BC3426x: History and Human Rights: Capitalism, Colonialism, and Culture

This seminar explores the relationship between colonial expansion and ideologies of the "human." We will approach comparative colonial experiences and their relationship to global discourses of human rights from a range of perspectives. The seminar will be especially concerned with the relationship between somatic states like pain and suffering, technologies of control, and shifts in political economy.

Global history in its "modern" form emerged at a moment when Europe's economy and culture were undergoing profound change. We will examine colonialism as the point of articulation for this "great transformation." In understanding eighteenth and nineteenth-century colonial projects as coeval with the exercise of liberal forms of rule and governance, we will focus on: 1) the development of global capitalism, the circulation of people and commodities, and the magic of money and markets; 2) the invention of customs and traditions, and a fundamentally new way for apprehending "cultural difference" along a hierarchically ordered continuum which drew critically on discourses of race and gender, and 3) the important challenges posed by Marxist and anti-colonial critiques to the assumptions of Western historiography. In this course we will examine these historical processes as precursors to the contemporary development of human rights struggles and debates.

Course Requirements
Students will be expected to post 1-2 page commentaries on the week's reading by 8 p.m. on the Monday night prior to our class meeting on Courseworks. A public lecture series accompanies this course, and students are expected to attend these lectures by scholars whose work we will be reading in the course of the semester. Prof. Uday Mehta (Amherst College) will be speaking October 30, 2002, Prof. Anne Stoler (University of Michigan) on November 13, and Profs. Antoinette Burton (University of Illinois-Champaign Urbana) and Mrinalini Sinha (Penn State University) on December 4, 2002. Class will meet from 4-5:30 p.m. on those days, and attendance is mandatory.

For the midterm, students have a choice of writing a 4-5 page book review about two monographs (at least one of which is on the course syllabus) along the lines of those found in the American Historical Review or a bibliographical essay along the lines of those found in the Annual Review of Anthropology on a topic/problematic of their choosing. Book reviews and bibliographical essays are expected to extend significantly beyond a summary of the monographs, and engage with critical concepts and the relevance of the text to the field (e.g., South African historiography, critical perspectives on human rights, comparative colonialism). Good examples of book reviews and bibliographical essays will be provided to the class. Students also have the option of responding to two essay questions posed by the instructor drawing on class readings. DUE October 16, 2002

For those of you who are interested in writing a final paper of 10-12 pages for this class, you must inform me of your topic by Week Six, and produce an argumentative outline and annotated bibliography by Week Twelve of the semester. Others will respond to three essays questions that draw on course readings as well as select outside readings. DUE December 13, 2002
*** The Craft of Research (Wayne C. Booth, et. al) is highly recommended for taking you through the research and writing process.***

Grading
Class participation 20%
Class postings 15%
Midterm Paper 25%
Final Research Paper 40%

Required Texts
A course packet will be available for purchase at Village Copier, 601 West 115th St (between B'way and Riverside Drive). Readings marked with a "**" are contained in the course-pack. The following books have been ordered through Labyrinth Books (on 112th street between Broadway and Amsterdam).


Mintz, Sidney. Sweetness and Power.


SCHEDULE
Week One, September 4: Introduction
Colonial Histories, Postcolonial Presents

Week Two, September 11: Provocations

*Cooper and Stoler. Tensions of Empire. [introduction]
*Dirks, Nicholas. Colonialism and Culture. [introduction]
*Mehta, Uday, "Liberal Strategies of Exclusion," Tensions of Empire.

Week Three, September 18 and Four (September 25)
The Netherlands, Indonesia, South Africa: Charting Connections

*Boxer, C. R. The Dutch Seaborne Empire, 1600-1800. [selections]


Weeks Five (October 2) and Weeks Six (October 9)
The Atlantic World: Slavery, Labor, Freedom


Week Seven (October 16)
The Commodity-Form

Mintz, Sidney. Sweetness and Power.

Suggested:

*Marx, Karl. Capital. [selections on "the commodity"]

Midterm Papers Due

Week Eight (October 23) and Week Ten
Empire, Race, and Sexuality

Foucault, Michel. The History of Sexuality.


Weeks Nine (October 30)
Public Lecture by Prof. Uday Mehta

Week Eleven (November 13)
Public Lecture

Week Twelve (November 20)
Subaltern Studies and Indian Nationalism

Ludden, David. [selections]

*American Historical Review, December 1994. (issue on Subaltern Studies)

Week Thirteen (November 27)
Righting Historical Wrongs


Week Fourteen (December 4)
Public Lecture by Profs. Burton and Sinha

Final Papers Due December 13, 2002