

Racial Capitalism in a Global Perspective

Spring 2022

Tuesday/Thursday 3:00-4:15

Krieger Laverty (G47)

Upper Division Seminar Course

Max Enrollment: 15 students

3 Credit Hours

Dr. Jacob Kripp

Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 12:00-2:00 P.M. in Mergenthaler 275D

Email: jkripp1@jh.edu

Cell: 508-954-3735

Introduction:

We live in a world of brutal racialized violence and massive economic inequality. How did the world get this way? How does a violent past continue to exert force on the present? How are racialized violence and inequality related? Can these global conditions be changed? This course tackles these questions through the lens of global racial capitalism. Global racial capitalism means three things. First, capitalism is more than just the study of economic markets. It is a way of organizing life and society that shapes how we act and think politically. Second, racism extends beyond individual prejudice. It is deeply ingrained in this social organization we call capitalism. Finally, this system has always involved politics that extends across borders. It brings people into contact through imperialism, colonialism, warfare, trade, and cultural exchange. This course wagers that this historical and theoretical perspective gives us a better window into understanding our unequal and violent present by looking at how race, class, and power function across borders.

The course proceeds in three sections. First, we develop concepts to study racial capitalism. We draw on the writings of Karl Marx and place his work alongside different thinkers who ask whether Marx might need to be modified or critiqued when we look at slavery, imperialism, and settler colonialism. Our second section looks at different case studies of racial capitalism (the port, the ship, the family, war, immigration, colonial violence, policing, prisons). We will use the concepts we developed in the first part of the course to theorize how race is connected to class, how war and violence are related to economic dispossession, and how racism is linked to the social organization of capitalism. Throughout this section we will look at how racial capitalism was imposed and resisted globally. Our final section looks at these aspects of resistance more fully. We explore how different futures were imagined under conditions of domination. How might these lost visions continue to inspire us today? How might we draw on theorists of racial capitalism, not just to interpret the world, but to change it?

Course Goals:

Students will develop the theoretical tools and vocabulary to read, write, and think about how racism and capitalism are linked both historically and in contemporary global society. They will develop critical reading and writing skills through a close reading of important philosophical and theoretical texts and they will learn how to synthesize and clearly convey complex ideas through written assignments. Students will engage in the difficult work of drawing from theory to think about the way power operates in the world and will critically analyze the effectiveness of different theoretical

approaches for studying politics. They are encouraged to develop their own ideas, rigorously grounded in textual and empirical evidence, on the relation between race, political economy, and power through class discussions that place different perspectives into conversation. A final project gives students the opportunity to develop these ideas further through independent creative work that connects local issues of racial capitalism to global politics.

Assignments:

Participation and Daily Questions (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. As part of your participation, you will come to class every day with two questions that attempt to seriously engage the assigned reading. We will discuss what constitutes a “good question” in our first class. Each subsequent class we will have different facilitators who will select questions from their peers that that serve as the basis for our discussion.

Short Paper #1: Dialogue (20%) Due Sunday February 20th at 11:59 p.m.

You will be asked to construct a short 5-6-page dialogue between Karl Marx and one of the interlocutors that we encounter in the first half of our course (Robinson, Moten, Wilderson, Cleaver, Coulthard) on the relationship between racism (or racialism) and capitalism, highlighting the overlap and disagreement between Marx and his interlocutor. You will then fold your own voice into the conversation, highlighting where you think they fall short on their theorizations. This assignment asks you to reproduce complex theoretical arguments in your own words. A rubric will be distributed alongside the assignment in class.

Short Paper #2: Critical Engagement (25%) Due Sunday, April 2nd at 11:59 p.m.

In this short, 5-page paper you will examine one case study of racial capitalism (the port, the ship, the family, war, colonial violence, immigration, policing, prisons). You will draw on at least two readings in class and critically assess their theorization of that “case study”. How does that space, tool, or technology of racial capitalism work according to the authors? How does it produce and reproduce the social relations of racial capitalism across space? Where might these authors disagree with each other and/or where do you think they fall short in their analysis? This assignment will ask you to draw on theoretical concepts to critically analyze global politics. A rubric will be distributed alongside the assignment in class.

Final Project (35%) Due Sunday, May 15th at 11:59 p.m.

The final project for this course builds on the two prior assignments and asks students to create their own zine. The zine will consist of roughly 15 pages. 8 to 10 pages must be writing that introduces and explicates a site of racial capitalism for a general audience. These pages will also include a guide on “what is to be done” that connects local politics with global racial capitalism. This can be in the form of one essay, or several shorter essays, or other forms of writing throughout the zine. The remaining pages will allow you to be creative, and may include art, poetry, photography, or collages. We will spend time in class looking at political zines and unpacking their purpose for politics, and workshopping how to create zines. I ask that each student **meet with me at least once before the end of week ten** to discuss their ideas for their final project. We will also spend class time workshopping

ideas and drafts with our peers, so it is imperative that students do not leave the assignment to the last minute. A rubric will be distributed alongside detailed instructions for the assignment in class.

Course Policies:

Electronics

I strongly prefer that students limit their use of technology to the texts assigned for class, a notebook and a pen or pencil. This will help foster discussion and debate between students, so that we are not buried behind our laptops. Occasionally students will be asked to do in-class assignments that require the use of a laptop, but students will be notified in advance.

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 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

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.

Course Schedule

Section One: THEORETICAL CONCEPTS OF RACIAL CAPITALISM

I. Week One: Introductions [44 pages]

This week will introduce us to the idea of racial capitalism through Ruth Wilson Gilmore's reflections. How are local politics of race and class connected to systems of global inequality? What is the relationship between race and class? What does studying racial capitalism look like? We will also interrogate the way Marxist and Black radical approaches to the study of capitalism narrate different visions of world history. What do these visions have in common in how they apprehend the past and the future? What is at stake in how they differ? How do the ideas of race and class interact in these different visions and what are the consequences for how we conceptualize global politics?

Tuesday, January 25th: Introduction

"Geographies of Racial Capitalism with Ruth Wilson Gilmore" available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2CS627aKrJI>

Thursday, January 27th: World History

"Introduction" & "Racial Capitalism: The Nonobjective Character of Capitalist Development" Robinson, C.J., 2000. *Black Marxism: The making of the Black radical tradition*. Univ of North Carolina Press. pp. 1-28

Marx, K. and Engels, F., 1848. *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. Pp. 22-34. Available at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/>

II. Week Two: The Commodity [76 pages]

This week we interrogate the commodity, which is the basic unit of value produced in a capitalist social formation according to Marx. We will read the first chapter of Capital and interrogate the distinctions between exchange-value and use-value in the commodity as well as explore the idea of a commodity "fetish". We will then debate the insights and limitations of Marx by engaging with Fred Moten's critique of Marx. Does Marx's "failure" to account for the slave's resistance undermine his analysis of capitalism? [How] does Blackness supplement, interrupt, or disrupt Marx's understanding of the commodity? What does it mean to be a commodity that screams?

Tuesday, February 1st: The Commodity

"Chapter One: The Commodity" in Marx, K., 2004. *Capital: volume I*. Penguin UK. p. 125-177

Thursday, February 3rd: The Commodity that Screams

"Resistance of the Object: Aunt Hester's Scream" in Moten, F., 2003. *In the break: The aesthetics of the black radical tradition*. U of Minnesota Press. p. 1-24

III. Week Three: Analytics of Domination [61 pages]

Our third week explores different frameworks for understanding domination. We will look at how the language of exploitation functions in Marx through his understanding of labor in a capitalist social formation. How does exploitation relate to class struggle? How are the stakes of struggle understood? How might violence function differently through racialization? We will speculate on how different understandings of domination and violence lead to different forms of political organizing and the stakes therein.

Tuesday, February 8th: Labor and Exploitation (Class War and the Proletariat)

“Chapter Four: The General Formula for Capital” in Marx, K., 2004. *Capital: volume I*. Penguin UK. p. 247-257

“Chapter Six: The Sale and Purchase of Labor Power” in Marx, K., 2004. *Capital: volume I*. Penguin UK. p. 270-283

Althusser, L., 1971 “Marxism-Leninism and Class Struggle” available at :

<https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/periodicals/theoretical-review/tr-3-1.pdf>

Thursday, February 10th: Accumulation and Death (Race War and the Lumpen)

Wilderson III, F., 2003. Gramsci's Black Marx: Whither the Slave in Civil Society?. *Social Identities*, 9(2), pp.225-240.

Cleaver, E., 1970. *On the ideology of the Black Panther Party* (Vol. 1). Ministry of Information, Black Panther Party. Available at:

<https://www.freedomarchives.org/Documents/Finder/Black%20Liberation%20Disk/Black%20Power!/SugahData/Books/Cleaver.S.pdf>

IV. Week Four: Primitive Accumulation [77 pages]

What was “primitive accumulation” and can it give us any insight into the relationship between capitalism and colonialism? For some, Marx offers an account that explains the violent origins of capitalism. For others, Marx is critiquing explanations of capitalism that relegate violence to a pre-capitalist past. We first look at Marx’s own theoretical account to try and gain some insight into what he meant by the concept (or in his critique of it). We then explore how Marx’s thought has been critiqued and expanded on by an indigenous scholar who revises Marx’s theoretical and historical account.

Tuesday, February 15th: Primitive Accumulation

“So-Called Primitive Accumulation” in Marx, K., 2004. *Capital: volume I*. Penguin UK. p. 873-926

Secondary: Roberts, W.C., 2017. What was primitive accumulation? Reconstructing the origin of a critical concept. *European Journal of Political Theory*.

[a useful resource if you are struggling with the original Marx writing, please at least give Marx’s own account a go before turning to Roberts!]

Thursday, February 17th: Primitive Accumulation in the Present

“Introduction” in Coulthard, G.S., 2014. *Red skin, white masks: Rejecting the colonial politics of recognition*. U of Minnesota Press. p. 1-24

Dialogue Due Sunday February 20th at 11:59 p.m.

Section Two: CASE STUDIES OF RACIAL CAPITALISM

V. Week Five: The Port and the Ship [62 pages]

We begin our “case studies” by looking at the ship. Eric Williams classic, Capitalism and Slavery, explores how British industry in major port cities was built off slavery. We explore the social and psychological contours of the slave ship itself in Marcus Rediker and Edouard Glissant. For Rediker, the slave ship is a modern factory, for Glissant it is an abyss. What is at stake in these different social and philosophical theorizations of the ship? In our next class we look at contemporary logistics through a podcast discussion and the blogposts of Charmaine Chua. Both explore how the container ship, and the politics of shipping logistics, are key sites of struggle and contestation in contemporary racial capitalism.

Tuesday, February 22nd: Capitalism and Slavery

“British Industry and the Triangular Trade” in Williams, E., 2014. *Capitalism and slavery*. UNC Press Books. p. 98-107

“Life, Death & Terror in the Slave Trade” Rediker, M., 2007. *The slave ship: A human history*. Penguin. p. 14-40

“The Open Boat” & “Errantry. Exile” in Glissant, É., 1997. *Poetics of relation*. University of Michigan Press. p. 5-22

Thursday, February 24th: Logistics

“The Dissonance of Things #6: Logistics—Violence, Empire, and Resistance” available at <https://thedisorderofthings.com/2016/05/09/logistics-violence-empire-resistance/>

Chua, C., 2015. Slow boat to China. *The Disorder of Things*. <https://thedisorderofthings.com/tag/slow-boat-to-china/>

VI. Week Six: Patriarchy and the Family [51 pages]

White supremacy and racial capitalism have always been a patriarchal affair. This week we will look at different Black feminist authors and examine how they understood oppression and domination. What role does gender play in sustaining racial capitalism? Does patriarchy serve as a more general model for social relations? How does freedom look differently from the perspective of Black women? Does Black feminism add an identity category to our analysis, or is it doing something else?

Tuesday March 1st: Black Marxism and Patriarchy

Jones, C., 1949. An End to the Neglect of the Problems of Negro Women! *Political Affairs*. Available at: <https://palmm.digital.flvc.org/islandora/object/ucf%3A4865>

“The Meaning of Emancipation According to Black Women” in Davis, A.Y., 2011. *Women, race, & class*. Vintage. pp. 53-59

Thursday March 3rd: Natal Alienation and Partus Sequitur Ventrum

Hartman, S., 2016. The belly of the world: A note on Black women’s labors. *Souls*, 18(1), pp.166-173.

Morgan, J.L., 2018. Partus sequitur ventrem: law, race, and reproduction in colonial slavery. *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism*, 22(1), pp.1-17.

VII. Week Seven: Violence and War [88 pages]

We build off our last week by looking at theories of world war and colonial violence. Du Bois shows us how the exploitation of Africa both benefitted the working classes of the United States and Europe and led to the outbreak of World War One. Merze Tate, will guide us to an understanding of how white supremacy was maintained amidst inter-imperial global warfare. Frantz Fanon's timeless account of the Algerian Revolution will be our guide for understanding the social and psychological effects of colonial violence. We will interrogate how Fanon distinguishes colonial violence from anti-colonial violence and whether we find his account persuasive. This session will also look at Fanon's writings on violence in a global context.

Tuesday, March 8th: World War

Du Bois, W.E.B., 2008. The African roots of war. *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, (1), pp.74-89

Tate, M., 1943. 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), pp.521-532.

Thursday, March 10th: Colonial Violence

"On Violence" in Fanon, F., 2007. *The wretched of the earth*. Grove/Atlantic, Inc. p. 1-62

VIII. Immigration

This week we will look at how processes of capitalism and racialization intersect in a global political economy that both requires and fears cheap migrant labor. How has this tension played out historically? How do existing racial categories travel and attach themselves to new ones? What are the global stakes for thinking through immigration? How do past histories of immigrant shape our present? On Thursday we will examine contemporary anti-immigration politics through the lens of white democracy. Do we find this concept useful?

Tuesday, March 15th: Immigration and "Asian" Racialization

"The New Jews: Settler Colonialism and the Personification of Capitalism" in Day, I., 2016. *Alien capital*. Duke University Press. pp. 1-40

"Introduction" in Pegues, J.H., 2021. *Space-time Colonialism: Alaska's Indigenous and Asian Entanglements*. UNC Press Books. Pp. 1-19

Thursday, March 17th: Contemporary Immigration and White Democracy

"Authorized Violence: Migrant Suffering and Participatory (White) Democracy" and "Conclusion: Migrant Futurity, Divided Whiteness, and the Authoritarian Turn" in Beltrán, C., 2020. *Cruelty as Citizenship: How Migrant Suffering Sustains White Democracy*. U of Minnesota Press. pp. 91-124

*****March 19th-March 27th: Spring Break*****

IX. Week Nine: Global Policing and Prisons [51 pages]

While recent protests have erupted against policing in the United States, policing was, is, and has been a global affair for a long time. What does it mean to think about policing in the context of empire rather than through the framework of the nation-state? How does policing function and why does it target racialized communities at home and abroad? How is policing related to the prison? How and why do global political economic factors shape the racialized contours of U.S. prison policy?

Tuesday, March 29th: Global Policing & Prisons

“How Counterinsurgency Became Policing” in Schrader, S., 2020. *Badges Without Borders*. Pp. 79-112

Newton, Huey P., 1969. Functional Definition of Politics. *The Black Panther*. available at: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/newton/1969/01/17.htm>

Gilmore, R.W., 1999. Globalisation and US prison growth: From military Keynesianism to post-Keynesian militarism. *Race & Class*, 40(2-3), pp.171-188.

Thursday, March 31st: No class, use this time to work on your papers!

***** Critical Engagement Due Sunday, April 2nd at 11:59 p.m. *****

Section Three: FREEDOM AND THE FUTURE

X. Week Ten: Art and Aesthetics [52 pages]

On Tuesday we will begin our final projects by looking at political zines and workshopping some preliminary ideas. Are zines an effective medium for communicating political struggle? How or what makes an effective zine? Thursday will extend our implicit discussion on the relation between art and politics. Fanon had an ambivalent relationship with the poetry, literature, and art of negritude and anti-colonial revolution. He found it at once inspiring and limiting. We will discuss these ambiguities and ask whether (or how) art can be revolutionary and to what end through an engagement with Afrosurrealism. We will explore the promise and pitfalls of this form of aesthetics for political organizing.

Tuesday, April 5th: Zines and Political Organizing

“Racial Capitalism and Prison Abolition” available at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1BZeL1qcOxnHW8PO3uq41eh7T82tEjuqO/view>

We will also begin workshopping our zines this class

Thursday, April 7th: Surrealism

“On National Culture” in Fanon, F., 2007. *The wretched of the earth*. Grove/Atlantic, Inc. pp. 145-169

Césaire, S., 1943. Surrealism and us. *Surrealist Women: An International Anthology*, pp.136-137

Miller, D.S., 2013. Afrosurreal Manifesto: Black Is the New black—a 21st-Century Manifesto. *Black Camera*, 5(1), pp.113-117.

XI. Week Eleven: Flight, Fugitivity, and Abolition [64 pages]

“But the revolutionary knows that escape is revolutionary—withdrawal, freaks—provided one sweeps away the social cover on leaving, or causes a piece of the system to get lost in the shuffle. What matters is to break through the wall, even if one has to become black like John Brown. George Jackson. I may take flight, but all the while I am fleeing, I will be looking for a weapon!” –Deleuze and Guattari. What does it mean that flight can be revolutionary? Do we agree? We will also explore contemporary discourses of abolition and ask how the fit within a Black revolutionary tradition. What questions do abolitionists ask today that are different from the way abolition was conceived in the past?

Tuesday, April 12th: Flight and Fugitivity

“Revolution in a Minor Key” in Hartman, S., 2019. *Wayward lives, beautiful experiments: Intimate histories of social upheaval*. WW Norton & Company. pp. 217-226

“Introductions” in Glissant, E., 1992. *Caribbean discourse: Selected essays*. University of Virginia Press. pp. 1-13

Thursday, April 14th: Abolition

Chua, C., 2020. Abolition is a constant struggle: Five lessons from Minneapolis. *Theory & Event*, 23(5), pp. S-127–S-147

“Police Abolition 101” available at:

https://issuu.com/projectnia/docs/policeabolition101_zine_digital_singlepages

XII. Week Twelve: Revolution and Riots [73 pages]

What is the relationship between slave resistance and revolution? Can we imagine a revolution in the present? What does revolution look like for the slave? Is it different from what it might look like for the worker? We will also look at rioting as a form of protest. Do riots have a political logic? Is “race riot” an effective description of what is taking place? (Here we will unpack both the language of “race” and the language of “riot”). Can riots be ends in and of themselves or do they require other forms of political organizing? How do these discussions relate to our prior conversations on violence and war?

Tuesday, April 19th: Revolution

Payne, S., 2021. ‘A General Insurrection in the Countries with Slaves’: The US Civil War and the Origins of an Atlantic Revolution, 1861-1866. *Past & Present*.

“The General Strike” in Du Bois, W.E.B., 1935. *Black Reconstruction in America*. Harcourt, Brace and Company: New York. Pp. 55-83 available at: <http://ouleft.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/blackreconstruction.pdf>

Wednesday April 21st: Protest, Uprising, and Riots

“The Riot Through the Eyes of the People” documentary available at:

<https://vimeo.com/423647949>

“Why Protest” available at: <http://www.thepicis.org/why-protest/>

XIII. Conclusions

Our final week will be spent workshopping and collaboratively brainstorming ideas for our zines. Students will have already met with me to discuss their ideas, so the general trajectory of the zine should (in theory!) be well defined at this stage. We will develop new insights through conversation. We will also convey their ideas clearly to each other and work on the structure and presentation of those ideas in their zines. The idea is that we can learn from each other’s novel projects, while also work with each other collaboratively on works in progress.

Tuesday, April 26th: Sharing Zines

No reading, please bring your zine materials to class

Thursday, April 28th: Course Conclusions

No reading, we will engage in a collective discussion of what we learned from the course, and what we do with that once we leave the space of Krieger Laverty