

Race & Colonialism in Global Politics

Sample Syllabus

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Course Description

How have race and colonialism shaped and affected global politics? Why do they still matter in global politics today in a supposedly “postcolonial” world? In this course, we will explore the many ways in which the history and experiences of colonialism and racism have structured and continue to shape global politics. As such, we will consider how many of the structures and institutions of global politics—such as international organizations, international law, and global capitalism—were built to reinforce forms of colonial domination and White supremacy. We will then examine how these structures and institutions continue to reproduce racialized hierarchies and inequalities, and how these forms of inequality and domination have been resisted and contested. To do this we will draw on postcolonial, decolonial, and anti-racist approaches coming from work in political science and international relations, social and political theory, history, and literature. We will also examine a number of historical and contemporary including the Haitian Revolution, efforts to build an anti-colonial world order in the mid-twentieth century, ongoing settler colonialism in Turtle Island/North America, and development programs in the Global South.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students will be able to: recognize how race and colonialism have shaped global politics, both historically and in the present; critically evaluate and engage with claims related to race and colonialism across a number of contexts; and apply post-/de-colonial and critical race perspectives in understanding and building arguments about global politics.

Course Requirements & Assignments

Attendance, participation, and discussion questions (15%)

- You are expected to attend every class meeting and to participate actively in class discussions. Please come to section prepared and on time. Complete the assigned readings and bring copies of them to class, either printed out or in electronic form. All course readings will be uploaded unless noted in the course schedule below. You are expected to actively participate in class discussions and to engage with the issues and topics being discussed.
- Before each class, beginning with our second class, you are expected to submit **one discussion question** relating to the readings and topics for the class in question to the online forum. Your question does not have to be particularly complicated or complex but should show engagement with the materials and themes being discussed that class. For example, it could be about something that you felt was unclear or confusing, something that you found striking or interesting and want to discuss further, or any other question that came to you as you were preparing for class.
- I recognise that participation can take many forms, from active and engaged listening to direct contributions to discussion, and that everyone comes to class with different backgrounds and degrees of familiarity with the topics at hand. Nevertheless, student engagement and participation are essential, and I encourage everyone to participate actively and frequently. If you must miss class due to illness, for personal or other reasons, please email in advance

whenever possible. In any case, I will work with you to make sure you are caught up on any missed materials and/or assignments.

Reflection paper (10%)

- Over the course of the semester, you will be required to write and submit **one reflection paper**. This reflection paper is an opportunity for you to practice your interpretive, analytical, and writing skills. The paper does not have a strict form or content, but should demonstrate close and thoughtful engagement with the readings and themes for the week in question, and should be roughly **one page, single-spaced** in order to receive full credit.

In-class presentation (10%)

- Over the course of the semester, you will be expected to do **one in-class presentation**. In this presentation, you should briefly discuss some of the themes, questions, and issues raised by the week's readings, draw connections to some of the other themes of the class, and raise a few points for discussion. This presentation should be **no more than ten minutes**.

Midterm paper (25%)

- Roughly half-way through the semester, you will be asked to submit a midterm paper responding to one of a set of prompts drawing on course readings and class discussions, reflecting on and applying some of the concepts, ideas, approaches, and themes we have discussed thus far.
- The midterm paper should be about **4-6 pages, double-spaced**.

Final project outline (10%)

- One month before your final project is due, you will be asked to submit an outline of the project. The outline should provide an overview of your final project, including the issue or topic that you wish to explore, the materials and sources that you plan on engaging with, a brief discussion of the form that your final project will take, and the potential claims, arguments, and/or interventions that you plan to make.
- The outline should be **2-3 pages, double-spaced** and include a bibliography of **at least five sources** that you plan to engage with in your project (at least two of which are *not* assigned course materials).

Final project (30%)

- The final assignment for this course is a final project that is due by the end of the semester. The purpose of the final project is for you to critically explore a topic or issue related to race and colonialism in global politics that is of interest to you through a diverse array of methods, approaches, perspectives, and materials. The form that the final project takes is left up to you—it could be research paper, a piece of creative (non-)fiction, a photo essay, or some other form of creative expression—so long it demonstrates close and thoughtful engagement with the themes of the course, you are able to articulate how it does so by drawing on class materials and discussions, and you put a reasonable amount of effort into it.
- You will have the opportunity to briefly present and discuss your final project with your classmates in our final class. This presentation is *not* graded but provides you with the opportunity to receive some helpful feedback before the final project is due the following week.

Course Schedule

Week 1 – Introduction

Required readings:

- Vucetic, Srdjan, and Randolph Persaud. 2018. 'Race in International Relations'. In *Race, Gender, and Culture in International Relations: Postcolonial Perspectives*, edited by Randolph Persaud and Alina Sajed, 35–57. London: Routledge.
- Shilliam, Robbie. 2020. 'Race and Racism in International Relations: Retrieving a Scholarly Inheritance'. *International Politics Reviews* 8 (2): 152–95.

Week 2 – Narrating the colonial

Required reading/listening:

- Achebe, Chinua. (1958) 1994. *Things Fall Apart*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Listen to [Toni Morrison's 1993 Nobel Lecture](#).

Week 3 – Constructing/constituting race

Required readings:

- Locke, Alain. 1992. *Race Contacts and Interracial Relations: Lectures on the Theory and Practice of Race*. Edited by Jeffrey C. Stewart. Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press. [Read "Lecture 1: The Theoretical and Scientific Conceptions of Race," pp. 1-14, and "Lecture 2: The Political and Practical Conceptions of Race," pp. 20-35]
- Wolfe, Patrick. 2016. *Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race*. London: Verso. [Read "Introduction," pp. 1-30]

Week 4 – Building the "White World Order"

Required readings:

- Hobson, John M. 2012. *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics: Western International Theory, 1760-2010*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [Read Chapter 2, "Eurocentric imperialism: liberalism and Marxism, c. 1830–1914," pp. 33-58, and Chapter 5, "Racist imperialism: racist-realism, liberalism and socialism, 1860–1914," pp. 106-130]
- Vitalis, Robert. 2015. *White World Order, Black Power Politics: The Birth of American International Relations*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. [Read Introduction, "A Mongrel American Social Science," pp. 1-24, and Chapter 4, "Imperialism and Internationalism in the 1920s," pp. 71-84]

Week 5 – Contesting the "White World Order"

Required readings:

- Du Bois, W. E. B. 2022. *W. E. B. Du Bois: International Thought*. Edited by Adom Getachew and Jennifer Pitts. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [Read Chapter 4, "Of the Culture of White Folk (1917)," pp. 36-49]
- Césaire, Aimé. (1955) 2000. *Discourse on Colonialism*. Translated by Joan Pinkham. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Week 6 – Resisting the "White World Order"

Required reading/watching:

- Getachew, Adom. 2019. *Worldmaking After Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. [Read Chapter 3, "From Principle to Right: The Anticolonial Reinvention of Self-Determination," pp. 71-106]
- Pontecorvo, Gillo, dir. 1966. *The Battle of Algiers*. Allied Artists.

Week 7 – Race and colonialism in IR theory

Required readings:

- Henderson, Errol A. 2013. ‘Hidden in Plain Sight: Racism in International Relations Theory’. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 26 (1): 71–92.
- Seth, Sanjay. 2011. ‘Postcolonial Theory and the Critique of International Relations’. *Millennium* 40: 167–183.

Week 8 – Settler colonialism and Indigenous international politics

Required readings:

- Shaw, Karena. 2002. ‘Indigeneity and the International’. *Millennium* 31 (1): 55–81.
- Lightfoot, Sheryl. 2016. *Global Indigenous Politics: A Subtle Revolution*. Routledge. [Read Chapter 2, “The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: forging structural change,” pp. 33-71]

Week 9 – Colonial wars and “race wars”

Required readings:

- Barder, Alexander D. 2021. *Global Race War: International Politics and Racial Hierarchy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. [Read Chapter 8, “Civilizational Conflict as Race War: From the 1990s to the Global War on Terror,” pp. 185-209, and Chapter 9, “The ‘Great Replacement’: Racial War in the Twenty-First Century,” pp. 210-236]
- Manchanda, Nivi. 2021. ‘The Banalization of Race in International Security Studies: From Absolution to Abolition’. *Security Dialogue* 52 (S): 49–59.

Week 10 – The coloniality of international law

Required readings:

- Anghie, Antony. 2006. ‘The Evolution of International Law: Colonial and Postcolonial Realities’. *Third World Quarterly* 27 (5): 739–53.
- Chimni, B. S. 2006. ‘Third World Approaches to International Law: A Manifesto’. *International Community Law Review* 8: 3–27.

Week 11 – (Neo-)colonialism and (racial) capitalism

Required readings:

- Bhambra, Gurinder K. 2021. ‘Colonial Global Economy: Towards a Theoretical Reorientation of Political Economy’. *Review of International Political Economy* 28 (2): 307–22.
- Bhattacharyya, Gargi. 2018. *Rethinking Racial Capitalism: Questions of Reproduction and Survival*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. [Read Chapter 1, “Beginning,” pp. 1-38, and Chapter 6, “Consumption and Indebtedness,” pp. 151-176]

Week 12, 15th November – “Modernisation” and development

Required readings:

- Gruffydd-Jones, Branwen. 2015. “‘Good Governance’ and ‘State Failure’: The Pseudo-Science of Statesmen in Our Times’. In *Race and Racism in International Relations: Confronting the Global Colour Line*, edited by Alexander Anievas, Nivi Manchanda, and Robbie Shilliam, 62–80. London: Routledge.
- Kothari, Uma. 2006. ‘An Agenda for Thinking about “Race” in Development’. *Progress in Development Studies* 6 (1): 9–23.

Week 13 – Decolonizing global politics?

Required reading/watching:

- Coogler, Ryan, dir. 2018. *Black Panther*. Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures.
- Bouka, Yolande. 2018. 'Wakanda, Afrofuturism, and Decolonizing International Relations Scholarship'. *Political Violence at a Glance* (blog). 6 February 2018.
<https://politicalviolenceataglance.org/2018/02/06/wakanda-afrofuturism-and-decolonizing-international-relations-scholarship/>.

Week 14 – Project workshop