Occupation as Sovereign Excess

Social Thought and Political Economy*
University of Massachusetts, Amherst
Spring 2010, Tues 6:30-9, Machmer E-10

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OH: Tues, Rao's 4-6

Description

We conceive of empires, states, and occupations as political orders with distinct temporal, spatial, institutional, and ideological features. In our conventional narrative, states build empires, empires collapse, and new states inherit the "post-colonial" period. Remaining contention over the putative occupation of native peoples' lands by foreign occupiers becomes construed as an outlying legacy of some unusually intractable dispute or witless imperial design awaiting a proper juridical solution.

The modern state, in this story, is the imperishable site of self-legislation, rule of law, rationality, justice, legibility, accountability, and negotiation. In contrast, occupation and empire are sites of external domination, illegality, and ruthless force. The state (and state-system) becomes the unique source of juridical and moral sovereignty whereas neither empire nor occupation can legitimate or stabilize itself. This basic distinction, at the heart of current political ethics, must be substantiated in the empirical terms it claims. If it cannot be ratified, we may ask how continuous forms of power across sites of empire, state, and occupation influence our political evaluations and sensibilities.

This course will pursue the hypothesis that current occupations (in Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan) exhibit the features of a broader post-sovereign regime that imperils this normative and empirical centrality of the State. Given classic depictions of state-formation we will examine several accounts of the post-Weberian era of economic, social, military, and political de-territorialization.

Eligibility

- STPEC students with departmental permission;
- Advanced 5-College students with related coursework & instructor's permission;
- Auditors with instructor's permission; prepared participation required

*The Social Thought and Political Economy Program (STPEC) is an interdisciplinary undergraduate program in Social and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. The STPEC Program encourages students to engage in a critical examination of society and to develop their own capacities for critical reading, writing, and thinking. For more on the STPEC program, including recent and current course offerings, see http://www.umass.edu/stpec/.
Requirements

1. **Reading:**
   a. Process: Seminar based on discussion/interaction/criticism of arguments; arguments are linked sets of evidentiary and theoretical propositions
   
   1. *Study and re-read* assignments before class
   2. *Prepare to lead discussion or act as discussant*
   3. Bring readily accessible, marked materials to class

   b. Materials:

   1. **Books (4)** at Food For Thought, Pleasant St. Amherst:

      
      
      

   2. **Articles/chapters** are pdf's sent by email

1. **Writing:** One seminar essay (15-20-pp) on approved topic, with four deadlines:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposal/Abstract</td>
<td>(1 page)</td>
<td>22 Feb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliographic outline</td>
<td>(1-2 pp)</td>
<td>8 Mar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argument</td>
<td>(5-8 pp)</td>
<td>29 Mar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Essay</td>
<td>(15-20 pp)</td>
<td>12 May</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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3. **Presence:** class contributions, private communication (including reading responses)
### Schedule

**January**

18
Introduction: Please read the instructor’s memo
Max Weber, “Politics as a Vocation”

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**Sovereign Power I: State**

25

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**February**

1
Anthony Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence: Volume 2 of a Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism* (California 1987), ch. 6

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**Sovereign Power II: Empire**

8
Alex Motyl, “Imperial Structures,” *Revolutions, Nations, Empires: Conceptual Limits and Theoretical Possibilities* (Columbia 1999)

15

22
*No Class* (Monday Schedule)

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**March**

1
Post-Sovereign Power I: Empire

8 Derek Gregory, The Colonial Present: *Afghanistan* *Palestine* *Iraq* (Blackwell 2004)

15 Break

22 Eyal Weizman, Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation (Verso 2007)


April

Post-Sovereign Power II: State

5 Michel Foucault, Society Must Be Defended, Macey tr. (Picador 2003 [17 Mar 1976]), ch. 11

Anthony Giddens, The Nation-State and Violence: Volume 2 of a Contemporary Critique of

Historical Materialism (California 1987), ch. 7

12 Teresa Caldeira, City of Walls: Crime, Segregation, and Citizenship in São Paolo (California

2000)

19 James Ferguson, Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal Order (Duke 2006)

26 Talal Asad, "Thinking about Terrorism and Just War," Cambridge Review of International

Affairs (2009)

Nasser Hussein, "Beyond Norm and Exception: Guantánamo," Critical Inquiry, 33 (Sum

2007)

May

3 Sayres Rudy, "Monistic Force at the End of the Line: Strategic De-Territorialization after

Sovereign Capture," theory@buffalo, 14 (2010)

Slavoj Žižek, "From Homo Sucker to Homo Sacer," Welcome to the Desert of the Real! Five

Essays on September 11 and related dates (Verso 2002)

12 End exam period

17 Grades due