

Postcolonial Theory and Theology

Instructor: Anne Joh, Ph.D.

Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary

Fall 2021

Mondays 6:30-8:30 pm, Synchronous Zoom

Anne.joh@garrett.edu

Office Hours: By appt.

(Syllabus subject to revision/changes/modifications by the instructor anytime)

Planetary implies a transnational literacy...and understands the subject as a provisional placeholder on this earth. (Gayatri Spivak)

What is the legacy of colonialism and imperialism? What are its key dynamics? How does race, ethnicity, territory, natural resources, militarism, psycho-socio-cultural-religious domination take shape in the process of colonialism? How has Christianity in particular, been both the source of complicity and resistance in relation to colonization? What are some of the noticeable consequences, legacies of colonization? This course examines the complex relationship between the colonizer and the colonized in the historical experience of colonization making different but shared geopolitical linkages. We will engage with texts from both theological and “non-theological” disciplines in order to have a better grip on what it is that comprise the postcolonial theological project. This seminar will require active and rigorous participation from each student.

SEMINAR PROCEDURES

The seminar meets once a week. There will be NO weekly seminar papers prepared by participants. Instead, the emphasis each week will be on every member completing the assigned reading and submitting questions for discussion and reflection. Here is how I propose working.

Each seminar day will be planned by a CONVERSANT. Conversants have the primary responsibility of planning discussion for the seminar. They will formulate these plans on the basis of their own reading of the material and after studying questions submitted that week by all the other seminar members. Conversants will study these questions, looking for ways to include them in the seminar by ordering and combining them in various relations. In other words, the seminar discussion is to be constructed out of materials provided by seminar members' questions.

At the seminar itself, conversants may make brief introductory remarks to set the stage for our conversation. In fact, I encourage conversant to offer, in these introductory remarks, some brief orienting thoughts about how seminar members interrogated and assessed the week's readings. Nevertheless, long discourses or summaries by conversant should be avoided. The aim at each seminar is well-orchestrated conversation, deliberately exploring key questions and issues. Always presume that seminar members have done the readings and hence do not need summaries. I will serve as moderator for each seminar, and periodically provide short lectures.

All seminar members will email their QUESTIONS to the conversants **and to the professor, by noon, the day before the seminar.** Conversant will, then, gather these questions the day before the seminar, study them carefully, then sometime before the seminar create an agenda for our seminar discussion. It is usually helpful for the conversant to bring a one page outline of the discussion as they envision it. Usually it is helpful to include your seminar members' questions within the outlined agenda you have constructed.

The questions submitted by each seminar member, however many in number, should take up no more than one page in length. Aim for brief, crisp, clearly articulated questions. If you develop your question in paragraph form, make sure your question has a clear, crisp, "sharp" edge to it. Ideally, your set of questions will be about 3 or 4 in number.

You may formulate your questions out of your sense that the author is unclear on a matter, because of your bafflement concerning an issue, or simply because you want to hear the seminar examine a particular theme or topic related to the reading.

Here are further examples of the kinds of questions seminar members may ask:

- 1) Clarification - seeking greater clarity about the nature of a given writer's position, about connections between readings, or about issues that continue from seminar to seminar.
- 2) Critique - identifying and briefly developing weaknesses you perceive in an assigned text.
- 3) Implication - exploring the implications for cultural critique, theology or something else, which you see generated by the assigned reading of the week.

SPECIAL ADMONITION: 1) Your questions are the material from which the conversant will shape the seminar dialogue of the week. 2) This is not the class for you to "wing it" or to not do the readings but come and preach. This course will stick very closely to the assigned readings and so should your remarks and engagement in the class. **Complete your reading promptly, and please submit questions and on time by noon, the day before our seminar.**

EVALUATION

Conversant/questions responsibility during the semester: 3 x 20%= 60%

Final Paper: 40%. No longer than 25 pages PLUS bibliography with citational style that is appropriate to your field. Final paper is to be a critical engagement with what you find most significant analytic in Sousa Santos, Boaventura. *The End of the Cognitive Empire: The Coming of Age of Epistemologies of the South*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2018. State what you find most compelling in his argument and what is its relevance to how you approach the question of knowledge, who and what produces what we know and how we know and also what the impact is for your field and research.

Office Hours and other Protocols

Office Hours:

Part of my job is to offer office hours to advisees and students enrolled in my courses. Appoints are scheduled individually as I do not hold set office hours. Do not be shy about requesting office hours. You can do so by sending me an email request. I prefer phone conversation rather than video meetings. We want to be sure that our time is used fruitful. Meetings should have a clear so think about what you want to discuss/accomplish during the meeting. Learning to set clear agenda for a meeting is part of professionalization. When you request a meeting let me know in few words what the purpose of the meeting is. Do not beat around the bush. Be clear and transparent. The day before our scheduled meeting, send me another email with no more than a one page of clear purpose and content of what you want to discuss. You do not have to craft a perfect email to me. It does not have to have the perfect narrative. Even bullet-point agenda of issues/topics to discuss is fine. This will help orient our meeting and gives me a heads-up. This also helps to take the pressure off having to feel you must perform during our meeting of your brilliance. If you need to cancel, I need an email from you that you need to reschedule or cancel.

*Shame spiral: If you are having difficulty with the course it's a good idea to reach out sooner than later. Many of us grapple with shame and fall into the trap of, "I'll get in touch when I have everything together." Please avoid this and just reach out and not wait.

Drafts/Papers:

If you want feedback at the meeting a good rule of thumb is the number of pages to be read divided by 2 is the number of days in advance it should be sent to me.

Post Meeting follow-up:

I highly recommend you send me a follow-up email highlighting our conversation's important points and resolutions, and especially important decisions or agreements that both of us have made. E.g., deadlines. If we continue with conversations and emails, keep everything in one single thread of emails so I can keep a track of our conversations' evolution.

Letter of Recommendation:

It's fine to request LORs via email. Include all information as necessary for me to write a specific and helpful letter on your behalf. This may include any paper you wrote for me, your CV, and any statement, letter or essay you will submit with your application. I do not take LORs lightly and need all relevant information 4 weeks advance to craft a letter I am willing to sign off on.

TEXTS:

(* Additional readings (PDF) will be posted online).

Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. 1994. Reprint, London and New York: Routledge, 2004.

Chen, Kuan-Hsing. *Asia As Method: Towards Deimperialization*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010.

Coulthard, Glen Sean. *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2014.

Dabashi, Hamid. *Post-Orientalism: Knowledge & Power in a Time of Terror*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2015. Reprint, London and New York: Routledge, 2017.

Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Translated by Richard Philcox. Paris: F. Maspero, 1961. Reprint, New York, NY: Grove Press, 2004.

Lowe, Lisa. *The Intimacies of Four Continents*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015. Mahler. Anne Garland. *From the Tricontinental to the Global South*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2018.

Mbembe, Achille. *On the Postcolony*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2001. Reprint, Johannesburg: University of Wits Press, 2015.

McClintock, Anne. *Imperial Leather Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. 1995. Reprint, New York, NY: Routledge, 2015.

Sousa Santos, Boaventura. *The End of the Cognitive Empire: The Coming of Age of Epistemologies of the South*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2018.

Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1979. 25th anniversary ed. New York: Vintage Books, 2004.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*. 1999. Reprint, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003. Selected Chapters.

SEMESTER SCHEDULE

WEEK 1: Sept. 13th INTRODUCTION

WEEK 2: Sept. 20th

Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents*

WEEK 3: Sept. 27th

Said, *Orientalism*

WEEK 4: Oct. 4th

Mbembe, *On The Postcolony*

WEEK 5: Oct. 11th

McClintock, *Imperial Leather*

WEEK 6: Oct. 18th

Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*

WEEK 7: Oct. 25th

Coulthard, *Red Skin/White Masks*

WEEK 8: Nov. 1st

Dabashi, *Post-Orientalism*

WEEK 9: Nov. 8th

Bhabra, “Postcolonial and Decolonial Dialogues” and “Postcolonial and Decolonial Reconstructions”

Mignolo, “The Geopolitics of Knowledge and The Colonial Difference”

Hafiz, “Smashing the Imperial Frame: Race, Culture, (De)coloniality”

Vázquez, “Towards a Decolonial Critique of Modernity”

WEEK 10: Nov. 15th

Buttelli, “Liberation Theology and Decolonization”

Pavan Kumar, “(An)other Way of Being Human: ‘indigenous’ alternaive(s) to postcolonial humanism”

Tlostanova, “The postcolonial condition, the decolonial option, and the post-socialist intervention”

Nov. 22nd (Thanksgiving Break)

WEEK 11: Nov. 29th

Chen, *Asia as Method*

WEEK 12: Dec. 6th

Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*

WEEK 13: Dec. 13th

Mahler, *From the Tricontinental*