

Spring 2014
American Studies 520
COLONIZATION / GLOBALIZATION / DECOLONIZATION
Mondays 2:10 – 5:10

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office hours:
T 1:00 – 2:30
W 1:30 - 3:00
and by appointment

Required texts

- Aguilar, Delia D., and Anne E. Lacsamana, eds. *Women and Globalization*. Amherst, NY: Humanity, 2004.
- Cazdyn, Eric. *The Already Dead: The New Time of Politics, Culture, and Illness*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2012.
- Dirlik, Arif, ed. *Pedagogies of the Global: Knowledge in the Human Interest*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2006.
- Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. 2005. New York: Oxford UP, 2007.
- Klein, Naomi. *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. New York: Metropolitan, 2007.
- Prashad, Vijay. *The Poorer Nations: A Possible History of the Global South*. London: Verso, 2012.
- Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Vintage, 1993.
- Young, Kevin. *The Grey Album: On the Blackness of Blackness*. Minneapolis: Graywolf, 2012.

Course objective, description, and idea

When this course was last taught, by my colleague Rich King in Spring 2012, the focus was on U.S. culture and the place of a critique of U.S. empire in the field of American cultural studies. This is an understandable focus, given that critiques of American empire were implicit in, but seldom voiced by, the Occupy Wall Street movement that had just been bullied into leaving encampments on Wall Street and elsewhere. Since then, several books and Web sites have appeared, situating the movement against global capitalism and assessing its achievements and failures. But few new books—or at least no more than might have been expected if there had been no Occupy movement—have situated the field of U.S. cultural studies against global capitalism. And, except for a few graffiti and poster artists who were physically involved in Occupy, no culture of anti-globalization has emerged. Was Occupy completely wasted then?

Two years have passed, and now we may assess gains and losses more broadly. At least one critic regards the new pope as an “Occupy pope,” and anti-sweatshop campaigns occasionally realize small victories. A vague awareness of a shrinking white middle class is creeping over the U.S. mainstream, while some critics suggest that the spike in punishment culture—stop-and-frisk policing policies, for example, and neighborhood block watch programs—indicates a new paranoid hostility toward not only young men of color but also, more generally, a restive working class. Indigenous autonomy, in the U.S. and elsewhere, continues to be trampled in the name of profit, especially the short-term wealth to be gained from the plunder of “natural” resources. Workers lose more and more rights, and these losses have not only accelerated but have also crept into traditionally “white collar” jobs. In public universities, for example, the idea of faculty governance has vanished, even as administrative salaries and powers

soar, and in thirty-seven states the highest-paid public employee is a coach. In other words, the problems identified by Occupy remain, only intensified.

In this course we will attempt five simple tasks: learn the history behind our current situation, study the ideas and beliefs that have propelled that history, examine a few sites of global capital's ravages, read examples of resistance in black U.S. culture, and envision grand strategies for decolonization toward social justice.

These five tasks will be roughly organized into three units: 1) histories of colonization and its extensions into globalization, 2) manifestations of globalization and neoliberalism as the contemporary world's principal expression of colonization, and 3) local and national examples of resistance, with possible lessons for larger-scale decolonization. Materials in these units will unavoidably and necessarily overlap, and the scale of our work will change as we move from text to text and issue to issue. The Dirlik anthology even examines our methods of studying and teaching. What does Linda Tuhiwai Smith mean when she insists, on the first page of her book *Decolonizing Methodologies*, that in the indigenous world the very word "research" is dirty?

Most of our work will recognize two main sites of expression: the economic and the cultural. These are not mutually exclusive sites, and sometimes they not only overlap but fully inhabit each other's bodies. However, we should always bear in mind that the field of cultural studies was born to Marxist critics, and that, in the United States at least, too much work labeled "cultural studies" forgets Raymond Williams's founding principle that "culture is ordinary." Moreover, as Annie Adams once complained, too much work that passes for cultural studies today chooses to examine the desiring body and ignore the starving body. This is understandable if regrettable. The desiring body is, after all, much easier to study, and much more pleasant. Who wants to study refugees and starving people, except from a distance? Besides, the student of the starving body must learn the political economy of starving, which for the U.S. scholar is much less immediate (in every sense) than the sensational culture of the desiring body. British critic Terry Eagleton argues that U.S. culture critics love to study desire but hate to study death:

American culture is deeply hostile to the idea of limit, and therefore to human biology. Postmodernism is obsessed by the body and terrified of biology. The body is a wildly popular topic in US cultural studies—but this is the plastic, remouldable, socially constructed body, not the piece of matter that sickens and dies. Because death is the absolute failure to which we all eventually come, it has not been the most favoured of topics for discussion in the United States.

(*After Theory*. New York: Basic, 2003. 185-86.)

In Eric Cazdyn's book, published almost a decade after Eagleton's, we will see the extent to which American culture tries to defer death, at least discursively.

Because of our own financial and scheduling constraints, we will accede to the ease of studying American culture most centrally. Still, all three words in the course title demand that we look elsewhere, not least because decolonization, while it might not have succeeded entirely in what Prashad calls the "poorer nations," at least has been attempted there in a concentrated way. Even when, at semester's end, we read Young's book on black cultural resistance, we must inquire into the global applicability of such cultural work. Also, we will read selections from Dirlik's anthology on pedagogical implications of globalization for those who, like us, teach in institutions that are an integral part of globalizing structures.

Without indulging the wallowing in discursivity of poststructuralist criticism, we must recognize that language is a key site of struggle. The uses to which technologies are applied—sometimes even the very names of these technologies—often cloak colonizing agendas. But

even the work of resistance and revolution bogs down in occasional linguistic morasses. To cite an example from my own research in the politics of temporality: Are “public time” and “public space” good or bad? For many observers, especially those who work in social sciences, they are sites of exploitation or oppression. For others, they are sites of resistance. Still, the indeterminacy of such terms as “public time” can usefully remind us to define our own visions of justice. Indeterminacy itself should not, however, be a guiding principle. Just because our visions of justice may differ in their particulars does not mean that our commitment to eradicating injustice should bog down in quarrels over pluralisms and “diversities” and identities. The struggle for justice is not negotiable. As Eagleton argues, several of life’s greatest joys are not socially constructed.

Finally, I offer two personal notes. 1) Asked about my teaching “method,” I usually demur. I have no grand and intractable “method.” Teaching may be performance, but many teachers are actors in only a meaningless sense. Often we will discuss assigned readings much less than you may expect. If that happens when you have questions or comments on the texts, please speak. In graduate seminars I often bring to class books and articles by writers such as Eagleton, John Berger, Nancy Fraser, and others whose work is too seldom assigned in our field. Sometimes I read passages from these pieces, and sometimes they may seem only vaguely related to our assigned texts and topics. Teachers are conditioned to teach from the inside out—that is, to start at the center of a topic and work outward. I prefer to start at the margins and work inward. The margins are vast, and offer many promising perspectives. Besides, if we as teachers never occupy at least conceptual margins, how can we advocate for people who have no choice but to inhabit physical margins? 2) Because I have not studied Marx’s own writings deeply, I do not call myself a Marxist critic. Still, the critics whose work best clarifies and explains the world seem, to me, often to be self-identified Marxists: Eagleton, Berger, Fraser, Gramsci, my old teacher and friend Delia Aguilar (whose collection we will read this semester) and her partner E. San Juan Jr. Studying poverty and class is not sexy, and it did not receive the grudging place in university curricula that ethnic studies and gender studies received—itsself a sign of its marginalization—and in fact few scholars of race and gender concern themselves with it. And yet, just as death is the inescapable “natural” (ie, not socially constructed) end of biological life, so is class the inescapable oppression that, too often, we too casually dismiss. We should know by now that the first casualty in the colonizing process always looks like poverty.

Course policies, guidelines, and expectations

As we meet on Mondays, we will have not only the week of spring break but also two holidays, MLK Day in the second week and Presidents Day in February, breaking into our calendar. Also, since we meet only once a week, it will be doubly important to keep up with readings. Our reading load will be heavy at times (though students in Spring 2012 were assigned eleven books, three more than we will read!). Some of our texts—Klein, for example—will be quick and accessible. Cazdyn and Said will be slower going. You would be wise, therefore, to look ahead in our schedule, to get a sense of the texts’ difficulties, and allow sufficient time for readings.

I regard this as, in the best sense, an experimental course. We cannot possibly cover all histories and aspects of colonization, globalization, and decolonization, and quite possibly we may not cover your “favorite” colonization. We will, however, practice ways of contextualizing by which you may still discuss in class and, more important, write your final project on, that “favorite.” May we hope to break new ground, theoretically and practically. Share your ideas,

observations, intuitions, suspicions, speculations, and inspirations. Though I will bring to class my own ideas, still I envision this course as being staunchly anti-authoritarian.

You will write four short papers and one presentation-length paper. By presentation-length, I mean the twelve to fifteen pages usually suited to conference presentations. Details of the assignments appear below. We will watch several films, and I hope to entice a guest speaker or two to share knowledge and observations. I will maintain e-mail contact with you, but you will not be required to respond to the whole class.

Requirements

Attendance and participation: Since we meet only once a week, these are expected. Though this is a graduate class, do not feel intimidated into silence when we discuss material that may be new to you. Our aim will be to create conversations, not interrogations.

Text presentation: At the beginning of the term you will sign up to lead a discussion of one of our texts during the semester. This presentation involves your briefly summarizing what you regard as the text's most interesting or most important points and asking two or three questions based on the text. Prepare to lead for 30 to 45 minutes, but find ways to reduce your workload by involving your classmates in discussion. Bear in mind again that graduate classes at their best feel like conversations.

Paper presentations: You will informally discuss the short papers and formally discuss the final paper. For the short papers, you need only to identify and briefly summarize your work, committing to no more than five minutes. For the final paper, which we will present in the final class meeting, I hope we can organize as for a conference, with two or possibly three panels, each of you speaking for fifteen to twenty minutes on your paper (which will probably still be in progress, as its final version will be due a week later).

Short papers: You will write four short papers. Each will juxtapose two of our texts (or selections from the anthologies—specific instructions for these will come later). For example, your first short paper should put Harvey and Prashad in conversation with each other. Where do they converge and diverge? Whose vision seems better fitted to the world as it is or could or should be? Why do you think so? These will be responses to the texts only, and so no research will be required. These papers should be two to three pages each.

Final paper: Because our course is reading-intensive, your final paper should be sized for a conference presentation—that is, twelve to fifteen pages. If you wish to write instead an article-length paper for possible publication, that is fine too, but let me know by at least the middle of the semester. Your paper should analyze an aspect of one or more of the terms in our course title. Do not feel constrained by the limits of our texts and class discussions. If you wish to write, for example, about the sort of “cross-colonization” that characterizes much Canadian indigenous and immigrant history, that would be fine. Though little of what is called interdisciplinary is really interdisciplinary, still I encourage you to cross disciplines as you write this paper.

Alternative to final paper: Decolonization and revolution may unavoidably take forms that most of us, limited to our knowledge of history and our failures of imagination, cannot possibly envision, but you may be visionary and revolutionary enough to envision those forms. If expressing that vision takes a form other than the conventional final paper, let me know and we can try to commit to finding a format for it. Let me know as soon as possible that you are considering this alternative project.

Note: We will have no quizzes or examinations.

Grading formula

Attendance and participation, 10 percent; text presentation, 5 percent; final project presentation, 10 percent; short papers, 25 percent (5 percent for each of the first three, 10 percent for the fourth); and final paper, 50 percent.

Rubrics and learning outcomes

Despite the fact that grades are assigned and certain standards are expected of graduate-level work, to attach a mandatory timeline to the learning trajectory as a movement from point A to point B is to enforce a mechanical process that destroys any sense of learning as fluid, malleable, and dynamic. (See Foucauld on institutional surveillance and control.) Moreover, few students start at the same point A, and so enforcing the common destination of a single point B is, to risk a pun, pointless except as a way of privileging the already privileged—exactly the opposite of the goal of learning about decolonization. I hope to learn your points A well enough to know when each of you has reached your own point B. That is the *real* “learning outcome.”

More formally, however, I should list the following goals for semester’s end: 1) general knowledge of the history and methods of the three terms named in the course title, 2) ability to apply that knowledge to a variety of sites of colonization, globalization, and decolonization, 3) ability to recognize similarities and differences in different times and places, 4) recognition of the central role of political economies in those histories, 5) awareness of local and global efforts at resistance, 6) understanding of what lasting justice might demand of both victims and profiteers of colonization and neoliberalism. Because achievement of these goals may be uneven, may overlap, and will surely involve frequent returns to previously studied injustices, no timeline for these goals is possible or desirable. Moreover, because it is the aforementioned institutional pressures that demand a timeline—in their insistence that “student learning outcomes . . . are observable and measurable” (see *WSU Syllabus Checklist*, August 7, 2013, page 7), an insistence that seems like a naïve threat to police classrooms—the interests of historically marginalized peoples are best served only by demonstrating and using our knowledge, not measuring it.

Note on language: While obviously we should avoid abusive and hateful speech, I also want to encourage you to exercise your academic freedoms in thoughtful, intellectually honest discourse. A racist idea is a racist idea, and we should be honest enough to say so.

Here is my statement to undergraduates: In our readings and discussions you may encounter words or phrases that will be, to some sensibilities, coarse or vulgar or racist. By themselves, no “mere” words are offensive. What makes a word vulgar or racist is its usage by a particular speaker in a particular context. Insensitive white men such as Glenn Beck complain that, for example, they are not allowed to say the “n” word without being labeled racist but that black men use it among themselves all the time. To “earn” the right to that word, Beck must first endure 500 years of racism. When you see and hear such words, consider their context. Who speaks them? Why? And to whom?

While in this course no words or phrases will be absolutely forbidden—that is, we will not serve as Language Police—still you should bear in mind the implications of your language, not for reasons of “political correctness” but to demonstrate both your intelligence and your sensitivity to historically marginalized peoples. For example, historically, who has used the term “colored people” and why?

Academic Honesty

I will refrain from rehashing the standard (and obligatory) proscriptions against plagiarizing, aside from saying that you should not cheat. Administrators say nothing about imperialism and colonization—after all, as recently as the 1980s, many universities profited from investments in apartheid South Africa—and so their condemnations of plagiarism are as close as they will ever come to our condemnations of colonization, which is to say, not very close.

Here is the official warning: “Cheating of any kind will result in your failing the course. See the WSU Standards for Student Conduct WAC 504-26-010 (3). You should read and familiarize yourself with these definitions and standards.”

Students With Disabilities: “Reasonable accommodations are available for students with a documented disability. If you have a disability and need accommodations to fully participate in this class, please visit or call the Access Center (Washington Building 217; 509-335-3417) to schedule an appointment with an Access Advisor. All accommodations **MUST** be approved through the Access Center.”

Safety and Emergency Notification: “Washington State University is committed to enhancing the safety of the students, faculty, staff, and visitors. It is highly recommended that you review the Campus Safety Plan (<http://safetyplan.wsu.edu/>) and visit the Office of Emergency Management web site (<http://oem.wsu.edu/>) for a comprehensive listing of university policies, procedures, statistics, and information related to campus safety, emergency management, and the health and welfare of the campus community.”

Schedule of assignments

Note: Our schedule of assignments is flexible and subject to change. Please keep up with any changes, which I will post via e-mail and announce in class. Books are listed below by authors’ or editors’ names, except for Aguilar and Lacsamana, which is listed as *Women*.

1/13: Introduction and syllabus. Discuss the terms named in the course title.

1/20: NO CLASS. MLK Day.

1/27: Harvey, entire book.
Prashad, through chapter 3.

2/3: Said, Introduction, Chapter 1, and first section of Chapter 2 (pp 62-80).
Women, Introduction and Chapters 1 - 3.

2/10: *Women*, Chapters 4 and 5.
Klein, Introduction and Chapters 1 - 8.

2/17: NO CLASS. Presidents Day.

2/24: Klein, Chapters 14 – 15 and 19 – 21.
Women, Chapters 6 – 8 and 13.

- 3/3: Dirlik, Chapters 1 – 7.
- 3/10: Dirlik, Chapters 10 – 15.
- 3/17: NO CLASS. Spring break.
- 3/24: Said, Chapters 3 and 4.
Prashad, Chapter 4.
- 3/31: Klein, Conclusion.
Women, Chapter 14.
- 4/7: Cazdyn, Introduction and Parts 1 and 2.
- 4/14: Cazdyn, Part 3.
Young, Overture and Book 1.
- 4/21: Young, Books 2 and 4, and Deadism.
- 4/28: Be prepared to discuss the already-assigned closing sections of these books: Harvey (Chapter 7), Prashad (Chapter 4), Said (pp 303-36), *Women* (Chapter 14), Klein (Conclusion), Dirlik (Chapter 15), and Young (Deadism).
Final Paper presentations—conference.
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Recommended readings

- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Rev. ed. London: Verso, 1991.
- Brantlinger, Patrick. *Dark Vanishings: Discourse on the Extinction of Primitive Races, 1800-1930*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2003.
- Byrne, Janet, ed. *The Occupy Handbook*. New York: Back Bay, 2012.
- Cardenal, Ernesto. *Zero Hour and Other Documentary Poems*. New York: New Directions, 1980.
- Césaire, Aimé. *Discourse on Colonialism*. 1955. New York: Monthly Review, 2000.
- Churchill, Ward. *On the Justice of Roosting Chickens: Reflections on the Consequences of U.S. Imperial Arrogance and Criminality*. Oakland, CA: AK, 2003.
- Conrad, Joseph. *The Secret Agent*. 1907. New York: Modern Library, 1998.
- Craib, Raymond B. *Cartographic Mexico: A History of State Fixations and Fugitive Landscapes*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2004.
- Denning, Michael. *Culture in the Age of Three Worlds*. London: Verso, 2004.
- Ebert, Teresa, and Mas'ud Zavarzadeh. *Class in Culture*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2008.
- Fogel, Robert William, and Stanley L. Engerman. *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery*. 1974. New York: Norton, 1989.
- Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Tr. Alan Sheridan. 1975. New York: Vintage, 1995.
- Fraser, Nancy. *Fortunes of Feminism: From State-Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis*. London: Verso, 2013.

- Galeano, Eduardo. *Upside Down: A Primer for the Looking-Glass World*. Tr. Mark Fried. New York: Picador, 2000.
- Harlow, Barbara. *After Lives: Legacies of Revolutionary Writing*. London: Verso, 1996.
- Hardt, Michael, and Antonio Negri. *Empire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2000.
- Harvey, David. *Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography*. New York: Routledge, 2001.
- James, C. L. R. *A History of Pan-African Revolt*. 1938. Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1995.
- Lawrence, Cecilia, and Natalie Churn, eds. *Movements in Time: Revolution, Social Justice, and Times of Change*. Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars, 2012.
- Low, Setha, and Neil Smith, eds. *The Politics of Public Space*. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Marable, Manning. *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America*. Rev. ed. Cambridge, MA: South End, 2000.
- Marx, Karl. *Grundrisse*. Trans. Martin Nicolaus. New York: Penguin, 1973.
- Moten, Fred. *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2003.
- Ozeki, Ruth. *A Tale for the Time Being*. New York: Viking, 2013.
- Roediger, David R., and Philip S. Foner. *Our Own Time: A History of American Labor and the Working Day*. New York: Greenwood, 1989.
- San Juan Jr, E. *Racism and Cultural Studies*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2003.
- Scarry, Elaine. *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. New York: Oxford UP, 1985.
- Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Zed, 1999.
- Smith, Neil. *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital, and the Production of Space*. 3rd ed. Athens, GA: U of Georgia P, 2008.
- Soja, Edward W. *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*. London: Verso, 1989.