

## Frantz Fanon's Global Politics: Racism, Madness, and Colonialism

AS.190.476 Fall 2022

Krieger Laverty

Upper Division Seminar Course

3 Credit Hours

Dr. Jacob Kripp

Office Hours: Thursday 12:00-2:00 p.m. in Mergenthaler 275B or Zoom via appointment.

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### Introduction

How is racism implicated in global political life and social culture? How does the construction of rationality and the imposition of madness reinforce a global racial hierarchy? What is the relationship between colonialism, racism, and violence? How is freedom imagined and liberation achieved from within a situation of colonial oppression? These were the questions that Frantz Fanon posed to the world during his short thirty-six years of life. These are the questions that we will grapple with throughout the course with Fanon serving as our guide.

Fanon was a radical intellectual who was born in the French Caribbean colony of Martinique. He was trained and educated in France as a psychiatrist. His first works analyzed the relationship between psychology, racism, and colonialism that emerged from Martinicans colonization. Later he travelled as part of his psychiatry work for the French Empire to Algeria, where he undertook a clinical residency. He joined the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) and eventually resigned his residency to join the anti-colonial war against the French empire in Algeria.

We will be analyzing his writings on racism, madness, war, colonialism, and freedom with an eye towards the *global* political dimensions of his thought. For Fanon, both biographically and theoretically, the transnational circulation of violence and ideas was generative of social and political life. We will situate Fanon's writings in the global historical context of decolonization, and ask how they can illuminate contemporary questions of madness, racism, fascism, and empire. In addition to reading Fanon's work, we will trace his influence on radical social movements, political thought, and global politics, and explore the limits and promises of culture, art, and film for social transformation.

### Course Goals

This course will introduce students to the political and philosophical thought of Frantz Fanon. Through Fanon we will focus on develop three intellectual skills. First, we will work on our close-reading skills of difficult theoretical texts. Second, we will work on synthesizing complex ideas in clear and concise writing. Finally, we will use the skills that we built through our engagements with Fanon to analyze racism in global politics and culture both historically and in our present. Assignments are geared toward applying these skills creatively through class dialogue and formal written assignments.

### Assignments & Grading

Participation & Fanon Dictionary (20%): Theory has always been about dialogue and conversation. Participation and contribution to class discussion is therefore essential to the process of collective learning and will be graded accordingly. Informal in class writing and group work will not be graded

for a letter but will contribute to your participation by its demonstration of clear reading comprehension.

### *Fanon Dictionary*

Starting in week two, students will have to choose one key word or phrase that they think is essential to those weeks reading. Using their own words, they will define that word in one-three sentences according to what Fanon meant by it. Students will cite the page number and reading that the word or phrase appears on. They will then upload their definition to the Canvas discussion board for that week prior to noon on Friday. We will keep a running list of key terms and glossary for Fanon throughout the semester that will serve as a reference for our other work.

### Example:

Cultural mummification (noun) in “Racism and Culture” p. 34: Fanon believes that the first stage of racism involves direct force (war) and the imposition of a colonial culture onto a colonized one. Cultural mummification occurs as part of this process. While a colonized culture is never fully erased, it is emptied of meaning. Whereas a healthy culture for Fanon is dynamic, open to the future and other cultures, a mummified culture is closed off, and frozen in time. Cultural mummification leads to apathy amongst the colonized.

Stanford Encyclopedia Entry (25%) [due September 25<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 p.m.]: Students will create a Stanford Encyclopedia entry for Frantz Fanon that focuses on his *global* politics. The aim of this assignment is to introduce, in a novel way, Frantz Fanon and his thought to an audience who might have heard of Fanon, but might not otherwise know much about him. The entry will be about 3-4 pages, double spaced.

Dialogue/Letter (25%) [due October 23<sup>rd</sup> at 11:59 p.m.]: Students will be asked to write a dialogue or a letter from the perspective of Frantz Fanon that analyzes a contemporary issue in global politics. The issue will be decided through the conversations that take place in course, and by ongoing current events. A rubric will be distributed ahead of the assignment. The dialogue/letter will be about 5-6 pages, double-spaced.

Critical Film Review (30%) [due December 18<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 p.m.] Students will place Fanon’s thoughts on national culture, national consciousness, and film into conversation with one of the film’s we watched for the course, one of the films from the list below, or a film of your choosing, in a critical film review. In the first part of the review students will analyze the film from a Fanonian perspective: They will critically re-imagine how Fanon would have responded to the film while incorporating his broader insights on racism, culture, and colonialism. In the second part of the review, students will offer their own thoughts on the film. The review may focus on the film as a whole, one or two characters, or a particular scene. A rubric will be distributed ahead of the assignment. The review will be about 7-8 pages double-spaced. **Students will meet with me in office hours prior to Thanksgiving break to discuss which film are planning to review. They will be prepared by the final class to discuss the film with their peers to share ideas.**

Films: *Concerning Violence*; *The Battle of Algiers*; *Exterminate All the Brutes*; *Lumumba*; *Here We Drown Algerians: October 17th, 1961*; *Sorry to Bother You*; *Judas and the Black Messiah*; *Get Out*; *Nope*

## Course Policies:

### Accessibility

You do not have to disclose your disability status in order to request accommodations from me. I do want to know about what kinds of accommodations will make our classroom a productive learning environment for you, but I also want you to know that disclosure is a choice.

Disclosure isn't limited to disability status: it may come up with respect to past trauma, gender identity, sexuality, etc. I have a legal obligation to disclose sexual misconduct and civil rights violations to the university, so be aware of these legal obligations. Risk is inherent in any space, but in order to manage that risk in as respectful way as possible, please observe the following ground rules concerning your and other's disclosures:

- Disclosure is a complex and personal decision, and it should be voluntary.
- Disclosures are only to our classroom. Please don't discuss that information with people outside of our class without express permission.

This is a classroom committed to access: I have tried to anticipate as many kinds of situations as possible, but if any changes would facilitate your greater participation, don't hesitate to contact me. Access works best as a community effort. If you are a student with a disability and use accommodations, please contact Student Disability Services, 385 Garland, (410) 516-4720, [studentdisabilityservices@jhu.edu](mailto:studentdisabilityservices@jhu.edu) so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

### Academic Integrity

Students will be asked to engage in close readings that draw directly from primary texts. Even when reframing arguments in their own words, you should make sure you are properly citing the texts you are drawing from. When in doubt, cite! If you have any questions about proper citation, please consult me. Plagiarism and other issues of academic integrity will be taken seriously in this course and students should familiarize themselves with their rights and responsibilities in the following document that outlines University policies: [https://provost.jhu.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2018/08/Homewood-WSE\\_KSAS\\_-WSE-EP\\_KSAS-AAP-Graduate-Academic-Misconduct-Policy-2018SU.pdf](https://provost.jhu.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2018/08/Homewood-WSE_KSAS_-WSE-EP_KSAS-AAP-Graduate-Academic-Misconduct-Policy-2018SU.pdf)

### Conduct

Part of what allows for a productive discussion is the trust that we have in each other to cultivate a space where everyone feels welcome to participate. That means that everyone should feel comfortable to discuss the texts. But it also means listening attentively to others, understanding when it is time to give other people a chance to speak, and fostering disagreements in a productive and respectful way. In this course we are dealing with intense, often personal topics. Different opinions are welcome but racist, sexist, ableist, homophobic or otherwise offensive language will not be tolerated. We are dealing with difficult material throughout the class. If for any reason, you need to take a step back from the classroom space to gather yourself and your thoughts, you may do so, no questions asked.

### Readings

Students should come prepared to discuss the theoretical dimensions of Fanon's text. Reading comprehension questions may be distributed ahead of a seminar. While they will not be formally submitted or checked for a grade, they will serve as the basis of our discussion. All readings will be

available through Dropbox, by following this link (unless otherwise noted):  
<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/65vv1klj0o4jt0d/AABKWsAdwkonle67-EEuJ0Gva?dl=0>

### Course Schedule

#### **I. September 2<sup>nd</sup>: Setting the Scene: Fanon in a Global Perspective [23 pages]**

Fanon, Frantz. 1967. "Racism and Culture" in *Toward the African Revolution*. New York: Grove Press. pp. 29-44.

Macey, David. 1996. "Frantz Fanon 1925-1961." *History of Psychiatry*, 7(28), pp. 489-497.

Watch "Frantz Fanon, His Life, His Struggle, His Work" on Kanopy:  
<https://www.kanopy.com/en/jhu/video/116375>

#### **II. September 9<sup>th</sup>: Negritude, Surrealism, Psychiatry and the Early Fanon [84 pages]**

Cesaire, Aime. 2001. *Discourse on Colonialism*. New York: Monthly Review Press. Pp. 31-46.

Cesaire, Suzanne. 1943. "Surrealism and us" in *Surrealist Women: An International Anthology*. Austin: University of Texas Press. pp.136-137

Ey, Henri., 1960. "The reality of mental disease and the disease of reality." *Comprehensive Psychiatry*, 1(1), pp.2-7.

Lacan, Jacques. 2002. "Presentation on Physical Causality" in *Ecrits: The First Complete Edition in English*. New York and Londono: W.W. Norton. Pp. 124-157.

Fanon, Frantz. 2018. "Mental Alterations, Character Modifications, Psychic Disorders, and Intellectual Deficit in Spinocerebellar Heredodegeneration: A Case of Friedrich's Ataxia with Delusion's of Possession" in *Freedom and Alienation*. London: Bloomsbury. Pp. 247-277

#### **III. NEED TO RESCHEDULE (September 16<sup>th</sup>): Black Skin, White Masks: Sociogeny, Race & Desire [115 pages]**

Fanon, Frantz. 1986. *Black Skin, White Masks*. London: Pluto Press. pp. 9-82

Wynter, Sylvia. 2001. "Towards the sociogenic principle: Fanon, identity, the puzzle of conscious experience, and what it is like to be 'Black.'" available at:  
[http://www.coribe.org/PDF/wynter\\_socio.pdf](http://www.coribe.org/PDF/wynter_socio.pdf)

#### **IV. NEED TO RESCHEDULE (September 23<sup>rd</sup>): Black Skin, White Masks: Lived Experience and Phenomenology of Race [78 pages]**

Fanon, Frantz. 1986. *Black Skin, White Masks*. London: Pluto Press. pp. 83-140

Glissant, Edouard. 1996. "Dispossession" and "Sardonic Interludes" in *Caribbean Discourses*. pp. 39-60. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.

**First Assignment Due: September 25<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 p.m.**

**V. September 30<sup>th</sup>: Black Skin, White Masks: Madness and Recognition [135 pages]**  
Fanon, Frantz. 1986. *Black Skin, White Masks*. London: Pluto Press. pp. 141-232

Buck-Morss, Susan. 2000 "Hegel and Haiti." *Critical Inquiry*. 26 (4), pp. 821-65.

**VI. October 7<sup>th</sup>: Fanon in Algeria: Racism and Institutional Psychotherapy [113 pages]**  
Macey, David. "In Algeria's Capital of Madness" in *Frantz Fanon: A Biography*. New York: Verso. Pp. 197-239.

Fanon, Frantz. 1967. "The North African Syndrome" in *Toward the African Revolution*. New York: Grove Press. Pp. 3-16.

Fanon, Frantz. 2018. "Our Journal" in *Freedom and Alienation*. London: Bloomsbury. Pp. 311-348.

Fanon, Frantz. 2018. "Letter to the Resident Minister" in *Freedom and Alienation*. London: Bloomsbury. Pp. 433-435.

Fanon, Frantz. 2018. "The Meeting Between Society and Psychiatry" in *Freedom and Alienation*. London: Bloomsbury. Pp. 511-530.

**VII. October 14<sup>th</sup>: Fanon in Algeria: War, Gender, and the Veil [123 pages]**  
Fanon, Frantz. 1965. *A Dying Colonialism*. New York: Grove/Atlantic Press. pp. 23-120.

Shepherd, Todd. 2008. "Inventing Decolonization" in *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. pp. 55-81

**Second Assignment Due October 23<sup>rd</sup>**

**VIII. NEED TO RESCHEDULE (October 28<sup>th</sup>): Wretched of the Earth: On Violence & Spontaneity [140 pages]**  
Fanon, Frantz. 1963. "Preface by Jean Paul Sartre", "Concerning Violence" and "Spontaneity: Its Strengths and Weaknesses" in *Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove. pp. 7-147

**IX. November 4<sup>th</sup>: Wretched of the Earth: National Consciousness and National Culture [100 pages]**  
Fanon, Frantz. 1963. "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness" and "On National Culture" in *Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove. pp. 148-248

**X. November 11<sup>th</sup>: Wretched of the Earth: Colonial War and Mental Disorders [77 pages]**  
Fanon, Frantz. 1963. "Colonial War and Mental Disorders" and "Conclusion" in *Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove. pp. 249-316

**XI. November 18<sup>th</sup>: Pan-Africanism & the Third World [62 pages]**

Fanon, Frantz. 2018. "The Algerian Conflict and African Anticolonialism" and "African Countries and Their Solidary Combat" in *Freedom and Alienation*. London: Bloomsbury. pp. 563-569 and pp. 633-636.

Fanon, Frantz. 1967. "Accra: Africa Affirms its Unity and Defines Its Strategy"; "Unity and Effective Solidarity are the Conditions for African Liberation" and "This Africa to Come" in *Toward the African Revolution*. New York: Grove Press. pp. 153-157 and pp. 170-190

Amin, Samir. 1987. A Note on the Concept of Delinking. *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)*, 10(3), pp.435-444.

Rodney, Walter. 1972. Problems of Third World Development. *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies*, 3(2).

**XII. December 2<sup>nd</sup>: The Black Panther Party [86 pages]**

Cleaver, Eldridge. 1970. *On the ideology of the Black Panther Party (Vol. 1)*. Ministry of Information, Black Panther Party.

Turner, Lou and Alan, John. 1986. *Frantz Fanon, Soweto & American Black Thought*. Detroit: News and Letters. Pp. 1-69

**XIII. December 9<sup>th</sup>: Fanonism Today and in the Future**

Closing Discussion on Final Projects

**Final Assignment Due December 18<sup>th</sup>**