

Professor Raka Ray
Spring 2007
M 12-2

Contemporary Theory: Postcolonial Sociology
Sociology 202B

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This course takes as its premise that in order for us to be effective sociologists in a globalized world we must have the ability to expand the parameters of our knowledge claims and theorizing. Some of the most important work on power, gender, race and nationalism, for example has been developed from within or in dialogue with countries with colonial histories, and from outside of the discipline of Sociology. In this course, we engage with one such body of work - postcolonial theory.

First postcolonial theorists came out of the humanities and since then, postcolonial theory has been created in and used by scholars in an increasingly wide range of fields from art history to anthropology. Precisely because postcolonial theory is interdisciplinary, the term "postcolonial" has become in some ways impossibly heterogeneous and diffuse. The term is undoubtedly contested - not the least because some of its theorists choose to write in incomprehensible language. But the term does beg certain questions: Who is "postcolonial"? When did "postcolonialism" begin? What is the relationship of postcolonialism to neocolonialism? Is it a theory (postcolonial theory) or more accurately described as a condition (of postcoloniality). Yet, many have found that the term is a useful shorthand to describe the various effects of colonialism and the disengagement from colonialism on both the "metropolis" and the colony".

In 1916, Lenin noted "for the first time, the world in completely divided up, so that in the future, only redivision is possible". World history has since then, consisted of a series of redivisions which continue to churn up questions of identity, belonging and power. What we call postcolonial theory examines the way the colonial past has shaped the social and political configurations of the present - both in the former colonies and in the former colonizing countries. Postcolonial theory thus intermingles past and present to understand the effects of colonialism on knowledge, social institutions and identity. It operates within, as Robert Young puts it, "the historical legacy

of Marxist critique on which it continues to draw but which it simultaneously transforms (Young, pp. 6)."

In this course we will grapple with some of postcolonialism's key theorists with the aim of bridging the gap between postcolonial theory and sociological theory. We will read to understand how postcolonial theory can enrich sociological conceptualizations about nation and nationalism, globalization, immigration, religion, and constructions of racial and gendered subjectivities. We will focus not only on the major arguments put forth by theorists such as Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Tim Mitchell, Ann Stoler, Partha Chatterjee, and Stuart Hall, but we will also grapple with how we can most usefully bring these theories into our sociological work.

Two useful texts that you might consider in addition to our readings are *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* by Ania Loomba and *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* by Robert J.C. Young.

READINGS

Required books for the course can be found at the university bookstore. In addition, a packet of readings will be available at Copy Central on Bancroft.

1. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*
2. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*
3. Timothy Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt*
4. James Ferguson, *The Anti-politics Machine*
5. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*
6. Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*
7. Ann Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*
8. Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather*
9. Paul Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*
10. Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*

There are three main requirements for the class.

Attendance and participation (20% of your grade): This is a seminar and its success depends on your commitment. I expect you to be in class, having read and thought about the materials for the week, willing to share your ideas with the rest of the class. If you are going to absent for some reason, I should be informed in advance (obviously except in the case of an emergency).

Class notes (40% of your grade). This is a course that does not require a research paper. However, it does require written reflections on the reading. There are twelve substantive weeks of reading. Each student is expected to write 1-2 (single spaced) page reflection pieces based on **six** weeks of reading. By calling these reflection pieces I mean that you should analyze and ask

questions of the texts, not summarize them. These reflection pieces should be posted on **b-space** by Sunday afternoon before Monday's class and should be considered part of that week's required reading.

One short paper (40% of your grade): This paper is **due on MAY 15**. It is not a research paper. Rather, it should be an analytical consideration of any one particular question that the class has raised for you. This will be discussed further in class.

January 22

1st class, no reading

January 29: First thoughts on Postcolonialism

- Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. New York and London: Routledge, 2005. Pp. 7-53
- Stuart Hall, 'When was the "Postcolonial"? Thinking at the Limit' in Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti (eds.) *The Postcolonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons*. London: Routledge, 1996) pp. 242-260.
- Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Introduction and chapter 1 (pp. 3-46).
- Arjun Appadurai, "Grassroots globalization and the Research Imagination" *Public Culture* 12.1 (2000). Pp. 1-19.
http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/public_culture/v012/12.1appadurai.html

February 5: Colonial Subjects

- Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*

February 12: Understanding Self and Other

- Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* pps 1-94, 252-265, 288-408

February 19 Holiday

February 26: Conceptualizing the Colonial project

- Tim Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt*

March 5: The failure of "development"

- James Ferguson, *The Antipolitics Machine*

March 12: Nationalism I

- Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*

March 19

Discussion of class projects

March 26 Spring Break

April 2: Nationalism II

- Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*

April 9: Sex and the Colony I

- Ann Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*
(Keep a copy of Foucault's *History of Sexuality Volume I* handy as you read this book)

April 16: Sex and the Colony II

- Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather*

April 23: Racial Identity and the Colony

- Paul Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*

April 30: Postcolonial politics

- Partha Chatterjee, "Populations and Political Society" in *The Politics of the Governed*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004. pp. 27-51
- Jean Comaroff, "The End of History, Again? Pursing the Past in the Postcolony" in Ania Loomba et al (eds.) *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond* Durham: Duke University Press: 2005. pp 126-144.
- Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (revised version)

May 7: Postcolonial and Post-enlightenment politics

- Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*