

ES 257 B Social Theory: Post-Colonial Elaborations

Winter 2007 Mondays 2-4:50 pm. SSB 103

Professor Pal Ahluwalia

Office hours (2:00 pm – 4:00 pm and 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm Room SSB 231):

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This course seeks to engage with the increasing spread of the intellectual concerns that are grouped under the category of postcolonialism. These concerns began life as a (yet unnamed) set of theoretical interventions from scholars largely working within the field of English literature. They were concerns that migrated, in part, because of people like Edward Said. *Orientalism* constituted a critical moment in the formation of this 'field.' It did this by placing the question of power, representation and colonialism firmly on the wider agenda of the New Humanities. In doing this, the question of the non-West and politics were firmly tied to theory in new and exciting ways. By offering both an ontic and ontological description of the effects of colonialism, evidenced through the binary of Europe and its Other, this book gave us both an empirically based description of power relations and the promise of the foundations of an ontological one. It not only opened up the possibility of revealing the power of representation, but also opened a new space through which psychoanalysis, philosophy and even theology could speak once again to questions of self and Being.

Psychoanalysis had the conscious/unconscious divide, philosophy, the master/slave dialectic and politics, the friend/enemy distinction. With Postcolonialism 'Europe and its other' became a site through which these other tropes registered the cultural element. Like psychoanalysis, philosophy and politics this division became a productive means by which postcolonialism could speak across the ontic divide into the ontological. This form of politics of culture authorized a new way of understanding political concerns at the same time as questions of culture were being rendered political. Out of that nexus of the empirical and the theoretical emerges the idea of postcolonial politics. From the womb of this once literary dominated field of postcolonialism, there emerged a new set of techniques for writing about politics and culture. This course will explore what can be broadly termed postcolonial politics.

Course Requirements:

Seminar Participation: Active engagement with the weekly readings and participation in seminar discussion is crucial. (20% of grade).

Class Presentations: Every student will be responsible for at least one class presentation based on weekly readings, designed to provoke and facilitate discussion. (10% of grade).

Critical Reading Commentaries: You will be responsible to provide written commentaries in

the form of 1-2 page critical reflections on the weekly readings which will be shared with all members of the seminar. We will discuss these details during the first class session. The commentaries should be analytical rather than descriptive, critically engaging the week's readings rather than summarizing them. They are meant both to encourage careful reflection *prior* to our group meeting and to be generative for seminar discussion (20% of grade).

Seminar Paper: A final research paper is due at the end of the seminar. The paper should be about 5000 words in length. (50% of course grade).

Week One. January 8:

Preliminary meeting for the purpose of organisation, explanation etc.

Week Two. January 15:

Public holiday

Orientalism

Seminar Presentation

Reading:

Edward Said, *Orientalism*, New York: Vintage Books, 1978.

Bill Ashcroft and Pal Ahluwalia, *Edward Said*, London: Routledge 2001.

Week Three. January 22:

Colonial Discourse Analysis

Seminar Presentation

Reading:

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London: Routledge, 1994.

Week Four. January 29:

Post-colonial Disruptions

Seminar Presentations

Reading:

Couze Venn, *The Postcolonial Challenge*, London: Sage, 2006.

Week Five. February 5:

Transnationalism

Seminar Presentations

Reading:

Arjun Appadurai, "Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination" in Arjun Appadurai, (ed.), *Globalization*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2001.

Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih, (eds) *Minor Transnationalism*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2005, pp.1-40; 109-134

Week Six. February 12:

Cosmopolitanism

Seminar Presentations

Reading:

Timothy Brennan, *At Home in the World*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Couze Venn, "Altered States: Post-Enlightenment Cosmopolitanism and Transmodern Socialities", *Theory, Culture and Society*, Vol. 19, Nos. 1-2, pp. 65-80.

Bryan Turner, "Cosmopolitan Virtue, Globalization and Patriotism", *Theory, Culture and Society*, Vol. 19, Nos. 1-2, pp. 45-63.

Week Seven. February 19 :

Public Holiday

Postcolonial Melancholia

Seminar Presentations

Reading:

Paul Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.

Edward Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.

Week Eight. February 26 :

Social Imaginaries

Seminar Presentations

Reading:

Charles Taylor, *Social Imaginaries*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.

Week Nine. March 5:

Postcolonial Terror

Seminar Presentations

Reading:

Susan Buck-Morss, *Thinking Past Terror: Islamism and Critical Theory on the Left*, London: W.W. Norton, 2003.

Rey Chow, *The Age of Terror: Self Referentiality in War, Theory and Comparative Work*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.

Week Ten. March 12:

Friendship

Seminar Presentations

Reading:

Leela Gandhi, *Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought, Fin de Siecle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2006