

G41.2900 Rajagopal and Young
Topics in Postcolonial Literature: Decolonization and its Aftermath

Arvind Rajagopal (Dept. Culture and Communication)
Robert J.C. Young (Dept. English)

Decolonization and its Aftermath: Globalization from Below

The advent of 20th C. decolonization challenged the way in which world history had been conceived for four centuries, as centered upon the tiny landmass of Western Europe, rather than say, as plural and polycentric. The former view made it difficult to understand how the majority of the world's population mattered to history at all. With the onset of decolonization after the end of World War I, the world began to be seen, first through the lens of the nation, and secondly, as an extensive set of interconnections, where seemingly remote events could have major effects across countries. This course will combine a survey of select decolonization movements with analyses of the transformations from anticolonial nationalism through postcolonial developmentalism to the contemporary new world order. The course will consider decolonization in two senses: as the historical achievement of independence in former colonies, and, as a communicational concept illuminating socio-political change. Therefore, in addition to historical and theoretical literature, this course will draw on literature, cinema and other media sources to explore the significance of decolonization in the 20th C and beyond.

The aftermath of the Cold War and the failure of non-alignment in the global South have been marked by the rise of religious and market fundamentalism as well as the emergence of a New World Order. It is increasingly obvious that decolonization has not brought all the freedoms it promised. Rather, it has enabled a deeper infusion of metropolitan technologies of governance, that would have been inhibited if erstwhile colonial structures had remained in place. Nevertheless, there are numerous unforeseen outcomes of the partial but increasing deinstitutionalization of regulatory systems. These are conventionally referred to in terms of democratization, consumer choice and the new mobility of goods and persons. At the same time, questions of politics begin to move beyond the purview of the state, and pose problems that are also opportunities for democratization.

This course will address a) the persistent legacies of colonization, as well as b) the political status of decolonization, as an initiative that inaugurates new futures, while remaining agnostic about its material outcomes. We will consider decolonization in the historical context of postcolonial development as well as retrospectively, in terms of the new world order, the clash of fundamentalisms, and rise of political violence that we witness today. The secondary literature is as yet sparse; we will seek to construct it from primary documents, political speeches and tracts, literary and other media texts including films, accounts of the developmental enterprises involved, as well as critiques of developmentalism and of the technocratic forms of governance it required.