

**ST. THOMAS UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY**

**Sociology 4013B – Senior Seminar: Global Sociology and Post-colonial /
Decolonial Thought, Winter 2020**

Time: Mondays and Wednesdays, 4PM-5.20PM
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Office hours: by appointment (email to schedule a zoom meeting)

Course Description

This class explores themes and topics in postcolonial and decolonial thought. Some of the work we will be doing this semester will relate to issues of theory. In particular, we will be reading critiques of mainstream sociology from postcolonial perspectives. However, we will also be delving into social issues and political problems that are shaped by our colonial present: climate change, migration, and development. We will also spend some time getting a firmer grasp of what exactly is entailed by empire and colonialism—historical events that are misremembered in the historiography many of us may have been exposed to while we were growing up in Canada. One of the key objectives of the course, therefore, will be to gain greater insight about our global social positions, and to see aspects of contemporary Canadian society within a colonial lens. From the vantage point of empire and colonialism, our modernity looks very different than it may look from the vantage point of citizenship in the colony. As a colony of European empire(s), Canada has been so successful that it often doesn't seem like a colony at all. Some of the readings in this course will help reposition our vision of global modernity.

The emphasis in the class is on global sociology, and therefore, we should also be mindful that there is a lot that is missing in this class, and that it can't teach us everything about the coloniality of the countries we grew up in and currently inhabit. The main objective of this course for advanced undergraduate students is to open pathways for critical analysis and further exploration.

How the course will be organized:

Given the conditions of the pandemic, class lectures will not be held in person. I will post a Panopto lecture every week by Monday afternoon. I will try to keep these lectures to an hour or less, but given lectures and videos will also be an important source of course content. Be sure to take notes.

Our second weekly meet will consist of a virtual meeting on Teams, where we will discuss course material and where you can ask questions—of me and of one another. It will be a chance to meet other students in the class, and together, we'll work at getting better using the online environment to engage one another about important issues and interesting texts. This virtual meeting will be each Thursday from 2:30PM to 4PM.

Because internet speed is important to being able to participate in online discussions, these weekly meetings are not mandatory and attendance will not be taken. If you are unable to participate in class discussions online, you can also participate in weekly Forums, which can be used to assess your participation grade. I will pose weekly questions in the Forums, and I will check them periodically. Engage with one another in those Forums, ask other questions, tell us about what you found interesting in the readings, or how they challenged you or made you think about something you had taken for granted.

Most importantly, we are all friends in this class. Let's encourage one another and help one another to learn. Lots of us are anxious about class participation, so let's acknowledge that and be friendly and welcoming to everyone. In this class, it will be okay to make mistakes. These texts and these issues are sometimes difficult and challenging, so let's be extra understanding with one another.

Course Material

Course texts are available on Moodle

Full bibliographic information for course readings is provided below.

Assessment:

Participation: 20%

Your participation grade will be assessed based on your demonstrated engagement with course content, including weekly Moodle forums and weekly Teams meetings.

Participation in neither is mandatory, but highly recommended. You should either participate in the forum or in the Teams meeting every week.

Mid-term take home exam, due March 8th: 40%

The mid-term will be composed of two answers running 1500-2000 words each and will encompass material up to week 6. It will be distributed just before March break.

Final take home exam, due April 14th: 40%

The final will be composed of two answers, running 1500-2000 words each, and will encompass material from the whole course, but will focus primarily on material from weeks 7-11. It will be distributed April 8th.

Plagiarism

Please abide by St. Thomas's policy on academic honesty. Anti-plagiarism software will be used in this class. In a third-year course, cases of plagiarism from the internet or from other sources will be dealt with rigorously. If you are in doubt about what constitutes plagiarism, please contact me or consult the academic honesty guidelines in the STU calendar. If you need extra time to finish assignments, please contact me.

Course Materials

Julian Go. 2016. *Postcolonial Thought and Social Theory*. New York: Oxford
-I will provide a copy of the introduction for the first week.

All course materials are available on the course Moodle page.

Readings:

Week 1: Sociology and Empire (January 11 and 13)

Go, Julian. 2016. Introduction: Social Theory Beyond Empire? In *Postcolonial Thought And Social Theory*. New York: Oxford, pp. 1-17.

Bhabra, Gurinder. 2013. The Possibilities of, and for, Global Sociology: A Postcolonial Perspective. In *Postcolonial Sociology: Political Power and Social Theory*, edited by J. Go. Emerald Publishing, pp. 295-314.

To begin the course, we identify the main challenge facing contemporary sociology. As a discipline, we are inheriting key concepts and a canon of thought produced in the context of European imperialism and colonialism that was not acknowledged by the founders of the discipline. Go and Bhabra introduce us to some of the problems that has caused for the present.

Week 2: Empire and the Global Economy (Jan 18 and 20)

Bhabra, Gurinder. 2020 forthcoming. Colonial global economy: towards a theoretical reorientation of political economy. *Review of International Political Economy*, Online first, 16pp.

Harp, Stephen. 2016. Race, Migration and Labor. In *World History of Rubber: Empire, Industry, and the Everyday*, pp. 10-39.

Weber, Klaus. 2015. Selection from, "Linen, Silver, Slaves and Coffee: A Spatial Approach to Central Europe's Entanglements with the Atlantic Economy," *Culture and History Digital Journal* 4(2): pp. 3-10.

-I am not asking you to read all of this article, I just want you to read a selection.

-while reading, consider how the colonial world influenced the modernization of day to day life in Central Europe

These readings provide a bit of a backdrop and entry point for understanding global society, capitalism and modernization from the standpoint of global social relations. The Harp reading provides a window onto race and labour regimes in the global rubber industry at the turn of the 20th century. Without rubber, there is no automobility—a key sign of 20th century modernity. The Weber reading focuses on the commercial networks of Germany, currently the wealthiest country in the European Union and one of the centres of capitalist accumulation for centuries. It points out how German economic dynamism was produced in relation to the colonies. There is

no Protestant Ethic (Max Weber) without the colonies, which provide outlets for increased productivity.

Week 3: Subjective Experiences of Being an Object (Jan 25 and 27)

W.E.B. DuBois. 1903. Of Our Spiritual Strivings, in *Souls of Black Folk*, pp. 1-7.

Fanon, Franz. 1967 [1952]. The Fact of Blackness. *Black Skin, White Masks*, pp. 109-140.

(Optional) Aldon Morris: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1468-4446.12241>, pp. 3-16.

This week focuses on two readings from the 20th century on the experience of blackness in the global colonial empire we have sketched out in the previous week. WEB Du Bois and Franz Fanon were two of the earliest theorists of imperialism and modernity from the standpoint of the colonized. Du Bois was long excluded from the canon of classical sociology. We focus this week on colonial subjecthood from the vantage point of subordinate positions.

Keywords: double consciousness; the veil

Week 4: Edward Said, Orientalism (Feb 1 and 3)

Said, Edward. 1993. Discrepant Experiences, in *Culture and Imperialism*, pp. 31-43. New York: Vintage.

In addition to reading some of Said's work, we will use the opportunity that Said's writing offers us to reconsider how representations of colonization and nature in New Brunswick erase the perspective of Wolastoqiwik people who suffered dispossession as a result of British imperial designs on the then not well-explored 'St. John' River. Though the article has many pages, this is due to a high number of images from the colonial period. It is a must-read for beginning to understand New Brunswick history.

Bear Nicholas, Andrea. 2015. The Role of Colonial Artists in the Dispossession and Displacement of the Maliseet, 1790s-1850s. *Journal of Canadian Studies* 49(2): 25-86.

This week we will be exploring key themes in the work of Edward Said, whose work on 'Orientalism' has been very influential in sociology. Of particular importance to Said is the construction of knowledge about the East and 'Orientals' that would serve the interests of Europe, and which is, therefore, a fundamental part of European imperialism. While Orientalism as a concept was developed in relation to knowledge about the 'East' (e.g., the lands East of the Europe), the concept is also important to Canadian Studies' understandings of colonialism in Canada.

Keywords: Orientalism; contrapuntal perspective; denial of coevalness

Week 5: Postcolonial Feminisms (Feb 8 and 10)

Spivak, Gayatri. 1999. Abridged version, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", 5pp.
-the whole essay is optional, pp. 66-111.

Mohanty, Chandra T. 1984. Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses. *boundary 2*, 12(3): 333-358.

This week's readings will focus on two classic postcolonial essays critiquing Western feminism from a postcolonial standpoint. It will also give us an opportunity to explore contemporary issues regarding discourses of women and human rights promoted by the national states and key international institutions governed by European and European-descendent men.

Week 6: Provincializing Europe (Feb 15 and 17)

Chakrabarty, Dipesh. 1992. Provincializing Europe: Postcoloniality and the critique of history. *Cultural Studies* 6(3): 337-357.

This famous essay will close out the first half of the class. The idea that Europe and its history have to be 'provincialized' challenges the notion that Europe is the centre of modern history, and that historical development since European colonialism has evolved in a diffusionist pattern, from the centre outward to the periphery. Chakrabarty and the Subaltern Studies project challenge this notion of Europe's sense of self and propose alternative ways of reading and understanding European modernity. We'll also pivot towards the decolonial school, and its rather different attempt to provincialize Europe, from the standpoint of colonial experiences in Latin America.

Week 7: The Coloniality of Power and the Coloniality/Modernity Perspective (Feb 22 and 24)

Quijano, Aníbal. 2007. Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality. *Cultural Studies* 21(2-3): 168-178.

Quijano, Aníbal. 2000. Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America. *Neplanta: Views from the South* 1(3): 533-556.
-you have the option of reading the complete article to p. 580.

Aníbal Quijano is a Peruvian sociologist and the founder of the Coloniality/Modernity/Decolonial school, which emerged out of a different set of traditions and experiences from the Subaltern Studies project of postcolonial scholarship. Key to these readings is his conceptualization of epistemic colonization and Eurocentrism. This work has proven hugely influential in recent years, and we will explore its critique of European modernity and the imperial world we continue to live with in the midst of a collapsing ecosystem our knowledge systems seem incapable of grasping.

Keywords: coloniality of power; Eurocentrism; race

March break – mid-term exam

Week 8: Encountering ‘development’ (March 8 and 10)

Escobar, Arturo. 1995. The Problematization of Poverty: The Tale of the Three Worlds and Development, in *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*, pp. 21-54. Princeton University Press.

Prashad, Vijay. 2008. ‘Buenos Aires: imagining an economy,’ in *Darker Nations: A People’s History of the Third World*. pp. 62-74. The New Press.

-(optional reading from the same book, ‘Kingston: IMF-led globalization.’)

This week we will be ‘encountering’ development as a concept in strict relation with European colonial projects. Development is largely seen as an optimistic project of improving the living standards of poor people around the globe, however, as we will see, this notion is premised on the standpoint of relatively privileged global positions who have forgotten imperial lineages and anti-colonial struggles. Our exploration of the project to reverse the imbalances in the global economy in Vijay Prashad’s book ends really at the beginning (much as the project itself did)—all we can do this week with the required readings is provide some backdrop. However, those who are interested in following the story closer to the present need to read about structural adjustment and the IMF and World Bank. Decolonization and global economic democratization was aggressively countered after 1975 by the formation of a new group of the world’s most powerful states, the G7, and a new agenda of global economic integration. I will post an optional reading for those interested in this topic, and I can suggest further reading for students interested in learning more.

Keywords: Development discourse; Modernization Theory; terms of trade; Raúl Prebisch

Week 9: Migration and Coloniality (March 15 and 17)

Castles, Stephen. 2015. Migration, Precarious Work, and Rights: Historical and Current Perspectives. In *Migration, Precarity, and Global Governance: Challenges and Opportunities for Labour* edited by Carl-Ulrik Schierup, Ronaldo Munck, Branka Likic-Brboric, and Anders Neergaard, pp. 46-67. Oxford University Press.

Delgado Wise, Raúl and Henry Veltmeyer. 2016. The Political Economy of International Labour Migration. In *Agrarian Change, Migration and Development*, pp. 74-101. Black Point, NS: Fernwood Publishing.

Bhambra, Gurminder. 2017. The current crisis of Europe: Refugees, colonialism and the limits of cosmopolitanism. *European Law Journal* 23: 395-405.

(Optional) Vic Satzewich and Nilolaos Liidakis. 2016. *Race and Ethnicity in Canada: A Critical Introduction*. New York: Oxford. Ch. 3, pp. 72-104 on immigration policy in Canada.

This week we look at recent sociology of migration, one that helps us to situate current events and debates within a sociological analysis that encompasses a global perspective. Castles and Milkman provide some historical backdrop about labour migration regimes to capitalist countries. Bhabra provides a critique of contemporary refugee regimes, which are excluding refugees from accessing their legal rights to asylum. Our focus will be on the immigration systems of larger capitalist states, but Canada's is certainly relevant here, and I will post a chapter from Satzewich and Liodakis for those interested in exploring white supremacy in Canada's history of migration.

Week 10: Achille Mbembe, Views from the Post-Colony (March 22 and 24)

Mbembe, Achille. 2003. Necropolitics. *Public Culture* 15(1): 11-40.

Mbembe draws on the traditions of European political theory to rethink our postcolonial present from the vantage point of the colonized. His work on necropolitics, and the sovereign decision of who will live and who must die resonates in the current coronavirus pandemic, the coming debt crisis, and the climate emergency that echoes on into the decade ahead.

Keywords: biopower; subject/subjectivity; colonial occupation; necropower

Weeks 11 and 12: Connected Histories and Relational Biographies (March 29, 31 and April 7)

Bhabra, Gurminder. 2010. Sociology after post-colonialism: provincializing cosmopolitanisms and connected sociologies, in *Decolonizing European Sociology*, edited by M. Boatca and S. Costa, pp. 33-47.

Go, Julian. 2016. Reconnecting Relations. In *Postcolonial Thought and Social Theory*, pp. 103-142.

We conclude the course with the two main thinkers we started with, Gurminder Bhabra and Julian Go. We will focus on how they leave us with a picture of a connected sociology of global social relations. What are the implications of this approach to a sociological analysis of the social crises we face in the 2020s?