

HIST 201  
**Postcolonialism and the Problem of Global Modernity**

Instructor: Viren Murthy (vmurthy2@wisc.edu)

Class meets: Monday 2:25-5:25

Location: Humanities 1131—This Class will meet face to face until further notice

Office Hours: Tuesday 4:00-6:00 or by Appointment

Office Hours will be online through Blackboard Collaborate. Students can access this through Canvas. If you have any question please contact the instructor.

**New Course Policies During Pandemic**

Given that we are experiencing a pandemic and UW-Madison wants to ensure general safety, we require the following measures.

While on campus all employees and students are required to correctly wear appropriate and properly fitting face coverings while present in any campus building (or outdoors when physical distancing is not possible) unless working alone in a laboratory or office space.

Practice physical distancing (staying at least six feet apart from others), in both indoor and outdoor spaces, including when entering and exiting building and instructional spaces.

The Instructor will halt class if any student is not wearing a properly fitted mask or is not practicing physical distancing.

We also require students to wipe down their seats and desks after using them, so that they are ready for the next class. These will be provided in the class.

Students and the instructor are also required to leave the class as quickly as possible after the class.

During the global COVID-19 pandemic, we must prioritize our collective health and safety to keep ourselves, our campus, and our community safe. As a university community, we must work together to prevent the spread of the virus and to promote the collective health and welfare of our campus and surrounding community.

**Accommodations for Students with Disability**

Please notify the instructor during the first week of the semester if you have a documented requirement for accommodation in this course. If you have any questions about this or require any assistance, feel free to contact the McBurney Disability Resource Center at 263-2741.

## **Credit Hours and Policy**

The credit standard for this 3-credit course is met by an expectation of a total of 135 hours of student engagement with the course's learning activities (at least 45 hours per credit or 9 hours per week), which include regularly scheduled meeting times (group seminar meetings of 115 minutes per week), dedicated online time, reading, writing, field trips, individual consultations with the instructor, and other student work as described in the syllabus.

## **Course Description:**

Postcolonial is often used as an adjective used to describe a historical period after independence from colonialism. In this context, we can speak of postcolonial Africa, India, Pakistan, Korea and a host of other colonized nations. However, "postcolonialism" usually refers to a theory that questions the Eurocentric assumptions of anti-colonial movements. One might say that postcolonial theorists criticize anti-colonial movements for reproducing the conditions of colonialism and creating a condition of "self-colonization." A major issue in postcolonial theory concerns the problem of nationalism. The Asian nation-state has been both the vehicle for independence and consequently a symbol of struggle against Eurocentrism, but at the same time, postcolonialists have seen the nation as a medium of self-colonialization. Postcolonial theorists have a conflicted relation to the nation, criticizing it on the one hand, and on the other, not always clear about the alternatives.

## **Learning Goals:**

The course has numerous learning goals. It is part of the Historians Craft series and so learning goals involve both content and skills. We will combine these two aspects of learning.

In each of our three-hour meetings, we will spend one hour working on historical method, research and writing. Below you will see that during each three-hour period, we will focus on a specific skill associated with the Historical Method. We will often do this through interrogating the content.

Students will learn to investigate discourses about democracy, civil society and other concepts clearly associated with the experience of capitalist modernity. Students will learn to read and analyze the arguments of key anti-colonial and postcolonial thinkers, including Frantz Fanon (Africa), M.K. Gandhi (India) and various contemporary theorists speaking about postcolonialism in various regions. Learning to read, analyze and comment about texts is crucial to being a historian. Through reading and discussion, students will to ask questions and evaluate sources. By analyzing theoretical texts and constructing arguments in written and oral assignments, students will learn key elements of critical thinking. Finally, through making presentations and writing papers, students will learn how to formulate their own arguments in relation to both historical and theoretical contexts. This part of the course will also enhance students' communication

skills. Unlike many of the other courses listed under the Historians Craft, this course focuses on intellectual history and philosophy. Consequently, the way in which we understand a historians “archive” is broad and includes both published books and even secondary materials. For this reason, through this course students will broaden their understanding of how history can be practiced. A large part of the course will focus on reading various scholars research and learning how through this process one can further one’s own research.

### **Assignments:**

**In oral assignments students will convey persuasive arguments, whether in formal presentations or informal discussions.**

**Oral Assignment 1 and 2:** Students will be required to present two readings in class and lead the discussion by asking questions. This will be good training for taking some complex ideas in the texts we read and making them relevant for us. These presentations should grasp the argument of the text and also articulate their own position with respect to this text.

**Oral Assignment 3:** Students give a longer oral presentation on their final paper. In addition to learning to present their own ideas orally, this presentation will allow them to receive feedback from both the instructor and other colleagues.

**In written assignments, students will present original ideas in clearly expressed, persuasive arguments and narratives.**

**Writing Assignment 1:** Students will be required to respond the readings briefly by Thursday evening and post their comments on Canvas. These comments should be approximately 250 words. This assignment is not graded and is primarily for your own benefit. However, I will give students credit for doing these assignments. In these comments or posts, you are to identify the point of a given author and give reasons for why you agree or disagree. The assignment is due every Sunday evening by 5pm. It is important that you turn in your posts on time because the second part of this assignments requires every student to comment on one other student’s post. This comment should be about 100 words and should engage with a point that the post is making. This second comment is due by 11 am on Monday. This should prepare us well for class discussion.

**Writing Assignment 2:** Students will write an Introduction (250 words approx.) to their first paper and this will be due September 28<sup>th</sup> in class. This will not be graded, but will be part of your participation grade is also meant to help you write your first paper.

**Writing Assignment 3:** Students will write one short paper (5-7 pages) critically analyzing the readings during the first few weeks of the course. This paper is due on October 19<sup>th</sup> and will be graded.

**Writing Assignment 4:** Students will write one longer paper (10-15 pages) The paper will be due on Dec. 14<sup>th</sup>, but students are expected to submit a rough draft to the instructor on November 30<sup>rd</sup>. They will also give this paper to a fellow classmate. In writing the final paper, students are expected to incorporate the various comments from both the student and the instructor.

**Academic Misconduct:**

We deal with academic misconduct severely. Papers with any plagiarized content will receive an “F” with no chance for a rewrite. If you directly copy more than five words in a row without citing their source, or if you include interpretations and conclusions that are not your own without citing their source, you are committing plagiarism even if you paraphrase. These principles must guide you whether your source is from printed or electronic sources and whether an author’s name is listed or not.

**Meet the Professor Requirement:**

Each Student is required to visit my office hours or make an appointment to see me twice during the semester. Before this meeting, the student is required to submit either an outline or a draft of their paper for discussion. The first meeting will take place during the fifth and sixth weeks. The second meeting will take place during the eleventh and twelfth weeks.

**Grading:**

Attendance, Participation, in Class Assignments and Weekly Reading Response and reply to peers comment 30 %

(A 200-250 word reading-response will be due on the Sunday by 5pm of every week. A reply or comment to a peer’s post is due by 11 am on Monday)

In-class Presentation #1 10%

In-class Presentation #2 10%

Oral Presentation of paper 10%

Mid-term paper 20 %

Final Paper 20%

Grading Scale:

94-100 A

90-93 A-

83-89 B

80-83 B-

73-79 C

70-73 C-

60-70 D

Below 60 F

**Required Texts:**

All readings will be on the Canvas website.

### **Weekly Schedule of Readings and Assignments**

(Schedule is subject to change based on the judgment of the instructor)

Reading Schedule:

#### **Week 1 (9/7) No Class**

#### **Week 2 (9/14) What is Intellectual History? What is Postcolonialism?**

Introduction to the Course

Williams, *Descartes*, Preface, xiii-xv

Peter Gordon, "What is Intellectual History?"

Geoffrey Barraclough, "Revolt Against the West"

Edward Said, *Orientalism*, Introduction and Chapter 1

Set schedule for presentations

Learning goals related to Historical Method: Learning what constitutes a historical argument and a point or thesis statement. More generally, the craft of history varies depending on what type of history one studies. Consequently, we will attempt to define what "intellectual history" and "history of philosophy" are as sub-fields of history and identify some of the skills involved therein. Because every week you will be reading a source of intellectual history/philosophy, each week you will learn how to evaluate a source, summarize and engage with the argument. Each of you will of course also do this in your

#### **Topic I: Postcolonialism in Gandhi and Fanon**

#### **Week 3 (9/21)**

Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, Parel ed. 1-62.

Ambedkar, "Ghandism"

Learning goals related to Historical Method: Learning how to find source materials related to an individual thinker/intellectual and also how to find secondary sources on a given topic. Possible visit from Memorial Library librarian. You will use these skills to create a bibliography in two weeks.

#### **Week 4 (9/28) Gandhi, Ambedkar and the Postcolonial Critique**

Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, 62-119.

Akil Bilgrami, "Gandhi and Marx".

Come to class with an introduction to your paper on Gandhi (about 250 words), which you should also upload to Canvas. (You are not committed to this. The aim of this exercise is to learn about writing an introduction and making a point.)

Learning goals related to Historical Method: Continuation of earlier discussion of what counts a point, but now in relation to your own writing. We will repeat this exercise with revisions in two weeks.

### **Week 5 (10/5) Gandhi and the Critique of Civil Society (Meet the Professor Week)**

Partha Chatterjee, Chapter on Gandhi  
Marx, “On the Jewish Question”

Assignment: Come to class with a Bibliography (based on skills you learnt two weeks ago).

Learning goals related to Historical Method: Learn how to construct a bibliography

### **Week 6 (10/12) Frantz Fanon: Postcolonialism and Race (Meet the Professor Week)**

Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, Chapter Five  
Prakash, *After Colonialism*, Introduction  
Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonialism* Introduction

Assignment: Rewrite Introduction based on comments that you received and additional research

Learning goals related to Historical Method: Learn how primary and secondary sources relate to one another. Learn how secondary sources could be treated as primarily sources. Learn how to revise point based on additional research.

### **Week 7 (10/19) Fanon Continued**

Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 1-41

### **MID-TERM PAPER DUE: “What is Gandhi’s Significance?”**

Learning goals related to Historical Method: Learning to read a primary source and explore historical issues—creating research questions and paper topics.

### **Week 8 (10/26) Fanon and The Problem of Recognition**

Houlgate, *Freedom, Truth and History*, Chapter One.  
Houlgate, *Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, 93-102.  
Fanon, Chapter 7.

Learning goals related to Historical Method: Learn how philosophy can be used in constructing a historical argument and how philosophical assumptions inform historical narratives.

## **Topic Two: Generalizing Fanon’s Paradigm: Thinking Through Latin America**

### **Week 9 (11/2) Recognition and Resistance**

George Ciccariello-Maher, *Decolonizing Dialectics*, chapter 2 and 3.

Assignment: Come to class with a bibliography for your final paper

Learning goals related to Historical Method: Learn how to search for primary and secondary sources in the library and construct a bibliography. Possible visit from librarian discussing finding visual sources.

### **Week 10 (11/9) Postcolonialism and Latin America**

Maher, Chapters, 4 and 5.

Learning goals related to Historical Method: Learning how to revise papers at both the paragraph and sentence level.

## **Topic Three: Postcolonialism and Marxism: Recent Debates—With Reference to Turkey**

### **Week 11 (11/16) Postcolonialism: The Critique of Modernity and the West (Meet the Professor Week)**

Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, Chapter 1  
Arif Dirlik, “Orientalism and Chinese History”

Learning goals related to Historical Method: Learning how secondary sources can become primary sources or that the distinction has more to do with how the historian uses these sources, rather than the content of the sources in themselves.

### **Week 12 (11/23) Marxist Critics of Postcolonialism and Postcolonialism in Turkey (Meet the Professor Week)**

Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory*, Introduction and “The Politics of Literary Postcoloniality” (in the *Race and Class*)  
Eren Duzgun, “Class, State and Property in Turkey”

Learning goals related to Historical Method: Learning how to think of our own present as history. What types of sources would one use in such a project? What sources does Ahmad use?

## **11/26 5pm Rough Drafts of Papers Due and Circulate to Peers**

### **Week 13 (11/30) Presentations**

Presentation of final paper in Class

Learning goals related to Historical Method: Learning how to construct an argument and give feedback to your peers.

**Week 14 (12/7) Presentations**

Presentations of final papers in Class

Learning goals related to Historical Method: Learning how to construct an argument and give feedback to your peers-continued.

**FINAL PAPER DUE 12/14**