Fall 2008 Graduate Seminar
Decolonization and its Aftermath: Globalization from Below
E58.2211-001 and G41.2900-002
T 0330PM 0530PM

Course Instructors:
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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 has 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.

Course Requirements
Participants will be required to participate actively in class discussions and make class presentations on the readings. They will write a 5 page midterm research paper, and a final research paper of 13-15 pages that can be a development of the midterm paper. The class size will have no more than 25 students.

Grade Breakdown:
Class Participation and class presentations:  25%
Midterm research paper      25%
Final research paper      50%

What follows is a thematic outline for the course, with key and secondary readings under each heading.

PART 1: Decolonization: Prelude and Advent
Themes we will consider in the first part of the course include: the moral and political imagination of decolonization; writings of postcolonial nationalist leaders and the projects of nation-building and citizen-formation that these leaders undertook, and the development of postcolonial infrastructure.

The term 'decolonization' covers a range of very different phenomena, from peaceful transfers of power to violent revolutions; as such there can be no simple account of it. The term refers to the shift of legal and political sovereignty from former imperial powers to their erstwhile colonial subjects. But it also refers to a movement for moral and political justice, a declaration of the solidarity of the colonized, and a liberatory ideology that embraced even countries that were not formally colonized, such as China and Iran. From the Bandung Conference of Non-Aligned Countries in 1955 to Pan-
Africanism and beyond, there arose a new imagination of personhood and of non-western development. It was led by an alliance of political leaders and educated intelligentsia arguing for an alternative model of development that avoided taking sides with either the capitalist or the socialist superpower. Instead they pursued national development through a cosmopolitan confederation that acknowledged a shared experience of colonial oppression, and strove for emancipation from this history.

1. Introduction and Historical Background: Sept 2

V. I. Lenin, ‘Draft Theses on National and Colonial Questions’ for the Second Congress of The Communist International
http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1920/jun/05.htm

Minutes of the Second Congress of the Communist International
Petrograd, July 19 – August 7 1920

4th Session July 25
Vladimir Lenin, ‘Report on the National and Colonial Question’
MN Roy, ‘Supplementary Theses On The National And Colonial Question’
John Reed. ‘America and the Negro Question’
http://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/2nd-congress/ch04.htm#v1-p121

5th Session July 28
Discussion on national and colonial question
Theses on the national and colonial question
http://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/2nd-congress/ch05.htm

Mao Zedong, Report on An Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan (1927)
http://www.etext.org/Politics/MIM/classics/mao/sw1/mswv1_2.html

‘On Contradiction’ (1937)
see especially
IV. ‘The Principal Contradiction and the Principal Aspect of a Contradiction’
Available on Blackboard under “Course Documents”

Recommended Film to be viewed: *Battle of Algiers* (dir. Gillo Pontecorvo, 1966)

**Recommended Reading:**
Congress of Peoples of the East, Baku, September 1920
[http://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/baku/index.htm](http://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/baku/index.htm)


Steve J. Stern, “Feudalism, Capitalism and the World-System”


Special Issue on *Battle of Algiers, Interventions* 9:3 (2007)
2. The ‘Third World’, Bandung and What Lay Behind It (1 week), Sept 9

Report of the Bandung Conference (extracts)

(excerpts)


**Recommended Reading**


Robert J.C. Young, ‘From Bandung to the Tricontinental’, *historein / ιστορείν*, annual publication of the Cultural and Intellectual History Society, Athens, Greece, 5 (2005), 11-21

3. Nationalists and Their Visions of Decolonization Sept 16, 23

September 16:


Kwame Nkrumah, *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for*

September 23:


PART 2: Postcolonial Development and the Makings of a New World Order

The second part of the course considers how the influence of anticolonial mobilization mutated in the postcolonial period, as the utopian hopes faded and a new world order began to take shape with the end of the Cold War; the rise of political and religious violence; the emergence of a (contested) global neoliberal consensus, and of debates over secular selfhood and religious fundamentalism.

Decades after the achievement of decolonization, it continues to be invoked as a utopian moment in non-western politics, and requires to be adequately understood, even if contemporary events lead us to question the nostalgia surrounding decolonization. In retrospect, it is clear that postcolonial development aimed to make official forms of nationalism dominant even as contestation from below grew. The historiography of decolonization has also been dominated by scholars sympathetic to top-down perspectives generated by postcolonial leaders. Unwittingly, Cold War concerns of isolating zones of East-West influence and viewing the superpower conflict as the overarching frame for understanding global affairs has continued to influence scholarship well past the end of the Cold War.

Against this tendency, recent postcolonial scholarship has emphasized the extent to which colonialism was not only a matter of sovereignty, but as well, of institutions and modes of knowledge that endured past independence, even as nationalists tried to undo colonialism's effects. We should note here some of internal contradictions new nations had to work through. The raison d'etre of colonial governance was the racial and cultural
incapacity of the colonized to govern themselves. Colonial rulers regarded native conditions as uncivilized and as requiring improvement, while forbidding citizenship and the attendant rights of self-improvement to colonial subjects. Anticolonial movements responded by conceiving of an alternative community, located in the "national state" (as Partha Chatterjee has termed it) that was meant to uplift the community it stood for. The form of representation was electoral democracy, but the means of upliftment was often through organizations and systems of understanding derived from colonial experience. Decolonization thus reproduced a colonial logic at its center, even as it moved past colonialism.


David Slater, *Geopolitics and the Post-Colonial: Rethinking North-South Relations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), Chapter 1


October 7:


**Recommended Reading**


October 14 – Columbus Day. No class.

**MIDTERM RESEARCH PAPER DUE OCTOBER 21**

5. The Formation of National Subjects (2 weeks): Oct 21, 28
October 21:

October 28:

November 4:
Rudolf Mrazek talk

November 11:

**Recommended Reading**


6. Culture and Everyday Life (1 week)

Nov 18


Recommended Film: Xala (dir. Ousmane Sembene, 1975).

**Recommended Reading**


Olivier Roy, *The Politics of Chaos in the Middle East or Globalised Islam (Extract)*

Film: Leila (dir. Dariush Mehrjui, 1996)

**Recommended Reading**


8. Popular Violence and State Complicity (1 week), Dec 2


**Recommended Reading**
Philip Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families: Stories from Rwanda*. New York: Picador, 1999


9. New World Order (1 week), Dec 9
David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005

**Recommended Reading**


Additional reading: