STPEC 392H
Social Thought & Political Economy (STPEC)
Spring 2016

Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:30PM - 3:45PM
TBA

Instructor: Graciela Monteagudo, PhD
gracielamonteagudo@sbs.umass.edu
Email messages will be answered within 48 hours

Office Hours: Mondays 1:30 to 2:30 PM
and by appointment
Machmer Hall Room E-27C

Course Overview

STPEC Core Seminar II, 392H, is the second half of the STPEC Core Seminar sequence. This seminar focuses on a series of interrelated political, social, and theoretical movements of the Twentieth and Twenty-First Century. We will study some of the major political, economic, and social events paying attention to the ways in which ideologies and political consciousness are constructed and de-constructed in relation to historical events and in oppositional social movements. As this is an interdisciplinary class, we will be bringing in analytic tools from various disciplines.

This course is designed to encourage students to continue developing the critical-analytic methods and approaches discussed in STPEC Core Seminar 1 and apply them to some of these centuries’ pivotal events. To that end, we will pay particular attention a number of contemporary social movements that changed the world.

Jumping continents, we will study the French May 1968, as it heralded the birth of less centralized, less hierarchical social movement structures. Students have the opportunity to study this time period by reading the words of one of its most recognized protagonists, Dany Le Rouge.

While touching on gender theories, this seminar will address, as well, queer movements and struggles of women of color for recognition within the feminist movement and within their own oppressed communities.

Students will also read texts on neoliberalism (or globalization) in an effort to understand the deep causes of cultural and economic changes the world has been going through in the past decades. Focus will be on the social movements that have sprung in opposition to neoliberalism: the Zapatistas in Chiapas and the Anti-Corporate Globalization and Occupy movements in the US, Bolivian Water Wars, and other
struggles for control over natural and discursive resources.

Core II is an interactive seminar rather than a lecture course. Full and prepared participation is needed and expected. All students are expected to attend all class meetings, arrive on time, read assigned texts, and participate in discussions.

**Attendance Policy**

Because this class is based on our discussions attending every class is crucial. Make every possible effort to not skip classes as the theories we are analyzing build on each other. It would be hard to understand what comes next if you did not participate in the class discussions of the previous theories.

*Excused Absences*: If you are forced to miss all or part of a class period due to a known conflict, please email me in advance. If you are forced to miss a class due to an emergency (illness, family crisis, etc.), contact me as soon as possible.

*Unexcused Absences*: You are allowed 2 unexcused absences. More than 2 unexcused absences will result in the loss of a letter grade in the participation portion of your final grade.

*Lateness*: Arriving to class late is disruptive to the instructor and to other students, and puts you at a disadvantage during the class. Unless you have cleared it with me previously, each 2 classes you are late will count as an unexcused absence. Arriving to class more than 30 minutes late also counts as an absence.

**Students with Disabilities**

The University of Massachusetts Amherst is committed to providing an equal educational opportunity for all students. If you have a documented physical, psychological, or learning disability on file with Disability Services (DS), Learning Disabilities Support Services (LDSS), or Psychological Disabilities Services (PDS), please notify me within the first two weeks of the semester so that we may make appropriate arrangements: http://www.umass.edu/disability/procedures.pdf.

**Class Dynamics**

We expect students to engage in class discussions respectfully, thinking critically about your own perspective and maintaining openness to ideas and experiences that are in conflict with your own.

The content of this course will lead to a number of discussions about “hot topics” such as class, gender, and racial constructions. Students are expected to engage in these
conversations sensitively and with openness to critique. If you feel you cannot speak in class, please talk with me privately and we will figure out strategies that might help.

**Grading**

Attendance and Participation 20%
Four MOODLE Responses 30%
Midterm Paper 20%
Annotated Bibliography and summary 5%
Final Oral presentation 5%
Final paper 20%

A 94-100  A- 93-90  B+ 87-89  B 84-86  B- 80-83
C+ 77-79  C 74-76  C- 68-73  D+64-67  D 60-63  F below 60

**Attendance and Participation (20%)**: This includes thoughtful comments and questions during class time to support discussion, contribution to small groups, and attendance. See above for attendance policy.

**Four MOODLE Responses (30%)**: Students will post questions and comments pertaining to their readings to Moodle. Length should be one page (double spaced). When critiquing or appraising an argument, you are expected to use direct citations.

*Deadlines: February 5, February 19, March 24, and April 9.*

**Midterm Paper (20%)**: The midterm paper is an analytical piece in which the student articulates his or her reaction to the readings assigned during the first part of the course. The student is expected to think about the different approaches of the authors, put them in conversation, and analyze them in context. At least two-three case studies or theories need to be analyzed in this way for this assessment. It should be 5-6 pages (double spaced, Times New Roman/Cambria font 12). Due March 5.

**Abstract, Annotated Bibliography and Final Paper (30%)**: The process for the final paper includes an abstract and an annotated bibliography, which must be presented two weeks before the final paper is due.

*Abstract and bibliography due April 14. Abstract and Annotated Bibliography worth 10% of your grade.*

**Final Paper**: This is a research paper, 10-12 pages (double spaced, Times New Roman/Cambria font 12) that should demonstrate your ability to analyze texts, support your arguments with quotations from texts, and make broader connections with other materials of the course centered on a relevant theme of your choice. Students are also expected to search databases and incorporate pertinent articles. Later in the semester I will provide a rubric with more details.

*Final paper due April 28. Final paper worth 20% of your grade.*
Note on Lateness: Unless arrangements are made before the deadline, late papers will not be awarded credit.

Technology Policy

This class will rely heavily on texts posted online in Moodle. If you can annotate and underline texts online, you can bring your laptop to class for reference, but you cannot use the computer for any other task, except that of taking notes. Checking email, FB, Twitter, etc., will amount to being absent from the class and will be graded accordingly. Attendance and participation amount to 20% of your overall grade.

Please turn your cell phone off during class.

Citations

Wikipedia can and should be used as a general reference. It is a great way to get acquainted with different authors and ideas, but it does not work as academic citation. You can use the site but then you must check on the references and quote from the references read, not from the information supplied by Wikipedia.

When you cite an outside source, you must cite it in academically acceptable formats. This includes references to websites. Just the name of the author and the book is not sufficient, or mentioning that the text is online. If you do not know how to cite academically, you can consult the online guide by the American Anthropological Association, http://www.aaanet.org/pubs/style_guide.htm.

Academic Honesty

DO NOT PLAGIARISE. That means no copy and pasting, and no direct paraphrasing. Any form of academic dishonesty (including but not limited to plagiarism from another student's writing) will result in an automatic failure in this course, following UMass policies. In addition, UMass requests that instructors turn students to the University Academic Honesty Board for further academic discipline, a process that does not sound like fun for anybody involved. So. Please be aware that all of your submissions will be assessed by Turn-it-in for originality.

Course Calendar

Week 1: January 19—Introduction to the seminar. What were the main concepts/theories in 391H? Timeline of Main Events 20th and 21st. Century

January 21— French May 68
It has been said that French May 68 started over sex. At Nanterre University, students demanded access to opposite sex bedrooms. A week later, demands included an end to the war in Vietnam. Twenty days later, and after brutal repression and massive arrests, unsuccessful attempts were enacted to burn down the Paris Stock Exchange. Soon, factory workers went on a wildcat strike, which seriously concerned the government. When the workers’ unions accepted salary raises and a reduction in working hours, May 68 was over. Sort of. In reality, the short-lived insurrection inspired many around the world and cleared the air for non-Soviet aligned social movements and thinkers (Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, and others).

**Readings:** For a quick history and appreciation of French May 68


**Graffiti:** [http://www.bopsecrets.org/CF/graffiti.htm](http://www.bopsecrets.org/CF/graffiti.htm)


Selections: The Student Revolt, Pp. 23-90

**Week 2: January 26—God is Dead:** Frederick Nietzsche

Misogynist, atheist, and controversial, Nietzsche was not, however, a Nazi or a leftist. His notion of perspectivism (no set of values is superior to another one), as well as his "god is dead" (death of the Western values) can and has been appropriated for a non-Eurocentric reading of the World. Nietzsche philosophy opened the way to social theories that account for diversity, rather than binary explanations of complex social phenomena


**January 28—Introduction to Foucault**

Michel Foucault (1926-1984) was an influential French philosopher. An important actor in May 68 in France, his critique of Soviet/Stalinist Marxism gave rise to a powerful methodology to understand the world by focusing on power and knowledge in Western societies. Rather than limiting his analysis to the economy, Foucault engaged in an exploration of how power produces knowledge and truth in different historical contexts.

And


**Week 3**  
**February 2— Biopolitics and Prison**

Developing the concept of biopolitics, Foucault analyzes a technology of power different from the punitive systems of Medieval Ages. He focuses on “governmentality”, a technology of government that creates subjects of power through normalization techniques.


**February 4 — Societies of Control: The Panopticon**

The Panopticon is a tower at the center of a prison, from which a guard can observe all cellmates. Although not everybody can be observed at the same time, the prisoners do not know when they are being observed, so an illusion of permanent surveillance is created. Michel Foucault derives from this a theory of a society that is constantly being watched by power, with the objective of normalizing behaviors. Hospitals, schools and other institutions function, according to Foucault, on similar premises.


***************First Moodle Response due ****************************  

**Week 4: February 9 – Introduction to Critical Race Theory**

Critical race theory not only dares to treat race as central to the law and policy of the United States, it dares to look beyond the popular belief that getting rid of racism means simply getting rid of ignorance, or encouraging everyone to “get along.” To read this primer is to be sobered by the recognition that racism is part of the structure of legal institutions, but also to be invigorated by the creativity, power, wit, and humanity of the voices speaking about ways to change that structure. As race relations continue to shape our lives in the new century —setting the stage for new tragedies and new
hopes—critical race theory has become an indispensable tool for making sense of it all. (Excerpt from Preface, Critical Race Theory: An Introduction)


February 11 — The New Jim Crow

Michelle Alexander argues that the War on Drugs and policies that deny convicted felons equal access to employment, housing, education, and public benefits create a permanent under caste based largely on race. As the United States celebrates the nation’s “triumph over race” with the election of Barack Obama, the majority of young black men in major American cities are locked behind bars or have been labeled felons for life. Although Jim Crow laws have been wiped off the books, an astounding percentage of the African American community remains trapped in a subordinate status - much like their grandparents before them. In this incisive critique, former litigator-turned-legal-scholar Michelle Alexander provocatively argues that we have not ended racial caste in America: we have simply redesigned it. Alexander shows that, by targeting black men and decimating communities of color, the U.S. criminal justice system functions as a contemporary system of racial control, even as it formally adheres to the principle of color blindness. The New Jim Crow challenges the civil rights community - and all of us - to place mass incarceration at the forefront of a new movement for racial justice in America. (Excerpt from the book)


Week 5: February 16 – Monday Class schedule – No Class

February 18—Social Construction of Sexuality

Foucault analyzes the creation of power/knowledge apparatus (the Church, the State, Medicine) that forced sexual confessions, making sex part of discourse and channeling those discourses into the creation of “perversions”, many of which were in the past either regarded with indifference or simply ignored (masturbation, men who love men, hermaphrodites, etc.). Sex became something to be administered and managed. A “policing of sex” became necessary, a need to regulate it through “useful and public discourses”.

Required: Graciela’s outline of The History of Sexuality (in Moodle)

Second Moodle Response due

**Week 6: February 23— Queer Theory**

Women’s struggles in the XIX and XX Centuries opened a social space for women to formally enter adulthood. Women, who were not even the subjects of law in Western societies, gained voting and other rights through a long, protracted struggle. Although useful to unify in a struggle for basic civil rights, in time the concept of “women” came under attack by women of color and poststructuralist thinkers. While women of color did not feel white feminists represented their own struggle, poststructuralist author Judith Butler critiqued the concept from a different angle. For her, the concept of “women” was responsible for reinforcing the women-men binary, leaving out a myriad of other possibilities. Butler’s work gave rise to the queer movement.


**February 25— Queer of Color Theory**

In Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique, Roderick A. Ferguson defines queer of color analysis as an interrogat[ion] of social formations as the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and class, with particular interest in how those formations correspond with and diverge from nationalist ideals and practices. Queer of color analysis is a heterogeneous enterprise made up of women of color feminism, materialist analysis, poststructuralist theory, and queer critique. (Ferguson, Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique)


**Week 7: March 1— Feminisms and Eurocentrism**

Are feminist ideals sometimes used as weapons in the global arena? Do Western women have the right to push for their universal truths beyond their own worlds? Do Muslim women need saving?

March 3— Neoliberalism (early 1970s to present)

Globalization has created a new interconnected, mobile and shifting world. As capital flows freely across borders, protected by laws and regulations, it collides with social movements that oppose it, at the same time that it creates new scenarios for interregional stress. In a move that David Harvey famously defined as “accumulation by dispossession”, neoliberal policies were implemented to guarantee the freedom of markets. Unevenly deployed across the world, these policies created ethnicized and genderized situations of oppression. As a result, the gap between those who have and those who have not has increased exponentially in these last years, giving rise to new social movements, even in developed nations and areas such as the US and the EU.


Film: The Take, 2004, 87 min

Midterm paper due

Week 8: March 8— Against Empire

The global Marxist was deeply impacted by the fall of the Soviet Union in the late nineties. Theories that had been envisioned as marginal became the focus of attention, as activists and organizers worldwide tried to find an alternative to the corporate globalization of the world. Basing their analysis on the social movements that were opposing globalization around the world, Italian author and ex-Red Brigade leader, Toni Negri, and US activist and academic, Michael Hardt, wrote Empire. Controversial, the book became, along with Naomi Klein’s No-Logo, a central theoretical reference for the Anti-Corporate Globalization Movement.


And

March 10 — Neoliberalism as Exception

Neoliberalism is commonly viewed as an economic doctrine that seeks to limit the scope of government. Some consider it a form of predatory capitalism with adverse effects on the Global South. In this groundbreaking work, Aihwa Ong offers an alternative view of neoliberalism as an extraordinarily malleable technology of governing that is taken up in different ways by different regimes, be they authoritarian, democratic, or communist. Ong traces how these and other neoliberal exceptions to business as usual are reconfiguring relationships between governing and the governed, power and knowledge, and sovereignty and territoriality. She argues that an interactive mode of citizenship is emerging, one that organizes people—and distributes rights and benefits to them—according to their marketable skills rather than according to their membership within nation-states. Those whose knowledge and skills are not assigned significant market value—such as migrant women working as domestic maids in many Asian cities—are denied citizenship. Nevertheless, Ong suggests that as the seam between sovereignty and citizenship is pried apart, a new space is emerging for NGOs to advocate for the human rights of those excluded by neoliberal measures of human worthiness. (From Duke University Press description of book content)


Week 9: March 15 — SPRING RECESS NO CLASS
Week 10: March 22— Neoliberalism and Structural Adjustment in “Africa”

Africa is a huge, diverse continent. However, although the concept of “Africa” is socially constructed, nevertheless people in the continent have to live and be defined by this concept. Formal democratic processes in the 90s opened up many countries to democratic elections. However, these elections did not alter the nature of most of these states, clientelistic, authoritarian, and inefficient. These democracies have now been blamed for the entirety of Africa’s problems and theorists argue that democracy might have been a good vehicle to make the structural adjustment less painful. At the same time, powerful NGOs act as governments that do not need to be elected. Moreover, as the states recede, warlords and multinational corporations operate freely. Export-production enclaves have become increasingly detached from the rest of society. Ferguson analyzes the impact of the West in creating shadows of democracy and argues that our focus on the “African” states as free standing in reality shadows the transnational relations that created “Africa’s” poverty.
March 24— Anti-corporate Globalization Movements (mid nineties to early 2000s)

If we were to define the anti-corporate globalization movement for what it stood against, we would say that it was neoliberalism and its “unelected treaty organizations like the IMF, WTO, and NAFTA”. However, this was, above all, a movement that advocated for the free movement of people, possessions, and ideas across the world. The aim of the movement was to fight against the international order that prevents people from moving freely across the planet. At its core, the movement was also about reinventing daily life in the movement’s own organizational techniques and structures. Spokescouncils, affinity groups, consensus, fishbowls, and vibe-watchers were examples of these democratic practices. Participants tried to live their movement as they would have liked to live their everyday lives: by experiencing “another possible world” in the moments when they got together and organized for this “possible — and better— world.”


Week 11: March 29— Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (1984 to present)

Thirty years ago, a small guerrilla group of Maoist intellectuals met in the Lacandon Jungle with the indigenous of Chiapas, Mexico. After ten years of intense dialogue, the Zapatistas appeared in public for the first time taking over the capital of Chiapas, San Cristobal de Las Casas, on January 1st. 1994 —exactly on the day when the NAFTA (“free” trade agreement) was put into effect. At the same time, millions of progressive people all over the world received an email inviting them to support the Zapatista struggle. Thanks to this global online move, the Mexican government did not massacre the Zapatistas. This was their last, an only, armed action. Instead of engaging in armed struggle, they focused on building an autonomous enclave among the poorest of the poor. Twenty years later, the Zapatistas control an important part of Chiapas, and are organized through “Juntas de Buen Gobierno” (Good Government Juntas). Campesinos from different communities rotate between their fields and their service to the communities in the Juntas, women have achieved a better status, and there are schools, hospitals and microenterprises where there had been despair and starvation.


Film: Zapatista, 1999, 56 mins

March 31 — Class meets at the Library

Introduction to databases and academic research

Week 12: April 5 — Politics of Decolonization

Indigenous people in Canada have been active in the struggle over their environment, in a context of decolonization of their practice and theory. What are the issues behind a politics of recognition? What is the connection between colonialism and liberal pluralism? How can a politics of self-recognition address oppression, re-evaluate and re-construct Indigenous cultural practices?


April 7 — Water Wars

It has been said that the Third World War will be about water. Whether this is true or not, the situation with water scarcity is serious. In certain areas of Mexico, for example, babies and children drink Coca-Cola because water is not reliable. However, bottled water is not always more reliable, and has been found to have more bacteria than tap water. The use of bottled water also increases pollution, as water is packed in plastic bottles. As with many social and ecological problems, the poorest suffer the most when
water is scarce. What is the connection between worldwide water issues, corporate profit, and neoliberal policies and agencies?


**Selection:** Climate Change, Pp. 39-51 and The World Bank, WTO, and Corporate Control over Water, Pp. 87-105 (in Moodle)

Film: Blue Gold: World Water Wars, 2009, 90 mins

***************Fourth Moodle Response due *********************

**Week 13: April 12— Bolivian Water Wars**

Historically a common trust, water is now bought and sold as a private commodity. With billions at the mercy of an unrestrained marketplace, it is easy to understand why this precious resource is at the center of the international movement working to turn back the rising tide of corporate globalization. The triumphant struggle of grassroots activists in Cochabamba, Bolivia, sounded a significant opening salvo in the water wars. In 2001, water warriors there regained control of their water supply and defied all odds by driving out the transnational corporation that had stolen their water in the first place. (From Cochabamba! book summary)

**Reading:**


***************ABSTRACT AND ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE ***************

**April 14— Occupy Movement**

Hot on the heels of the Spanish “Indignados” and the hopeful beginning of the Arab uprisings, the Occupy Movement marked the re-emergence of the Anti-corporate globalization movement. The difference between these two movements can be found not in the way they organized (de-centralized, direct action oriented, non-hierarchical, mostly through consensus), but rather in their focus and sense of timing. While the Anti-Corporate Globalization movement fought over global justice, the Occupy movement was mostly concerned with domestic issues following the 2008 economic crisis. By addressing Wall Street as the monster behind the debacle, Occupy hit the right spot to mobilize important sectors of the US population.

Week 14: April 19— Black Lives Matter Movements.
Readings TBA

April 21—26 Student Presentations and conclusions

******************************FINAL PAPER DUE April 26******************************