

Topics in Social and Political Philosophy (PHIL 454R): Anti-colonial Philosophy

Fall 2024

Professor: Iaan Reynolds

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Times and Location: T-Th 2:30-3:45pm, LA 122

Office Hours: T 10:00am-12:00pm and by appointment (CB 507-P)

Course Description

The colony casts a long shadow on the achievements of Western modernity. As scholars of this historical formation have pointed out, the material abundance supporting European culture's development from the end of the medieval period to the present depended on the exploitation and genocide of racialized persons, the uncompensated extraction of natural resources, and the creation of oppressive social and political forms of life that persist to the present day. In this class, we will begin to familiarize ourselves with the major philosophical approaches to understanding and resisting colonialism. We will focus, in particular, on the distinction between historical-materialist diagnoses and prescriptions on the one hand, and more cultural-epistemological approaches on the other. In so doing, we will ask questions about the problematic nature of Western philosophy's claims to universality, its underlying conception of the human, and the possibility of overcoming the colony.

Course Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Identify key concepts relating to anticolonial philosophy, including those of dependency, racialization, the postcolony, and neocolonialism;
2. Differentiate anticolonial philosophy from broader historical and systematic tendencies in social and political philosophy;
3. Explain and evaluate ideas in social and political philosophy, showing their relationship to other areas of philosophy and to decisions in public policy, international relations, and practical life;
4. Develop original criticisms and arguments in response to key positions covered over the course of the semester;
5. Demonstrate an understanding of current events in terms of the ideas studied in the class through discussion and targeted writing assignments.

Readings

The required texts for this course will be provided as PDFs. Students are expected to print each text and read/annotate it before class on the day it's listed on the schedule below. I recommend you mark up your texts and get in the habit of taking notes during and after your reading, as these measures have been shown to help students retain written material.

Names and Pronouns

In this classroom, we will respect and refer to people using the names and personal pronouns that they share. If you use a name or personal pronoun other than that which the University officially uses, please let me know. Visit www.uvu.edu/multicultural/lgbt to learn more.

Grading

The grading scale is on the right. Your grade for this course will be broken up as follows:

Participation – 33%
 Assignments – 33%
 Final Paper – 34%

94-100 = A
90-93.99 = A-
87-89.99 = B+
84-86.99 = B
80-83.99 = B-
77-79.00 = C+
74-76.99 = C
70-73.99 = C-
67-69.99 = D+
64-66.99 = D
60-63.99 = D-
0-60 = E

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

Students are expected to maintain a high standard of academic integrity in accordance with UVU's Student Code of Conduct (<https://www.uvu.edu/studentconduct/students.html>.) Any instance of plagiarism or cheating could result in a failing grade for the course. Please cite any sources you use in completing your assignments (such as webpages, books, articles, etc.), and please be in touch with me if you have any questions about plagiarism.

Statement on AI

The Department of Philosophy and Humanities recognizes that Artificial Intelligence and Natural Language Processing Tools are largely accessible to students and will be used by many in higher education for the foreseeable future. However, the skills taught in the humanities are unique. We aim to educate students in the careful reading of texts, the development of rigorous writing skills, the analysis and use of arguments, and to foster the thoughtful application of each of these skills in students' personal and social development. Research has not yet determined what bearing the use of AI tools in the classroom will have upon the successful acquisition of these skills. Therefore, at this time, online learning support platforms (like ChatGPT or Google Bard) may not be used for course assignments in our department except as explicitly authorized by the instructor. Any assignment or content composed by any resource other than the student (whether human or digital) must be attributed to the source through proper citation. Unacknowledged use of online learning support platforms is an academic integrity violation and will be treated as such.

Participation

Discussion. Successful discussion-based classes depend on broad participation. Participation means coming to class prepared and respectfully engaging in the class discussion. Those who consistently take part in the seminar, including through respectful listening, thoughtful contributions, and a consideration of the class's discussions in their weekly reflections, will have strong in-class participation grades. We will talk more about good practices for class participation during the first few weeks of class.

NB: My attendance policy is not meant to penalize students who feel nervous speaking in front of others for any reason. If this describes you, please come and talk to me and we can make a plan for your success in this course.

Daily Debrief. Each student is bringing one question to a “debrief” with two or three partners before we discuss the day's readings. These groups will be set at the beginning of the semester. The debrief is meant to give you an opportunity to “air” your thoughts about the reading before we go to a discussion in the full group. Each student should come ready to participate in these debriefs with a written question or a quote copied from the reading.

Attendance. Students are expected to attend every meeting of the seminar. Unexcused absences beyond the first will negatively impact the participation grade. If you need to miss class due to an emergency or unforeseen circumstance, please get in touch with me over email as soon as possible.

Electronics. We don't often spend time in spaces free of constant distraction from the outside world. Since removing disruptions such as texts and social media facilitates the process of critical reflection, I would like this class to be such a space. Please keep all electronics in your bags. The use of electronic devices for purposes unrelated to our class will count as an unexcused absence.

Assignments (33%)

Short Papers. Students will prepare three short papers (2-3 pages double-spaced, 600-900 words) over the course of the semester, aimed at developing skills in philosophical argumentation. We will go over what well-developed writing assignments look like in class.

Presentation. In addition to the short papers, each student will present on the reading for a day of their choosing. These five-minute presentations are meant to get the class talking about the substantive issues in the reading. Successful presentations will avoid mere summary and will focus on one key passage in order to develop its philosophical significance.

Final Paper (34%)

The final paper (10-12 pages double-spaced, 3,000-3,600 words) will emphasize both the close reading of texts, and the development of an original philosophical argument. Students are encouraged to expand on reflections from class in the brainstorming, organization, and composition of the Final Paper. The process of writing the paper will include sub-assignments (thinking through the core problem and organization of the paper, drafting an introductory

paragraph, workshopping a draft of the paper with a partner) which will be factored into the total grade.. We will go over the requirements for this paper in class.

Course Schedule

Please complete and be ready to discuss the reading in class on the date that it is listed in the calendar. As noted above, the calendar might shift or change throughout the course of the semester. I will be in touch about any of these changes and update the Syllabus on Canvas.

Getting our Bearings (Week 1)

August 22 – Reading: Class Syllabus

Colonialism, Neocolonialism, and the “Third World” (Week 2)

August 27 – The Third World Project

Reading: Vijay **Prashad**, *The Darker Nations*, Introduction

August 29 – Nationalism and the Cold War

Reading: **Prashad**, *The Darker Nations*, Chapter 1: Paris

The Historical Materialist Account (Week 3)

September 3 – Capitalism’s “Outside”

Reading: Karl **Marx**, *Capital, Volume I*, “The Modern Theory of Colonization”

September 5 – Marxism in the Third World

Reading: Walter **Rodney**, “Marxism as a Third World Ideology”

Imperialism, Finance Capital, and Monopoly (Week 4)

September 10 – The Division of the World

Reading: Vladimir I. **Lenin**, “Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism,” Chapters V and VI

September 12 – Rule by Monopoly and Finance Capital

Readings: **Lenin**, “Imperialism,” Chapter VII; Kwame **Nkrumah**, *Neocolonialism: The Highest Stage of Imperialism*, Introduction

Cultural and Epistemic Interpretations of Colonialism (Week 5)

September 17 – The Production of Knowledge of the “Orient”

Reading: Edward **Said**, *Orientalism*, Introduction

September 19 – The Decolonial Turn

Reading: Nelson **Maldonado-Torres**, “On the Coloniality of Being”

The Postcolonial Alternative (Week 6)

September 24 – The Response of Colonized Intellectuals

Reading: Dipesh **Chakrabarty**, *Provincializing Europe*, Introduction

September 26 – ** NO CLASS **

Colonialism as Barbarism (Week 7)

October 1 – The “Decivilization” of the Colonizer

Reading: Aimé **Césaire**, *Discourse on Colonialism*, pp. 31-53

October 3 – Giving the Lie to Humanism

Reading: Césaire, *Discourse*, pp. 54-78

Racism and Universalism (Week 8)

October 8 – The Imposition of Cultural Inferiority

Reading: Frantz Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution*, pp. 31-44

October 10 – ** NO CLASS **

What Is To Be Done? I (Week 9)

October 15 – Organized Struggle

Reading: Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Ch. 1: “On Violence,” pp. 1-62

October 17 – ** NO CLASS – Fall Break **

What Is To Be Done? II (Week 10)

October 22 – The Need for International Struggle

Reading: Amílcar Cabral, “The Weapon of Theory”

October 24 – Reimagining National Liberation

Reading: Tricontinental Institute for Social Research, “Ten Theses on Marxism and Decolonization”

The Postcolonial Debate I (Week 11)

October 29 – Identity and History

Reading: Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, Chapter 1: “Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History”

October 31 – Displacing the Universal

Reading: Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments*, Chapter 1: “Whose Imagined Community?”

The Postcolonial Debate II (Week 12)

November 5 – Reintroducing Capitalism

Reading: Benita Parry, *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique*, Chapter 1: “Beginnings, Affiliations, Disavowals”

November 7 – Postcolonial Studies and the Cold War

Reading: Elizabeth Portella Perrerias, “The Weapon of Theory Reconsidered: Anti-colonial Marxism and the Post Cold-War Imaginary”

** The author will be joining us virtually for this class session **

The Settler Colony (Week 13)

November 12 – Settler Colonialism and Genocide

Reading: Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native”

November 14 – The Distinctive Problems of the Settler Colony

Reading: Mahmood Mamdani, *Neither Settler nor Native*, Introduction

The Interconnection of Struggles (Week 14)

November 19 – Feminism’s Colonial Problem

Reading: Françoise Vergès, *A Decolonial Feminism*, Chapter 1: “Taking Sides: Decolonial Feminism,” pp. 4-28

November 21 – NGO Vocabulary and Neoliberal Ideology

Reading: **Vergès**, *A Decolonial Feminism*, Chapter 1: “Taking Sides: Decolonial Feminism,” pp. 28-42

Thanksgiving Recess (Week 15)

Retrieving Universalism? (Week 16)

December 3 – “Decolonizing the Political”

Reading: Mahmood **Mamdani**, *Neither Settler Nor Native*, Conclusion: “Decolonizing the Political Community”

December 5 – Contesting Europe’s Legacy

Reading: **Fanon**, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Conclusion, pp. 235-239

Student Resources

Accessibility. Students who need accommodations because of a disability may contact the UVU Accessibility Services Department (ASD), located on the Orem Campus in LC 312. To schedule an appointment or to speak with a counselor, call the ASD office at 801-863-8747. Deaf/Hard of Hearing individuals, email nicole.hemmingsen@uvu.edu or text 385-208-2677.

Religious Accommodations. UVU values and acknowledges a wide range of faiths and religions as part of our student body, and as such provides accommodations for students. Religious belief includes the student's faith or conscience as well as the student's participation in an organized activity conducted under the auspices of the student's religious tradition or religious organization. The accommodations include reasonable student absences from scheduled examinations or academic requirements if they create an undue hardship for sincerely held religious beliefs. For this to occur, the student must provide a written notice to the instructor of the course for which the student seeks said accommodation prior to the event.

Title IX. Title IX states that no person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance. Students who believe they have been excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or discriminated against because of their sex may contact the EO/AA office to make a report, ask questions, or share concerns by email at: titleix@uvu.edu, in-person at BA-203, or by phone at: (801) 863-7999. To learn more about the Equity and Title IX office please visit us online at: <https://www.uvu.edu/equityandtitleix/>

Academic Tutoring. The Humanities and Social Sciences Lab offers academic assistance in all areas of study, including research and writing. It is located at LA-015, and you can also reach it by email (tutoring@uvu.edu) or phone (801-863-5376). More information can be found at: <http://www.uvu.edu/academic tutoring/>. These services are free to all UVU students, and are available in both face-to-face and online tutoring sessions on a first come/first served basis. While tutors will not complete or correct homework for you or help you on take-home tests or quizzes, they will help you understand and reinforce concepts that you are learning in your classes.

Writing Center. The UVU Writing Center is a free resource provided to students of all disciplines. Specially trained and certified tutors work one-on-one with students on any assignment at any stage of the writing process. Tutors will help students identify patterns of error and discuss revision strategies. The Writing Center is located in the Library, Room 208, across the hall from the Visual Arts Lab. To contact the front desk, call 801-863-8936, or visit the website at: www.uvu.edu/writingcenter

Health resources. UVU has resources available if you struggle with physical and mental health. Student Health Services is located at SC-221. You can contact them by phone (801-863-8876) or find more information at: <http://www.uvu.edu/studenthealth/>. If you feel that a health issue is affecting your performance in this class, please try to let me know early on so we can work something out together.

Food pantry. If you have trouble affording food, know that UVU has a food pantry available: <https://www.uvu.edu/socialimpact/programs/food-pantry.html>