The Black Radical Tradition in the Americas

Draft Syllabus

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Course Description

Karl Marx was not the only person who developed an influential theory of social revolution. A cadre of theorists from the Global South have extensively theorized about the issues facing their particular nations, and they have developed social theories that have challenged social and global inequality. This course is a theory based course that will focus especially on the anti-colonial and postcolonial thought of radical Black intellectuals from the Americas, the Caribbean and West Africa. We will critically engage these theorists, and consider how their work represents, and has influenced the revolutionary social movements of the latter half of the 20th century.

At its core, this course is an introduction to coloniality/postcolonial studies. This course is not exhaustive as postcolonial studies is a broad and growing field. However after you complete this course, you will have a solid foundation to continue on to more advanced courses in postcolonial studies. To this end, we will primarily take a sociological approach in this course. We will read some theorists who are trained in the area of the humanities but, in the spirit of transgression, we will certainly blur disciplinary boundaries as a means to critically engage key debates within postcolonial studies.

Required Texts:

The Black Jacobins by C.L.R. James
Caliban and Other Essays by Roberto Fernandez Retamar and Edward Baker
Discourse on Colonialism by Amié Césaire
Wretched of the Earth by Frantz Fanon
Black Skin White Masks By Frantz Fanon
How Europe Underdeveloped Africa by Walter Rodney
(http://www.marxists.org/subject/africa/rodneywalter/howeurope/)

For the Term Papers

***Consciencism: Philosophy and the Ideology for Decolonization by Kwame Nkrumah
*** Feminism Without Boarders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity by Chandra Talpade Mohanty

*All texts are available at the Campus Bookstore. However, I suggest you order them used through Amazon.com or Abebooks.com. If you purchase the books used the costs range from $3.00 USD$ 15.00 USD.*

Supplementary Texts:
The supplementary texts are located online via Canvas

Optional Texts
Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition by Cedric J. Robinson

**Evaluation Criteria and Grading**

I. Attendance and Participation 20%
II. Weekly Online Journal Entries 25%
III. Term Papers (45% each worth 15% of your grade)
IV. Class Discussion Question (10%)

I. Attendance and Participation

Attendance and participation is very important for this class. Since it is a seminar and theory based course, discussion is very important. If you are shy, don't worry about it! We're all friends here and everyone's thoughts will be respected. Attendance is required and will be taken at the beginning of every class meeting. Active participation includes asking and answering questions, participating in group exercises, and doing the reading before class.

This is the most important requirement of the class. Twenty percent (20%) of your total grade has been allocated to your presence in the classroom throughout the whole class period. If you arrive to class late, you will be marked absent. More than three unexcused absences will result in a zero for the attendance requirement. More than five unexcused absences will result in an automatic “F” for the course.

If you need to be absent due to a medical situation, your absence will only be excused if you present a doctor's note. Notes from doctors will be initially accepted, but subject to verification so be sure that they have specific contact information. University documentation is required for special situations such as fieldtrips. to participate in competitive sports representing Lehigh University, and other professional, educational events or other official University events. Please talk to me if you have any questions about your particular situation.

II. Weekly Journal Entries – Post online

Choose one piece from the week's reading – summarize it and comment on it. Weekly reaction papers are to be posted online every Tuesday by 5 pm. They are to be no longer than one page double spaced.

III. Term Papers

The term papers are opportunities to use some of the concepts we have discussed in class to critically engage the work of a key postcolonial theorist and political activist. General Format: Format: 6-7 Pages long + sources cited section; 1 inch margins; 12 pt Times New Roman Font; Follow the MLA, APA or Chicago Style format. Papers are due online (PDF format). Discuss & cite at least three of the readings from the course in your analysis.
Paper One: The Colonial Period. Post-Online by Friday September 30th @ 5 pm. Summarize and discuss Amié Césaire and C.L.R. James's discussion of Colonialism. First, what is colonialism in the first place? What is their critique of colonialism? How does the reality of colonialism and slavery contradict Western Enlightenment Ideals?

Paper Two: The Psychology of Colonization & Its Social Products: post online by Friday, 5 pm of Week 10 For paper two, complete a review of the following book:

Consciencism: Philosophy and the Ideology for Decolonization by Kwame Nkrumah

Answer the following question: How has postcolonial scholarship framed the relevance of Marxian thought to the anticolonial struggles of postcolonial societies? What are the benefits/limitations of a Marxian approach to social change in a postcolonial context?

Paper Three: Colonialisms and Neocolonialisms: Challenges of the Contemporary Period 8-10 pages. Discuss & cite at least four of the readings from the course in your analysis. Due on the last day of exams. Review the following book:

Feminism Without Boarders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity by Chandra Talpade Mohanty

How does western notions of race, gender, and sexuality affect feminism's ability to address the experiences of women in postcolonial and neocolonial contexts? Can there be a 'transnational feminism'?

Class Discussion Question

Each Wednesday, one person will come to class prepared to lead a 30 min class discussion. This includes providing a brief summary of the key themes of the materials covered that week, and three questions for the class to consider. Also, you should come to every class with one question you have about the materials we are covering.

Additional Information

Electronic submissions of assignments and papers will NOT be accepted. Extensions will only be given with a documented, valid excuse as per Lehigh University guidelines. Lecture will begin promptly at 2:35 pm and run until 3:50 pm. Please allow sufficient time to settle in and review the previous day’s lecture notes before lecture begins. Because we have a small class:

- Please silence all cell phones and pagers.
- Do not talk with others during lectures or while others are speaking.
- Express disagreement respectfully and be reflective about your conduct and opinions.
- Do not pack up your belongings before the end of class, as this makes it difficult for others to hear, think, and concentrate.
Academic Integrity

All work must be your own. Academic dishonesty of any sort – including unintentional or intentional plagiarism, cheating, and/or unapproved collaboration – will not be tolerated, and will result in an automatic grade of F for the course. By registering for this class you acknowledge and agree to this policy and accept responsibility for educating yourself regarding Lehigh University codes of student conduct. Be advised that all cases of academic dishonesty will be reported according to University of Florida.

Learning Accommodations

Students with documented special needs who require, for example, extra time or other accommodations on examinations, should notify me in writing with the inclusion of official documentation, within the first two weeks of the course so that we can make appropriate arrangements.

Reading Schedule

Topics in lecture may vary a bit from week to week depending on the pacing of lectures and the interests of the class. However, students should keep up with the reading schedule as noted below, and readings should be completed prior to lecture. I reserve the right to change the syllabus as needed to fit student needs.

Theme 1: Setting the Context: Revisiting the Colonial Period

Week I

Black Jacobins Chapters 1, 2, 3,4

Optional Background Reading:


See Coursesite: Rethinking the Color Line by Howard Zinn (from Rethinking the Color Line: Readings in Race and Ethnicity; 3rd Edition)

Week II

Black Jacobins: Chapters 7-8 (skip 9); 10-13

In-class Film: Garifuna Journey/Quilombos

Week III

A Discourse on Colonialism by Aime Cesaire pgs 31-78
The Colonizer and the Colonzed pgs 1-118

Theme 2: After Colonialism: Race, Nation and Culture

Week IV
Film: The Battle of Algiers

Week V
The Colonizer and the Colonzed 119-154
The Wretched of the Earth by Frantz Fanon Introduction-pg 148

Week VI
Selections from Freud
The Wretched of the Earth by Frantz Fanon pgs. 148-conclusion
See Coursesite: “National Liberation and Culture” from Colonial Discourse and postcolonial Theory
See Coursesite: Selections from “Toward the African Revolution” by Frantz Fanon

Week VII
Black Skin White Masks

Theme 3: Theorizing the Colonialism from a Marxian Framework

Week VIII
Film: Life and Debt
Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition by Cedric J. Robinson – Part I
How Europe Underdeveloped Africa by Walter Rodney – Introduction – Chapter III

Week IX
Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition by Cedric J. Robinson Part II
How Europe Underdeveloped Africa by Walter Rodney – Chapter III – V

Week X

Film Lumumba

Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition by Cedric J. Robinson Part III

How Europe Underdeveloped Africa by Walter Rodney – Chapter V – End

See Coursesite: “Marxism and the Postmodern by Fredric Jameson

Theme 4: Critiquing the Postcolonial and the Postmodern

Week XII

See Coursesite: “Can the Subaltern Speak?” by Gaytri Spivak

See Coursesite: “The Postcolonial and the Postmodern” by Homi Bhabha

See Coursesite: “Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism” by Fredric Jameson

See Coursesite: “The Postcolonial Aura” by Arif Dirlik

See Coursesite: “Notes on the Postcolonial” by Ella Shohat

Week XI

See Coursesite: “Notes on the Politics of Location” by Adriene Rich

See Coursesite: “Under Western Eyes, Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses” by Chandra Talpade Mohanty

See Coursesite: “Cartographies of Struggle: Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism” from Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity by Chandra Talpade Mohanty

Theme 5: Gendering and Sexualizing the “Postcolonial”

Week XIII

See Coursesite: “Introduction and Chapter 1” from Imperial Leather by Anne Mcclintock

See Coursesite: “Redrafting Morality” by M. Jacqui Alexander
See Coursesite: “Colonizing Bodies and Colonizing Minds” by Oyeronke Oyewumi

See Coursesite: “Gender and Colonial Space” by Sara Mills

See Coursesite: “Preface” from The Invention of Woman by Oyeronke Oyewumi

Theme 6: Postcolonial/NeoColonial/ Hybrid? Thinking about Latin America and the Caribbean

Week XIV

Film: Cuba, une odyssée africaine

Caliban and Other Essays by Roberto Fernandez Retamar and Edward Baker

See Coursesite: “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America” by Aníbal Quijano

See Coursesite: “The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference” by Walter D. Mignolo

(Post)Coloniality for Dummies: Latin American Perspectives on Modernity, Coloniality, and the Geopolitics of Knowledge” by Santiago Castro-Gómez

both from Coloniality at Large: Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate

Theme 7: Hybridity

Week XV

See Coursesite: “The Caribbean: Culture or Mimicry?” by Derek Walcott

See Coursesite: “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse” by Homi Bhabha

See Coursesite: “In Praise of Creoleness” by Jean Bernabe et al.

See Coursesite: “How (!) Is an Indian?: A Contest of Stories” by Jana Sequoya

See Coursesite: “Introduction” from The Caribbean Postcolonial by Shalini Puri