kinds of issues. The most brilliant argument can become unintelligible when not articulated clearly.

Citations

Given the importance of supporting your work, here are some guidelines. When you quote from a text, you must indicate that you have done so (failure to do so constitutes plagiarism). In addition to placing cited material within quotation marks, you must also make some kind of note as to the title of the quoted work and the page number. For our purposes, this can be as simple as: (Madison, *Federalist 10*:65) or (Marx and Engels, 1848: 21) – with the full bibliography appearing at the end of the paper. Or, references can be put into footnotes where the full citation resides. Additionally, anything you paraphrase, or any idea you borrow, should be attributed to the author and cited in the very same manner. For more examples and information on how to cite different kinds of sources, consult the [MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers](#) or the [Chicago Manual of Style](#). Cite World Wide Web sources with the appropriate URL and the date when you contacted the site. With web citations, the rule is the same as with other citations: using the information provided in your citation, I should be able to access the exact same material that you claim to have accessed.

Helpful Hints

Writing is not always easy and is a skill that requires time and practice to develop and sustain. You are certainly not alone if writing is something you not only dread but find difficult. Some suggestions: start your papers well in advance of the deadline. Letting ideas simmer for a day or two and then returning to them later can do wonders. Starting early also gives you time to think through your argument prior to turning your paper in. Let someone else proof-read your paper. This is good for catching grammatical and spelling errors, and can be a valuable source of feed-back for you. Remember, no spell-check in the world can help distinguish between “to” and “too” or “were” and “where” – not to mention “ordinary” and “ornery” or “split” and “spilt”. Spell checks are limited in what they can do – you will still need to proof-read your papers carefully. Try to work with someone who won’t just say “this is great” and leave it at that. You want honest, constructive criticism. Also, try reading your paper out loud to yourself. Any sentence that is too difficult to speak smoothly is just as hard to read and should be reworked. Feel free to submit drafts of your papers to me for review and comments. I will be happy to take a look at your written work before the deadline – however, the sooner the better.

Class Atmosphere and Our Roles:

Political Science is by its very nature a contested and contestable subject. There is no consensus on the “truth” of most consequential political questions, concepts, ideas, beliefs, or viewpoints. Indeed, such contestability is at the very core of the meaning of the term “political.” It is important to always remember that is okay to disagree with others and to express such disagreement – but in ways that do not demean or insult those with whom we disagree. The classroom is a space for all of us to learn, and to learn from each other. That is its central purpose. This purpose is defeated if anyone there is made to feel disrespected or intimidated. Therefore it is our joint responsibility to make sure each of us adheres to a code of principled and respectful debate and disagreement – and eschews actions that cause anyone to feel they are not getting the most out of the course.