Colonialism and Postcolonialism

Prem Kumar Rajaram

4 CEU credits

MA course Winter Semester 2015

Introduction

Definitions of 'colonialism' and 'postcolonialism' vary. Colonialism is sometimes understood as a specific event or experience of the past. Colonialism is also understood as an ongoing exercise of economic, military or political power by stronger states over weaker ones ('neo-colonialism'). Still others point to colonial epistemology or forms of knowledge, premised on the privileging of western forms of understanding, and indeed of living, and the appropriation or derogation of 'local' or 'native' forms. As a result, postcolonialism is sometimes understood in straightforward temporal terms ('after colonialism'). Other times postcolonialism is understood as a quotidian condition of cultural, political and/or economic marginality. And yet more understandings see the marginal condition of 'postcoloniality' as an 'in-between' intellectual or cultural condition, existing at the interstices of European modernity, with which it has a complex, intertwined and symbiotic relationship. Postcolonialism is thus about questions of agency, subjectivity, power and justice, all couched within the resounding question of who gets to speak? And on whose behalf?

But these questions of postcolonialism are sometimes ahistorical, meaning that not enough attention is paid to how histories of colonialism frame 'postcolonialism'. This course provides a detailed study of colonialism as a basis for understanding the claims and limits of postcolonial theory and postcolonial time.

Goals

A principle goal of the course is for students to achieve a detailed knowledge of colonialism. The course centres on studying colonialism as a process of knowledge-making, thus the specific subset of goals would be for students to acquire a comprehensive knowledge of how colonial power operated to construct spaces of governance and subjects to govern.

A second principle goal of the course is for students to be able to relate the study of colonial process of knowledge-making to contemporary situations, both 'post-colonial' and non-colonial. Students should be able to assess the extent to which colonial practices of knowledge making and the representational frames that underpin these can be related to other situations and time periods. Students should be aware of the limits of comparison across time and space.

Learning outcomes

At the end of the course, students should have a wide and thorough reading of colonialism of the 19th and early 20th century which they should be able to read critically and relate to other spaces and time periods.

Student Requirements:

Students are expected to read the texts critically. When you read keep in mind the following:

What is the principle theme of the paper? What theories/methods does the author use in making his/her argument? What is his/her argument? How convincing is it? What insights does it provide and what are its limitations (look for contradictions, bias, oversights)? Try to think 'outside the text'. Why is the author writing in this way or about this topic? What does his/her argument tell you about the intellectual or cultural 'location' of the author?

Assessment

1. 2,500 word essay – 70% (topic to be decided in consultation with me)

2. Class presentation – 20%

3. Class participation – 10%

The course is designed to encourage critical thinking and discussion. In marking essays I will be looking for a competent critique of existing literature/argument and will be assessing the competency and originality of the response to whatever your topic is. Students are encouraged to seek out relevant materials that are not a part of this course. An 'A' paper would have, at a minimum, all of the following: a sound critical analysis of the existing literature; a sound and well-structured argument; and some demonstration of original thinking that is clear, analytically-sound and relevant to the themes of the course/your argument in the essay.

Lecture Outline (all readings are mandatory)

1. Introduction: Situating Colonialism and Postcolonialism

Ania Loomba, excerpt from *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, New York & London: Routledge, 1998.

Ella Shohat, "Notes on the 'Post-Colonial'", in Social Text, No. 31/32, Third World and Post-Colonial Issues (1992), pp. 99-113

This class is a broad introduction to histories and discourses of colonialism and postcolonialism. Students should at the end of the course feel comfortable in their knowledge of these terms and should understand the explanatory limits of both.

2. Histories of Colonialism & Historiography

Jurgen Osterhammel, Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview. Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2000; excerpts.

Dipesh Chakrabarty, Provincializing Europe. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2000, excerpts.

This class provides a somewhat sweeping history of colonialism and it provides a study of the historiography of colonialism. The idea is to provide students with broad empirical knowledge of colonial histories while at the same time giving them tools to read these histories in terms of the power relations that they embody.

3. Colonialism and the Production of Knowledge

Edward Said, excerpt from Orientalism, reproduced in Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory, New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.

James Mills, `The History of British India`. London: Baldwin, Cradock and Joy, 1817. (pp. 332-342).

David Ludden, "Orientalist Empiricism: Transformations of Colonial Knowledge", in Carol A. Breckenridge & Peter van der Veer, `Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament`. Philadelphia, `University of Pennsylvania Press,` 1993

This class centres on Said's notion of orientalism. It studies how colonial practices of knowledge are run through with certain orientalist notions of native society and native subjects and asks what the consequences are for the exercise of colonial power.

3. Operationalising `colonial knowledge`

Thomas Babington Macaulay, "Speech in Parliament on the Government of India Bill,

10 July 1833" . In `Macaulay, Prose and Poetry` (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1957.) Thomas Babington Macaulay, "Minute of 2 February 1835 on Indian Education". In `Macaulay, Prose and Poetry` (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1957.)

Arjun Appadurai, "Number in the Colonial Imagination". ", in Carol A. Breckenridge & Peter van der Veer, `Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament`. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993.

Frederick Cooper, "Colonizing Time: Work Rhythms and Labour Conflict in Colonial Mombassa." In Nicholas Dirks, *Colonialism and Culture*. University of Michigan Press, 1992.

This class centres on how colonial forms of knowledge are used in specific contexts. This class studies how the abstract orientalist knowledge outlined by Said is put into practice in terms of colonial policy.

4.Anthropology `and Colonialism`

George Steinmetz, "Ethnography and the Colonial State". In Steinmetz, `The Devil's Handwriting: precoloniality and the German Colonial State in Qingdao, Samoa and Southwest Africa`. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007; excerpts.

This class looks at how anthropology and ethnography were employed as a means of acquiring colonial knowledge and the limits of these.

5. Representational `Practices`

Timothy Mitchell, `Colonising Egypt`. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991; excerpts

(pp. 1-62). Rudyard Kipling, `The White Man's Burden`. Internet Modern History Sourcebook.

 Joseph Conrad, `Heart of Darkness`. Penguin, 1994 (first published 1902) (pp. 10-25).

George Orwell, `Shooting an Elephant`. http://www.online-literature.com/orwell/887/

Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *The Buru Quartet*, excerpts.

This class looks at the ways in which knowledge of colonial subjects and spaces are represented in literature. It studies colonial representational frames as a way of contextualising information and outlines its effects on colonial governance and native subjects.

<u>6.Gender</u>

Susan Pedersen, "National Bodies, Unspeakable Acts: The Sexual Politics of Colonial Policy Making". `Journal of Modern History,` Vol. 63, 1991.

William Bentinck, "On Ritual Murder in India". Excerpt from "Lord William Bentinck on the Suppression of `Sati,` 8 November 1829.". in Keith (ed.), `Speeches and Documents on Indian Policy, 17501921.` (Oxford: OUP, 1922). Modern History Sourcebook.

Frank Proschan, Eunuch Mandarins, Soldats Mamzelles, Effeminate Boys, And Graceless Women French Colonial Constructions Of Vietnamese Genders, `GLQ 8:4, 2002`

This class looks at the construction of colonial genders and looks at how they are used instrumentally to further the goals of colonial governance.

<u>8. `Race and Difference`</u>

Ann Laura Stoler, "Sexual Affronts and Racial Frontiers: European Identities and the Cultural Politics of Exclusion in Southeast Asia". In Stoler and Cooper `Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World.` Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.

Frantz Fanon, "Facts of Blackness". In Fanon, `Black Skin, White Masks.`

This class is related to the earlier class on gender and continues the study of the creation of colonial subjects, and the limits of this creation and the attendant struggles.

9. <u>`Colonial and postcolonial modernities and politics`</u>

Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Difference – Deferral of a Colonial Modernity.". In In Stoler and Cooper `Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World.` Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.

Frantz Fanon, "Concerning Violence", in Fanon, `The Wretched of the Earth.`

Achile Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*. California: University of California Press; extracts.

10. <u>`Politics and Administration`</u>

`Mahmood Mamdani, Beyond Settler and Native as Political Identities: Overcoming the Political Legacy of Colonialism, Comparative Studies in Society and History, Vol. 43, No. 4 (Oct., 2001)`

Matthew Hull, "Ruled by records: The expropriation of land and the misappropriation of lists in Islamabad". *American Ethnologist* 35 (4): 2008.

11. <u>`Development`</u>

`James Ferguson,` *`Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order.`* `Excerpts.`

Durham: Duke University Press.

Peris Jones, "When 'development' devastates: donor discourses, access to HIV/AIDS treatment in Africa and rethinking the landscape of development". Third World Quarterly, Vol. 25, No. 2, pp. 385–404, 2004