

## Race and Racism in International Relations

Fall 2021

Tues, Thurs 10.30-11.45am

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341 - Mergenthaler

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Office Hours: Tues, 12-2pm

The rationale for this course starts with two premises concerning the teaching of International Relations (IR). Firstly, students are mostly taught a version of IR that focuses on “high” politics – war, diplomacy, security etc. Secondly, students are usually taught a geography of international politics that is centred on the US – and the West in general. There are other ways to teach IR that depart from these premises. One might focus on “soft” politics – culture, economy, rights, ideas etc, and one might recentre geography towards the East or the Global South. Ostensibly, such conceptual and geographical shifts allow for race and racism to be more easily included into the IR syllabus.

However, the aim of this course is to demonstrate that even when these premises underpin the teaching of IR – even when a syllabus is organized around hard politics and a US/Western focus - race and racism are necessary phenomena through which to understand international politics. In fact, this course provokes students to critically consider how race and racism bring into sharp relief the complicities and connections between high and low politics, and the West and Global South. A further aim of the course is to mobilize this perspective to explain the contemporary predicaments of our global order in a critical and imaginative fashion.

Each week we focus on one topic. Each week comprises two seminars. As students, you need to read/watch the preparation materials before the Tuesday seminar. Tuesday’s seminars will include a brief lecture or scene setting for the topic, followed by discussions specific to the materials. Thursday’s seminars will comprise a specific activity: I will provide a contemporary news topic/event and you, in groups, will see if and how you can make critical sense of the topic/even by way of the preparation materials.

Course requirements are as follows:

### **Class participation (20%): Each Thursday**

Participation shall be assessed by way of the Thursday seminar activity.

I shall grade you specifically on the quality (not quantity) by which you engage with fellow students during these activities.

I will grade generously, that is, I will start with the assumption that you are participating fully and to a high quality.

If for any reason you feel worried by this element of your grade, please do get in touch with me in confidence. I entirely appreciate that some situations might make participation hard for some students.

### **Report on IR and Critical Race Theory (40%): Due Oct 15<sup>th</sup>**

You will write a report (3-4 pages in length) to the International Studies Association's (ISA) governing council evaluating the extent to which the current attempts to ban Critical Race Theory in K-12 education are an issue of concern for scholars of IR and not just for scholars of American politics.

For this report you will draw specifically upon the materials and discussions of the **Cold War/Decolonization** topic. You may also draw freely upon other relevant materials.

NB: the work we will undertake on the Thursday seminar of this topic will significantly help you in preparing this report. And on that Thursday, we shall also discuss expectations for the report.

### **Video group presentation (40%): Due Dec 7<sup>th</sup>**

You will be randomly assigned groups half-way into the semester. You will collectively produce a video that will critically address the following statement: "Racism is currently the biggest threat to the US state."

You will make use of the materials provided and discussions had in the course. You should make connections between these materials in a careful but creative way. You can, of course, make use of social media and other multi-media sources, but these should complement the points you are making rather than provide their analytical foundation.

You can use any basic and free editing software, such as Windows Movie Maker. I will check, when I assign groups, that each group has access to free software.

You will **NOT** be assessed on the technical professionalism of the video. You will be assessed as follows: 40% - engagement with intellectual sources; 30% - engagement with "real life"/popular issues; 30% - critical creativity (in terms of putting together your argument and expressing it).

Your video should be 10 mins long **max**. Video presentations will take place on 2<sup>nd</sup> Dec (Thurs). Presentations will comprise of a showing of the video and a 10 mins class conversation about it immediately afterwards. (The conversation will not be graded, but you will, as a group, need to be responsive).

In class I shall explain to you the protocols I have in place to ensure that no individual will be disadvantaged by others in their group who might not be contributing adequately. I shall also lay out the time frames and tasks that will help the production of the video.

## **COURSE OUTLINE**

### **Introduction (31<sup>st</sup> Aug, 2<sup>nd</sup> Sep)**

We will devote Tuesday's seminar to introductions and we shall collectively decide upon our communication and convening protocols (including Covid related issues). Thursday's seminar will take a biographical look at how some key scholars of IR came to study race and racism, and what institutional, political and intellectual obstacles they faced.

- Robbie Shilliam (ed.), "Race and Racism in International Relations: Retrieving a Scholarly Inheritance", *International Politics Reviews* 8 (2), 2020

### **What kind of state is the US? (7<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> Sep)**

The conventional unit of analysis in IR theory is the state. Some time ago, Stanley Hoffman wrote an influential piece wherein he suggested that IR theorists were oftentimes talking about the US state - not just any state. But what if we saw this “exceptional” state, historically, within the process of European imperial expansion? In this case, settler colonialism and plantation slavery would become central to our analysis. How might this shifting of emphasis in our unit of analysis – from a generic state to a post-slaveholding-settler-colony help us think differently about the US in contemporary international politics?

- Stanley Hoffman, "An American Social Science: International Relations", *Daedalus* 106 (3), 1977
- Neta Crawford, "A Security Regime among Democracies: Cooperation among Iroquois Nations", *International Organization* 48 (3), 1994 <https://a2391-5234693.cluster37.canvas-user-content.com/courses/2391~108024/files/2391~5234693/course%20files/2-Crawford.pdf>
- Nikole Hannah-Jones, "Reframing the Legacy of Slavery with 'The 1619 Project'", *The Daily Show* Feb 2020 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cMOHvXHLNeM>
- Jamelle Bouie, "1619 Project", *New York Times* (2010) <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/republicans-racism-african-americans.html>

### **World War / Race War (14<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> Sep)**

Conventionally in post WW2 IR theory, anarchy is considered the structure that patterns states' interactions. Anarchy implies the absence of any higher political authority such as a world government; and in that absence, states are said to be faced with a security dilemma: every action that a state undertakes to make itself securer vis-à-vis other states tends to increase the insecurity of all other states, which impels these states to make themselves more secure etc. But early 20<sup>th</sup> century thought tells a different story. Here, the security dilemma is associated with the threat to white supremacy posed by the non-white world in the struggle over imperialism and racism. How do we – can we? - reconcile these two understandings of the determinants of conflict and war?

- John H. Herz, "Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma", *World Politics* 2 (2), 1950
- Theodore Lothrop Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color against White World-Supremacy* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921, chapter 1 [https://www.gutenberg.org/files/37408/37408-h/37408-h.htm#Page\\_3](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/37408/37408-h/37408-h.htm#Page_3)
- Ian Frazier, "When WEB Du Bois made a Laughing Stock of a White Supremacist", *The New Yorker* (Aug 26) 2019 <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/08/26/when-w-e-b-du-bois-made-a-laughingstock-of-a-white-supremacist>
- Alex Barder, "Scientific racism, race war and the global racial imaginary", *Third World Quarterly* 40 (2), 2019

### **Liberal Internationalism and White Supremacy (21<sup>st</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup> Sep)**

Liberal internationalism is an influential ideology that seeks to refute the pessimism of the security dilemma by way of supporting the spread of liberal values – individual equality, freedom, rights etc – so that even in the absence of a world government there might still exist a “world order”. Liberal internationalists also by and large argue that, whenever given the choice, humanity chooses these values over and above others. How might we interrogate this ideology by reference to the fact that, historically, liberal values have so often been spread through – or accompanied by – imperial rule? Merze Tate, the first African-American woman to receive a PhD in Government from Harvard

University was concerned with such issues. Recently, scholarship on Woodrow Wilson – the exemplary liberal internationalist – has revealed his white supremacist inclinations. We might also ask: have there been other projects, alternative to western liberalism, that have sought a global expansion of rights?

- John Ikenberry, "The Next Liberal Order", *Foreign Affairs* 99, 2020
- Merze Tate, "The War Aims of World War I and World War II and Their Relation to the Darker Peoples of the World", *The Journal of Negro Education* 12 (3), 1943
- Lloyd E. Ambrosius, "Woodrow Wilson and the Birth of a Nation: American Democracy and International Relations", *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 18 (2007)
- Patrick Quinton-Brown, "The South, the West, and the Meanings of Humanitarian Intervention in History", *Review of International Studies* (2020)

### **Cold War / Decolonization (28<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup> Sep)**

The Cold War has had an enormous influence on our understanding of international relations. During this era, scholars made various arguments about the balance of power between the “west” and the “east” and the ways in which this balance might or might not be tipped towards all-out nuclear war. Underlying these arguments in the US was antipathy towards the Soviet Union and its promotion of communism as an ideological and practical alternative to capitalism. George Kennan’s famous telegram from Moscow in 1946 set the stage for much of this scholarship. But was the Cold War only about capitalism vs communism? After all, the same era could just as easily be defined as the quintessential era of decolonization. In fact, soon after Kennan, African-American writer, Richard Wright, reported on a different struggle over the balance of power between racist and colonial empires/states and the rest of humanity. How might we think about the articulation of these two wars domestically and internationally, and from “west” to “east” and “north” to “south”?

- George Kennan, “The Long Telegram”, 1946  
<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116178.pdf>
- Richard Wright, *The Colour Curtain: A Report on the Bandung Conference* (World Publishing Co., 1956) selections
- Martin Luther King Jr, “Speech on South Africa in London”, 1964  
<http://www.rfdksafilm.org/html/speeches/africaking.php>
- Charisse Burden-Stelly, "Lessons from Peekskill: Paul Robeson and Black Radical Internationalism" *IMixWhatILike* (2020) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BgtR9SOqkX4>

### **Nukes (5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> Oct)**

For decades, IR scholars considered nuclear weapons to be the prime existential threat to humanity. Strategic studies focused on the diplomatic, psychological and technological dimensions of the nuclear arms race. Rarely were these discussions made to focus on the imperial and racist determinants of nuclear testing – including the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Indeed, nuclear testing has always taken place in locations close to or expropriated from minorities and colonial subjects. Is there a different story to tell of this existential threat that weaves in imperial and racist determinants? And how might that story inform our present-day concerns over existential threats to humanity?

- Barton Bernstein, "The Atomic Bombings Reconsidered", *Foreign Affairs* Jan 1995
- Robert Jacobs, "Nuclear Conquistadors: Military Colonialism in Nuclear Test Site Selection during the Cold War", *Asian Journal of Peacebuilding* 1 (2), 2013
- Teresia Teaiwa, "bikinis and other s/pacific n/oceans", *The Contemporary Pacific* 6 (1), 1994

- Talia Quandelacy, "Nuclear Racism: Uranium Mining on the Laguna and Navajo Reservations." *TuftsScope: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Health, Ethics, and Policy* (2010)

### **Culture Clash (12<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> Oct)**

In 1993 Samuel Huntington wrote his famous thesis outlining the possibility that the deepest lines of conflict amongst humanity might be civilizational rather than what had putatively driven the Cold War – ideology (liberalism vs communism). After 2001, Huntington's thesis was considered, by some, to be a prophetic statement on the global war on terror that followed 9/11. Civilization, though, is a loaded concept and difficult to disentangle from the racist ideologies that undergirded European empire and which presented humanity as a hierarchy comprised of civilized, barbarians and savages. How might these old racist ideas have been rearticulated in new ways for/by the war on terror and afterwards? Is it so easy to say that a clash of civilizations is not, in fact, still a clash of ideologies? Here, we have to think carefully about the claims made on behalf of religion as well as culture and the ways in which race is never too far removed from this claim-making.

- Samuel Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?", *Foreign Affairs* 72 (3), 1993
- Mahmood Mamdani, "Good Muslim, Bad Muslim, A Political Perspective on Culture and Terrorism", *American Anthropologist* 104 (3), 2002
- Shampa Biswas, "The 'New Cold war': secularism, orientalism, and postcoloniality", in G. Chowdhry & S. Nair (eds.), *Power, Postcolonialism and International Relations* (London: Routledge, 2003) <https://ir101.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/biswas-the-new-cold-war.pdf>
- Leila Rafei & Ashoka Mukpo, "The Enduring Harms of Trump's Muslim Ban", *ACLU*, Jan 2021 <https://www.aclu.org/news/immigrants-rights/the-enduring-harms-of-trumps-muslim-ban/>

### **War and the Domestic Front (19<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> Oct)**

As a field of study, International Relations has often analytically distinguished international politics and foreign policy from national politics and domestic policy. As a "level of analysis", the "international", it is supposed, has its own distinct logics – for example, the security dilemma – which are not easily replicated on the national level, which is still governed by laws and justice systems. But do these levels of analysis remain so distinct when we start to factor race and racism into the logics of war and peace? Perhaps, for instance, racist policing at "home" is intimately entangled with military adventures "abroad". And perhaps the techniques of winning wars abroad have derived from winning racist wars at "home".

- Quinn Slobodian & Stuart Schrader, "The White Man, Unburdened", *The Baffler* (40), 2018 <https://thebaffler.com/salvos/the-white-man-unburdened-slobodian-schrader>
- Nivi Manchanda & Chris Rosedale. Resisting racial militarism: War, policing and the Black Panther Party. *Security Dialogue*. June 2021.
- Jairus Grove, "The Stories we tell about Killing", *Disorder of Things* (January) 2016 <https://thedisorderofthings.com/2016/01/06/the-stories-we-tell-about-killing/>
- Angela Davis, "On Palestine, G4S and the Prison-Industrial Complex", in *Freedom is a Constant Struggle* (Haymarket, 2016)

### **Homeland Defence (26<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup> Oct)**

Causal distinctions between domestic and international causes of conflict can be questioned in other ways too. If intra-state struggles – often resulting in violence – are informed by ideologies of race, then perhaps IR scholars need to rethink their relative avoidance of domestic politics. It could be

said that this is one of the most important challenges facing IR scholars in the US academy. After all, the second substantive breaching of the Capitol in history in 2021 – the first was during the *international* war in 1812 between Britain and the US – was largely driven by white nationalists and various others who sympathized with the “lost cause” of the secessionist slave-holding South and wished to purify government of elements traitorous to the “true” American people. In fact, a close look at Samuel Huntington would suggest that he, himself, was as concerned with homeland defence on a cultural level as he was with preparing for a clash of civilizations that would be waged abroad. How might IR think critically about some of the racist logics of homeland defence?

- Samuel Huntington, "The West Unique, Not Universal" *Foreign Affairs* 75 (6), 1996
- Marc Driscoll, "White Dude's Burden", *Cultural Studies* 23 (1), 2009
- Ryan Bohl, "The Global History of the Alt-Right", *Salon*, Mar 20th 2017  
<http://www.salon.com/2017/03/19/the-global-history-of-the-alt-right/>
- Luke Mogelson, "In the Streets with ANTIFA", *The New Yorker* (Oct, 2020)  
<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/11/02/trump-antifa-movement-portland>

### **Climate Crisis (2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> Nov)**

Mainstream IR has occasionally flirted with the dangers of climate change, at least when it comes to “high” politics – for example, the nuclear winter that might follow nuclear war. More recent engagements have grappled with “low” politics, for example, the ways in which an industrially triggered climate change now poses security threats to the state. Climate change is often construed as a “manmade” process, hence the meaning of the term “anthropocene”. But is it humanity per se that is responsible for climate change, or is it particular practices undertaken for the benefit of particular humans? We will address this question by bringing race and colonialism into the equation. If we consider the climate crisis to be racialized in terms of who it most affects and colonial in terms of its fundamental practices, how might our calculus of threat be enlarged?

- Anatol Lieven, "Climate Change and the State: A Case for Environmental Realism", *Survival* 62 (2), 2020
- Nick Estes, "Fighting for Our Lives: #NoDAPL in Historical Context", *Wicazo Sa Review* 32 (2), 2017
- Judith Carney, "Subsistence in the Plantationocene: dooryard gardens, agrobiodiversity, and the subaltern economies of slavery", *Journal of Peasant Studies* 48 (5), 2021
- Ian Round, Jazmin Conner, Jermaine Rowley & Sandy Banisky, "In Urban Heat Islands, Climate Crisis Hits Harder", *Howard Center for Investigative Journalism* (Sep, 2019)  
<https://cnsmaryland.org/interactives/summer-2019/code-red/neighborhood-heat-inequality.html>

### **Black Lives Matter Global (9<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> Nov)**

The global outbreak, in the summer of 2020, of protest movements against racist police brutality led mainstream IR magazines such as *Foreign Affairs* and *Foreign Policy* to publish arguments as to why Black Lives Matter should be considered a phenomenon of relevance to IR scholars. Most probably, you'll have been attracted to taking this course with last summer's protests in mind. We reflect on this moment, one year later, and dig deeper into the globality of BLM: how historically unprecedented was its eruption; how capacious is its reach; and how diverse is its details?

- Brenda Gayle Plummer, "Civil Rights has always been a Global Movement", *Foreign Affairs* (June) 2020 <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-06-19/civil-rights-has-always-been-global-movement>

- Jennifer Ho, "Anti-Asian Racism, Black Lives Matter, and COVID-19", *Japan Forum* 33 (1), 2021
- CBS News, "Black Lives Matter around the world", 2021  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2R-d\\_CzsaGo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2R-d_CzsaGo)
- Black Lives Matter Protests 2020 Global Map <https://www.creosotemaps.com/blm2020/>

### **Video Group Presentation workshops (16<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> Nov)**

No readings for this week. On Tuesday we will workshop in class our expectations for the video and discuss practical ways to research and produce it. Thursday's class will be devoted to groups beginning this work.

### **Global Reparatory Justice (30<sup>th</sup> Nov, 2<sup>nd</sup> Dec)**

Global justice debates are well established in IR scholarship. These debates cover various issues, for instance: whether rights are – and should be – only available to citizens, or whether the cosmopolitan case for human rights trumps communitarian arguments; and whether wealth and resources should be distributed across borders so as to satiate the basic needs of all humanity, or whether charity begins (and ends) at home. Some debates even reference different kinds of justice-seeking – for instance, reparatory and restitutive instead of retributive. Missing from most of these debates, however, is a focus on one of the longest standing demands for reparatory justice to emerge from the US context: reparations for slavery. Such demands have become especially contoured against the backdrop of the 6<sup>th</sup> January Capitol insurrection. We dwell on these reparative demands and consider the ways in which they force us to recalibrate the intimacies with which we consider the pursuit of global justice and our accountability to past wrongs.

- Civil Rights Congress, *We Charge Genocide: The Historic Petition to the United Nations for Relief from a Crime of the US Government Against the Negro People* (1951) Parts I and II <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=dSNYAAAAMAAJ&pg=GBS.PP8&printsec=frontcover&output=reader&hl=en>
- Manning Marable & Cheryl Y. Greene, "World Conference against Racism, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance", *Souls* 4 (3), 2002
- Eduardo Gonzalez and Kelebogile Zvobgo, "As America Seeks Racial Justice, it can Learn from Abroad", *Foreign Policy* (March) 2021 <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/03/14/racial-justice-truth-reconciliation-commissions-international/>

### **Video Presentations (7<sup>th</sup> Dec)**

No readings. Tuesday will be the presentation day. After presentations we will seal up the course.