

Just Futures Seminar I: Dispossession and Race in the Americas

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Description: This seminar analyzes the historical construction of race and ethnicity in the Americas by focusing on the processes of dispossession—of land, bodies, and heritage—that started with the European colonization of the continent. The first part of the class builds a theoretical framework that will allow students to understand the origin of ethnic and racial classifications as acts of symbolic power, and their connections to specific historical conjunctures. The second and main part of the class focuses on the historical processes that resulted in the colonization of the Americas and the global transformations that came from the encounter of people in the “New World” (the development of capitalism, the emergence of settler colonialism, the Atlantic slave trade, and modern liberalism) in order to trace the genealogy of the ethnic and racial classificatory systems that continue to be used today. We will pay particular attention to the transformation of land tenure and labor regimes and how different political economies produced different logics of racialization. The focus of the seminar is in the Americas as a unit, including both North and South America, and the Caribbean, from the 15th century to the present. The readings come from a wide range of disciplines, including sociology, anthropology, history, political science, settler colonial studies, and law. The last part of the class is organized as a workshop where students will develop their ideas for a final project and discuss student-selected readings.

Grading:

- Discussion memos and class participation (50%)
- Final project (50%)

Schedule:

1. Symbolic Power and Group-making
  - a. Bourdieu (1993). Identity and Representation: Elements for a Critical Reflection on the Idea of Region. In *Language and symbolic power*.
  - b. Wacquant, L. (2013). Symbolic power and group-making: On Pierre Bourdieu’s reframing of class. *Journal of classical sociology*, 13(2), 274-291.
2. Dispossession and the Origins of Capitalism

- a. Perelman, M. (2000). *The invention of capitalism: Classical political economy and the secret history of primitive accumulation*. Duke University Press. Select Chapters.
  - b. Marx, K. (2004). *Capital: volume I* (Vol. 1). Penguin UK. Select Chapters.
  - c. Polanyi, K. (2001). *The great transformation: The political and economic origins of our time*. Beacon press. Select chapters.
3. Dispossession and Race
  - a. Wolfe, P. (2001). Land, labor, and difference: Elementary structures of race. *The American Historical Review*, 106(3), 866-905.
  - b. Speed, S. (2017). Structures of settler capitalism in Abya Yala. *American Quarterly*, 69(4), 783-790.
4. Economic transformations in the Age of Exploration
  - a. Robinson, C. J. (2020). The Atlantic Slave Trade And African Labor. In *Black Marxism, revised and updated third edition: The making of the black radical tradition*. UNC press Books.
  - b. Banaji, J. (2007). Islam, the Mediterranean and the Rise of Capitalism. *Historical Materialism*, 15(1), 47-74.
5. Religious considerations in economic problems - The early Atlantic slave trade
  - a. Fredrickson, G. M. (2015). *Racism: A Short History*. Princeton University Press. Select Chapters.
  - b. Adiele, P. O. (2017). The Popes, the Catholic Church and the Transatlantic Enslavement of Black Africans 1418-1839 (Volume 16). Georg Olms Verlag. Select Chapters.
6. Indigenous labor in Spanish America
  - a. Seed, P. (2001). *American pentimento: the invention of Indians and the pursuit of riches* (Vol. 7). U of Minnesota Press. Select Chapters.
  - b. Masters, A. (2021). The Two, the One, the Many, the None: Rethinking the Republics of Spaniards and Indians in the Sixteenth-Century Spanish Indies. *The Americas*, 78(1), 3-36.
  - c. Dell, M. (2010). The persistent effects of Peru's mining mita. *Econometrica*, 78(6), 1863-1903.

7. Race and Law in the Colonial Americas
  - a. Harris, C. I. (1993). Whiteness as property. *Harvard law review*, 1707-1791.
  - b. Twinam, A. (2015). Purchasing whiteness. Stanford University Press. Select Chapters.
  - c. Masters, A. (2018). A thousand invisible architects: vassals, the petition and response system, and the creation of Spanish imperial caste legislation. *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 98(3), 377-406.
8. New empires and chattel slavery
  - a. Eltis, D. (2000). *The rise of African slavery in the Americas*. Cambridge University Press. Select Chapters.
  - b. Rugemer, E. B. (2013). The development of mastery and race in the comprehensive slave codes of the greater Caribbean during the seventeenth century. *William & Mary Quarterly*, 70(3), 429-458.
9. Property rights and civilization
  - a. Bhandar, B. (2018). Chapter 1: Use. In *Colonial lives of property: Law, land, and racial regimes of ownership*. Duke University Press.
  - b. Wolfe, P. (2006). Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native. *Journal of genocide research*, 8(4), 387-409.
10. Asian labor in the Americas
  - a. Lowe, L. (2015). The intimacies of four continents (Chapter 1). In *The intimacies of four continents*. Duke University Press.
  - b. Seijas, T. (2014). Asian slaves in colonial Mexico: from chinos to Indians (Vol. 100). Cambridge University Press. Select Chapters.
11. National states - Frontier expansion
  - a. Fernández-Kelly, P. (2015). Land, Race, and Property Rights in American Development. *Race and Real Estate*, 64-86.
  - b. Schulz, C. A. (2019). Territorial sovereignty and the end of inter-cultural diplomacy along the “Southern frontier”. *European Journal of International Relations*, 25(3), 878-903.

12. National states - Creating labor markets
  - a. Du Bois, W. E. B., & Mack, H. J. (2017). *Black Reconstruction in America: Toward a history of the part which black folk played in the attempt to reconstruct democracy in America, 1860-1880*. Routledge. Select chapters.
  - b. Wacquant, L. (2002). From slavery to mass incarceration: Rethinking the 'race question' in the US. In *New Left Review* (pp. 41-60).
  - c. Ashiagbor, D. (2021). Race and Colonialism in the Construction of Labour Markets and Precarity. *Industrial Law Journal*, 50(4), 506-531.
13. Workshop
  - a. Final project and reading proposals
14. Workshop
  - a. Student selected readings
15. Workshop
  - a. Student selected readings