

SO285 MIGRATION, SPACE, AND POWER

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Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description

This course is an invitation to radically rethink migration with the help of two exceptional scholars, teachers, and activists: Rosa Luxemburg and Doreen Massey. Both Luxemburg and Massey were economic thinkers who made long-lasting contributions to their respective disciplines, shaped the political movements they supported, and inspired new generations of scholars and activists. Both were staunch supporters of internationalism and critics of global capitalism. Both conducted research on and advocated for workers' rights, and both left behind incisive reflections on the potential of solidarity. Both also repudiated binary models that juxtaposed the west and the rest, reform and revolution, global and local. Last but not least, both were women in spaces coded masculine – women who refused to conform to the heteropatriarchal gender norms of their social worlds. Considering that “there is no capitalism without migration” (Casas-Cortes et al., 2015), Luxemburg's and Massey's critiques of capitalism yield inspiring insights on migration as they engage with political and economic dependencies, colonial legacies, and what Massey called *geometries of power*: the uneven positioning of different individuals and different groups within the global interconnectedness. In dialog with Massey's notion of a global sense of place, Luxemburg's theory of the accumulation of capital can help us reframe the sticky connections between migration and capitalism in its current neoliberal guise. Following Massey's observation that “mobility, and control over mobility, both reflects and reinforces power” and Luxemburg's insistence that we consider inequality globally and not just locally, we will examine the wide-reaching consequences of capitalism's expansion into social activities hitherto unclaimed by the market as well as its enduring impact on both lived realities and popular perceptions of migration. In addition to selected texts by Luxemburg and Massey, we will also read a range of complimentary writings on migration, space, and power by Fatin Abbas, Gargi Bhattacharyya, Manuela Boatcă, Umut Erel, Evyn Lê Espiritu Gandhi, Sara Farris, Stuart Hall, Suzanne Hall, Edward Said, Zoé Samudzi, and Lea Ypi, among others.

Requirements

Students are required to attend class regularly and on time and to engage consistently in coursework including reading, listening, and taking notes. They will participate respectfully in class discussions, listen attentively to others, offer thoughtful questions and comments, and contribute meaningfully to a productive learning environment.

Students are expected to allocate sufficient time to complete and annotate all readings before class. The readings will be provided as PDFs and links via Google Classroom. Students are responsible for consulting the weekly schedule. Some assignments involve

work in small groups or pairs; students are expected to approach collaboration with accountability, supportiveness, and kindness.

While many primary texts are available free online, I recommend purchasing the following:

- *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader* edited by Peter Hudis and Kevin B. Anderson, New York: Monthly Review Press, 2004.
- *Doreen Massey Selected Political Writings* edited by David Featherstone and Diarmaid Kelliher, London: Lawrence Wishart, 2022.

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

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences from twice-per-week courses should not affect the participation grade or require documentation. Please inform me in advance if you know you will be missing a session.

Bard College Berlin may not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed 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.

It is crucial that you arrive on time as tardiness leads to disruption, unnecessary repetitions, and takes valuable time away from what could be inspiring and engaging discussions. Being late to class three times will count as one absence.

Assessment

Your performance in this course will be assessed based on your assignments (see below) and your preparedness for and participation in class. Please see the rubrics for each assignment at the end of this syllabus to understand the grading approach and contact me if you have any questions or concerns. If you find it hard to participate in class discussions or find certain topics difficult or sensitive, please let me know in advance and we will together find an approach that accommodates your needs. If you find yourself struggling with the course at any moment, don't hesitate to get in touch to talk about it. I also recommend visiting BCB's Learning Commons to develop your writing skills, alongside the feedback you will receive from me on written assignments.

Assignments

This course includes three types of assignments. The assignments are marked red in the syllabus and will also be posted on Google Classroom:

Short response paper and comments: Early in the semester, you will be asked to respond briefly (500 words) to a prompt drawn from the assigned readings. The purpose of this assignment is to ensure you engage meaningfully with the course material, consolidate your understanding, and identify thematic areas of particular interest. The response will be shared with your classmates via a course padlet and you will be asked to comment on at least two other responses (100 words each).

Presentation: In Weeks 7 and 8, you will give a 10 to 15-minute presentation (depending on the number of participants), demonstrating your familiarity with selected concepts discussed in class and your ability to use them to engage critically with questions around migration that emerge from specific examples.

Final paper: A 3000-word essay in response to one of three prompts engaging with the key topics, questions, and concepts discussed in this course. You will workshop your essay abstracts with your peers in class and are welcome to make an appointment to discuss them individually with me. Your final essay must be on a different topic than your presentation. The deadline for this assignment is **midnight 17 December 2026**.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Essays that are up to 24 hours late can be downgraded up to one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where a professor agrees to accept a late assignment, it should be submitted by the new deadline agreed upon by both parties. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment. Grades and comments will be returned to students in a timely fashion. Students are also entitled to make an appointment to discuss essay assignments and feedback during instructors' office hours.

Students will receive feedback for their course work during and at the end of the semester. Students are entitled to make an appointment with an instructor to discuss seminar participation, or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

Grade Breakdown

Seminar preparation & classroom participation: 30% (15% weeks 1-7 + 15% weeks 8-15)

Short response and comments: 15%

Presentation: 25%

Final essay: 30%

Schedule

Week 1

Tuesday, 1 September

Introductions and opening exercises.

Thursday, 3 September

 Listen to [Spatial Delight](#) Episodes 1 (Full of Power) & 2 (Geography Matters!)

 Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, New York: Vintage, 1994, 1-15.

Week 2

Tuesday, 8 September

 Doreen Massey, *The Shape of the World*, *Geographical Worlds*, 1995.

 Fatin Abbas, *Ghost Season*, 2023, excerpt.

Wednesday, 10 September

 Doreen Massey, *Setting the Scene & Opening Propositions*, *For Space*, 2005, 1-15.

 Stuart Hall, *The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power*, 1992.

Week 3

Tuesday, 15 September

 Lucy Mayblin and Joe Turner, *Time and Space*, *Migration Studies and Colonialism*, 2021, 26-48.

***** Short response paper *****

Respond to the prompt posted on the padlet by submitting a 500-word response. Comment on at least two other responses (100 words each), offering your thoughts and questions. Deadline for short response: 21 September. Deadline for comments: 28 September.

Wednesday, 17 September

 Evyn Lê Espiritu Gandhi, *Introduction*, *Archipelago of Resettlement*, 2022.

 Noam Leshem and Jen Bagelman, [Unsettling 'The Settler'](#), *Society & Space*, January 23, 2023.

Optional:

 Craig Santos Perez, *Interwoven*, 2018.

 Listen to [Evyn Lê Espiritu Gandhi speak](#) about Vietnamese “refugee settlers” in Guáhan and Palestine/Israel, *The Funambulist*, 2022.

Week 4

Tuesday, 22 September

 Listen to two podcast episodes about Rosa Luxemburg's life and work, one with Agata Lisiak from [The Dead Ladies Show](#), 2022 and one with Lea Ypi from [Jacobin](#), 2021.

📖 Browse through *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader* and <https://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/index.htm>.

Optional:

📖 Lea Ypi on Rosa Luxemburg in the [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#), 2022, and in [Jacobin](#), 2019.

📖 Julia Damphouse, [Why They Hated Rosa Luxemburg](#), *Jacobin*, 2026.

Wednesday, 24 September

📖 Rosa Luxemburg, Chapter 27, *The Accumulation of Capital*, 1913.

📖 Oleksandr Polianichev, [The History of Aggression in Asia That Moscow Wants to Erase](#), *New Lines Magazine*, May 9, 2025.

👁 Gurminder Bhambra, [Legacy of Empire](#), 2020.

Week 5

Tuesday, 29 September

📖 Rosa Luxemburg, Chapter 29, *The Accumulation of Capital*, 1913.

📖 Tao Leigh Goffe, *Pedagogies of Smoke, Dark Laboratory: On Columbus, the Caribbean, and the Origins of the Climate Crisis*, 2025.

Thursday, 1 October

📖 Doreen Massey, Chapter 13: Throwntogetherness: The Politics of the Event of Place, *For Space*, 2005. 149-162.

📖 Banu Subramaniam, *Botany of Empire: Plant Worlds and the Scientific Legacies of Colonialism*, 2024, excerpt.

Week 6

Tuesday, 6 October

📖 Rosa Luxemburg, *Women's Suffrage and Class Struggle*, 1912.

📖 Sara Farris, Introduction, *In the Name of Women's Rights: The Rise of Femonationalism*, 2017.

📖 Jillian Grise, [Bodies of Hope and Disruption](#), *Kohl: A Journal for Body and Gender Research*, 2017.

Wednesday, 8 October

📖 Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*, 1992.

📖 Umut Erel, *Migrating Cultural Capital: Bourdieu in Migration Studies*, *Sociology*, 2010.

Week 7

Tuesday, 13 October

Presentations

Thursday, 15 October

Presentations

*****FALL BREAK*****

Week 8

Tuesday, 27 October

Presentations

Thursday, 29 October

Presentations

Week 9

Tuesday, 3 November

📖 Doreen Massey, *World City*, London: Polity, 2007, 165-187.

📖 Manuela Boatcă, [Thou Shalt Honour the Asparagus](#), *LeftEast*.

🎧 Listen to Surviving Society presents [Material Crimes](#) Episode 2 (A Very British Massacre)

Thursday, 5 November

📖 Rosa Luxemburg, *The Proletarian Woman*, 1914.

📖 Zoé Samudzi, [Reparative Futurities: Thinking From the Ovaherero and Nama Colonial Genocide](#), *The Funambulist*, 2020.

Optional:

🎧 Listen to [Zoé Samudzi speak](#) about anticolonial solidarities and reparative futurities, *The Funambulist*, 2020.

***** Saturday, 7 November – off-campus visit *****

Required attendance. This excursion will replace one of our regular on-campus sessions.

Week 10

Tuesday, 10 November

📖 Doreen Massey, *A Global Sense of Place*, 1991 (*Selected Political Writings*, 151-163).

📖 Caroline Knowles, *The Flip-Flop Trail and Fragile Globalization*, *Theory, Culture & Society*, 2015.

Thursday, 12 November

📖 Suzanne Hall, Chapter 2: The Boundaries of Belonging, *City, Street and Citizen: The Measure of the Ordinary by Hall*, 2012.

🎧 Listen to [Spatial Delight](#) Episode 3 (World City)

Week 11

Tuesday, 17 November

📖 Doreen Massey, *Places and Their Pasts*, 1995 (*Selected Political Writings*, 164-177).

👁️ Doreen Massey, [Mexico City](#), BBC2 documentary, 1999.

Week 13

Tuesday, 24 November

📖 Rosa Luxemburg, [The National Question and Autonomy](#), 1909.

📖 Molly Crabapple, *My Great-Grandfather the Bundist*, *New York Review of Books*, 2018.

***** Final essay abstract (300 words) due Monday, 30 November, 9 am *****

Thursday, 26 November

📖 Gargi Bhattacharyya, *Ten Theses on Racial Capitalism*, *Rethinking Racial Capitalism*, 2018.

📖 Jens Adam and Sabine Hess, *Fortified Nationalism Racializing Infrastructures and the Authoritarian Transformation of the Body Politic: A Field Trip to the Bifurcated Polish/EU Border*

Regime on the Polish-Belarusian border, *Movements Journal*, 2023.

Week 14

Tuesday, 1 December

 **In-class workshop: peer review of final essay abstracts**

Thursday, 3 December

 Guest lecture (details TBA)

Week 15

Tuesday, 8 December

 Rosa Luxemburg, Order Reigns in Berlin, 1919 (*Reader* 373-78).

 M.E. O'Brien and Eman Abdelhadi, Quinn Liu on Making Refuge, *Everything for Everyone*, 2022.

Thursday, 10 December

Reflection and closing exercises

***** Final essay due midnight, 17 December *****

RUBRICS

Preparedness and participation

A = You attend class regularly and on time and consistently engage in the coursework including completing the readings, listening attentively, and taking notes. You participate in class discussions in thoughtful and respectful ways, engage carefully with what your peers say, and contribute to a productive learning environment.

B = You attend class regularly but are sometimes late or come without having completed all the readings carefully. Your participation in discussions is present but could be more consistent, and your engagement with your peers' contributions could be stronger.

C = You do not attend class regularly and are repeatedly late. You are often unprepared and fail to engage with your peers' contributions in respectful or substantive ways.

D = You have missed more than 25% of classes, are repeatedly unprepared, and show little engagement with your peers' contributions.

F = You have missed more than 30% of classes, are consistently unprepared and disengaged, and your behavior disrupts the learning environment for others.

Short response and comments

A = You offer a well-structured and thoughtful response to the prompt that demonstrates genuine engagement with the assigned readings. You proofread and edit your response before posting it to the padlet. Your comments on your peers' responses are careful, considerate, and substantive.

B = Your response shows you completed the readings but engages with them only superficially. The writing would benefit from another round of editing and proofreading. Your comments on your peers' contributions on the padlet feel somewhat rushed and lack the depth they could have.

C = Your response addresses the prompt only superficially and shows limited engagement with the assigned readings. Your comments on your peers' responses are minimal or perfunctory.

D = Your response has little or no connection to the prompt, and your comments on your peers' responses suggest you did not read them carefully.

F = You did not submit a short response and did not comment on your peers' contributions.

Presentation

A = The presentation demonstrates your full command of the material and reflects in-depth engagement with the readings. It is clearly and carefully formatted and includes a complete list of sources.

B = The presentation demonstrates your general familiarity with the material and some engagement with the readings, but lacks critical engagement and close reading of the texts. The formatting could use some more attention and the sources may be incomplete.

C = The presentation demonstrates uneven familiarity with the material and contains misreadings or gaps in understanding of texts discussed in class. The formatting needs improvement for clarity.

D = The presentation demonstrates limited engagement with the readings and insufficient familiarity with the key concepts discussed in class.

F = The presentation demonstrates your lack of familiarity with the basic concepts discussed in class and/or fails to meet the academic standards as set out in the Student Handbook.

Final essay rubric

A = The essay demonstrates full command of the material and reflects in-depth engagement with the selected readings, clear and compelling argumentation, and skillful writing throughout.

B = The essay has a solid and consistent focus and demonstrates clear argumentation, but some paragraphs are underdeveloped and the essay's overall purpose is not always fully realized. The paper contains occasional stylistic, grammatical, or spelling errors.

C = The essay fulfills the minimum requirements of the assignment. It may lack developed argumentation, rely on generalities, or offer insufficiently supported evidence, but demonstrates basic understanding of the material. The paper contains multiple stylistic, grammatical, and spelling errors.

D = The essay has major deficiencies in writing and argumentation. The paragraphs are not logically organized and the paper lacks overall cohesion.

F = The essay does not fulfill the basic requirements of the assignment or fails to meet the academic standards set out in the Student Handbook.