

PS179 Postcolonial Theory and Politics

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Office Hours: by appointment

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Course Description

This course offers a comprehensive introduction to postcolonial theory and politics by examining how colonialism and imperialism continue to shape social, political, and economic structures in the Global North as well as the Global South. We will study postcolonial theory as a tool to analyze these structures that were formed following the establishment of newly independent states in formerly colonized territories, and explore theories and practices of resistance to colonial and neocolonial violence. We will address material dynamics that perpetuate these neocolonial hierarchies, such as debt traps, agricultural commodification, and brain drain, and survey contemporary political issues such as forced displacement, migration, spirituality, tourism, gender, art production, and climate justice through the lens of postcolonial theory. A central theme of this course is the justification and rationalization of inequality through epistemic violence, skewed media representation, and narratives of cultural and biological difference. By applying a postcolonial framework to these issues, we will learn to critically evaluate political, economic and cultural power relations, develop analytical tools to identify the colonial and postcolonial structures that are invisibly reproduced across multiple domains, and recognize how many present-day challenges at home and around the world may be rooted in or linked to historical legacies of colonialism.

Requirements

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

Accommodations

Bard College Berlin is committed to inclusion and providing equal access to all students; we uphold and maintain all aspects of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and Section 3 of the German Disability Equality Act of April 27, 2002 (Federal Law Gazette I p. 1468). If you have a disability, or think you may have a disability, please contact the Disability

Accommodation Coordinator, Atticus Kleen, (accommodations@berlin.bard.edu) to request an official accommodation.

Requests for accommodations should be made as early as possible to ensure adequate time for coordination and planning. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and may require advance notice to implement.

If you have already been approved for accommodations with the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, please arrange to meet with me outside of class so that we can develop an implementation plan.

Students may face extenuating circumstances related to various personal or external factors, which impact their academic performance. While these circumstances often do not fall within the legal framework of Disability Accommodations, Bard College Berlin is committed to supporting students experiencing such circumstances. A student needing a short extension or a replacement assignment because of an extenuating circumstance is encouraged to make arrangements directly with instructors if possible. If further support is needed, please visit the [Bard College Berlin Accessibility page](#). Questions about this process can be directed to James Harker (j.harker@berlin.bard.edu) or Maria Anderson-Long (m.andersonlong@berlin.bard.edu).

Attendance

Two absences will not affect the participation grade or require documentation. After two absences, your participation grade will be impacted.

Per Bard College Berlin policy, you cannot miss more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

Assignments

1. Very brief reflections written in class on the topic of the session.
2. Research paper. You must have the topic approved by the instructor. You will submit the below-listed sections of the paper over the course of the semester, and turn in the final draft at the end. The final paper should be 3000-3500 words in length. Please submit your assignments via Google Classroom in Word format.
 - Topic and Research Question
 - Literature Review
 - First Draft
 - Final Paper Submission

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Late assignments will be downgraded 5%. Thereafter, they will be downgraded 5% for every 24 hours. Essays that are more than 72 hours late will not be accepted.

You are entitled to make an appointment with me to discuss seminar participation, or you may be asked to meet with me at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

Grade Breakdown

1. **Attendance & Participation (30%)**: Active engagement in class discussions.
2. **Reflections (40%)**: Brief written reflections on assigned readings.
3. **Final Research Paper (30%)**: 3000-3500 words.

Course Schedule

Readings are available on Google Classroom.

Wed, January 28	Defining Colonialism and Postcolonialism J. Galtung, A Structural Theory of Imperialism Mishra, V., & Hodge, B. (2015). □ What is Post (-) colonialism?. In <i>Colonial discourse and post-colonial theory</i> (pp. 276-290). Routledge.
Fri, January 30	The Colonial Boomerang Graham, S. (2012). Foucault's boomerang: the new military urbanism. <i>Development Dialogue</i> , 58(April), 37-48. Abourahme, N. (2018). Of monsters and boomerangs: Colonial returns in the late liberal city. <i>City</i> , 22(1), 106-115.
Wed, Feb 6	Liberation Movements: War and Violent Resistance Frantz Fanon, <i>The Wretched of the Earth</i> (selected sections)
Fri, Feb 8	Nonviolent Liberation Movements: Questioning Postcolonial Theory Trivedi, H. (2011). Revolutionary Non-Violence: Gandhi in Postcolonial and Subaltern Discourse.
Wed, Feb 11	After Liberation: The Making of the Global South Dorman, S. R. (2006). Post-liberation politics in Africa: Examining the political legacy of struggle. <i>Third world quarterly</i> , 27(6), 1085-1101. Doran, C. (2019). Postcolonialism, anti-colonialism, nationalism and history. <i>International Studies</i> , 56(2-3), 92-108.
Fri, Feb 13	The Postcolonial Unsovereign: Coups, Civil Wars, Terrorism, and Other Natural Disasters Kinzer, S. (2007). <i>Overthrow: America's century of regime change from Hawaii to Iraq</i> . Macmillan (excerpts) Rodríguez, F., Rendón, S., & Weisbrod, M. (2025). Effects of international sanctions on age-specific mortality: a cross-national panel data analysis. <i>The Lancet Global Health</i> , 13(8), e1358-e1366.

Wed, Feb 18 Dependency, the Resource Curse, and the Debt Trap
Graeber, D. (2014). *Debt: The First 5,000 Years, Updated and Expanded*. Melville House. (Selected Excerpts)

Fri, Feb 20 Free Trade, Foreign Aid, and the Debt Trap
John Perkins, *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man* (selected excerpts)
Topic and Research Question Submission!!!

Wed, Feb 25 Postcolonial Psychology: Justifying Inequality and Hierarchy
Jost, J. T., et al. (2011). System justification: How do we know it's motivated?. In *The psychology of justice and legitimacy* (pp. 173-203). Psychology Press.

Fri, Feb 27 Constructing the Other: Orientalism
Said, E. W. (2016). *Orientalism: Western conceptions of the Orient*. Penguin UK. (excerpts)

Wed, March 4 Distancing the Other: Race, Racism, and Biological Determinism
Grosfoguel, R. (2016). What is racism? *Journal of World-Systems Research*, 22(1), 9-15.
Liscum, M., & Garcia, M. L. (2022). You can't keep a bad idea down: Dark history, death, and potential rebirth of eugenics. *The Anatomical Record*, 305(4), 902-937.

Fri, March 6 Erasing the Other: Epistemic Injustice and the Subaltern
Spivak, G. C. (2023). Can the subaltern speak?. In *Imperialism* (pp. 171-219). Routledge.

Wed, Mar 11 Mining the Other: Epistemic Extractivism, Academia, Data and AI
No Readings
Literature Review Submission!!!

Fri, Mar 13 (Mis)representing the Other: Global Media and the News
Hall, S. (1997). The spectacle of the other. *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices*.

Wed, Mar 18 Settler Colonialism
Wolfe, P. (2006). Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native. *Journal of genocide research*, 8(4), 387-409.

Fri, March 20 Internal Colonization
Bombay, A., Matheson, K., & Anisman, H. (2014). The intergenerational effects of Indian Residential Schools: Implications for the concept of historical trauma. *Transcultural psychiatry*, 51(3), 320-338.

Wed, March 25	Non-Western Colonialisms Kuzio, T. (2002). History, memory and nation building in the post-Soviet colonial space. <i>Nationalities Papers</i> , 30(2), 241-264.
Fri, March 27	Colonial Environmentalism Bhambra, G. K., & Newell, P. (2023). More than a metaphor: 'climate colonialism' in perspective. <i>Global Social Challenges Journal</i> , 2(2), 179-187. Huggan, G., & Tiffin, H. (2007). Green postcolonialism. <i>Interventions</i> , 9(1), 1-11.

Spring Break: March 30-April 6

Wed, April 8	Food and Agriculture: Who Owns an Acre, Who Owns a Seed? Vandana Shiva, <i>Who Really Feeds the World?</i> (selected excerpts) Zaitchik, A. (2023). The New Colonialist Food Economy. <i>The Nation</i> .
Fri, April 10	Food and Agriculture: Who Owns an Acre, Who Owns a Seed? McMichael, P. (2013). The land grab and corporate food regime restructuring. In <i>The New Enclosures: Critical Perspectives on Corporate Land Deals</i> (pp. 63-83). Routledge.
Wed, April 15	Coloniality of Migration and Forced Displacement Gutiérrez Rodríguez, E. (2018). The coloniality of migration and the "refugee crisis": On the asylum-migration nexus, the transatlantic white European settler colonialism-migration and racial capitalism. <i>Refuge</i> , 34(1). Diken, B. (2004). From refugee camps to gated communities: biopolitics and the end of the city. <i>Citizenship studies</i> , 8(1), 83-106.
Fri, April 17	Migration and Brain Drain Rizvi, F. (2005). Rethinking "Brain Drain" in the Era of Globalisation. <i>Asia Pacific Journal of Education</i> , 25(2), 175–192.
Wed, Apr 22	The Help: Global Care Chains, Womanhood, and Motherhood Raijman, R., Schammah-Gesser, S., & Kemp, A. (2003). International migration, domestic work, and care work. <i>Gender & Society</i> , 17(5), 727-749. Lutz, H. (2018). Care migration: The connectivity between care chains, care circulation and transnational social inequality. <i>Current Sociology</i> , 66(4), 577-589.
Fri, Apr 24	Enlightening White Spirits, Saving Brown Souls: Shamans, Yogis and Pentecostal Churches King, R. (2013). Orientalism and the discovery of 'Buddhism' in <i>Orientalism and Religion: Post-Colonial Theory, India and "The Mystic East"</i> . Routledge.

Putcha, R. S. (2020). Yoga and White public space. *Religions*, 11(12), 669. 27(2), 151-179.

Comaroff, J. (2012). Pentecostalism, populism and the new politics of affect. In *Pentecostalism and Development: Churches, NGOs and Social Change in Africa* (pp. 41-66). London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.

Also Recommended:

[*Yoga Wars! India Blocks Patents On Poses : Planet Money : NPR*](#)

Fotiou, E. (2016). The globalization of ayahuasca shamanism and the erasure of indigenous shamanism. *Anthropology of Consciousness*,

Wed, April 29

Eat, Love and Exploit: The “Exotic” Far Away and The Neocolonial Tourist

Devine, J., & Ojeda, D. (2017). Violence and dispossession in tourism development: a critical geographical approach. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 25(5), 605–617.

New York Times (1982) *Why the Computer Chose Cancun*.

Research Paper First Draft Submission!!!

Friday, May 1

Federal Holiday

Wed, May 6

Museums and the Politics of Restitution

Divya P. Tolia-Kelly (2016). Feeling and Being at the (Postcolonial) Museum: Presenting the Affective Politics of 'Race and Culture'. *Sociology*. 50(5):896-912

Friday, May 8

Cultural Production and Coloniality

Toukan, H. (2024). Refusing Epistemic Violence: Guernica-Gaza and the ‘German Context’. *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry*, 57(1), 122-147.

Fri, May 13

Research Paper Submission!!!

Essay Deadlines

- **Topic and Research Question Submission: February 20**
- **Literature Review Submission: March 11**
- **First Draft Submission: April 29**
- **Final Paper Submission: May 13**