

# Current Debates in the Political Theory of (Post-)colonialism and Empire

<b>POLI 561</b> <b>Winter 2018</b>	<b>Professor Yves Winter</b> email: <a href="mailto:yves.winter@mcgill.ca">yves.winter@mcgill.ca</a>
<b>422 FERRIER</b> <b>M 11:35-14:25</b>	<b>Office:</b> 418 Ferrier <b>Office hours:</b> W 14:30-16:30 & by appt

## Description

Since the late 1970s, debates about colonialism and empire have become a central concern of the humanities and the social sciences. Having lagged behind other disciplines, political theorists and historians of political thought have started to address the colonial legacy over the course of the past two decades. The first wave of work, published in the early 2000s focused on the place of empire and colonialism in the theories of canonical thinkers, on these thinkers' collusions with colonial practices, and on the importance of empire in the emergence of key categories and traditions of European political thought. A key focus of these studies has been on modern liberalism's colonial underbelly: from the personal complicity of seventeenth and eighteenth-century proto-liberal authors such as John Locke, John Stuart Mill, and Alexis de Tocqueville to the more abstract questions of how racial slavery, imperial expansion, and settler colonialism have been integral to the articulation of liberal concepts and ideas.

Over the course of the past ten years, a second wave of studies have broadened the debate beyond the ideologies and categories of modern liberalism. Among this new scholarship are works that combine historical and theoretical approaches to address issues such as the colonial genealogies of modern regimes of law and legality, settler colonialism, contemporary forms of empire and imperialism, anti-colonial conceptions of freedom and emancipation, as well as justice, reconciliation, and reparations.

In this class, we will read a selection of works from this second wave of political theory scholarship on (post-)colonialism and empire. By being exposed to the ongoing debates, students will acquire an understanding of the current state of the field. This means that we will prioritize contemporary texts over the classical field-defining works. With the exception of one text, all of the works we are reading were published over the course of the past decade, and some of them are hot off the press.

Please note that the first class meeting (January 8) will be a full, substantive class, and students are expected to do the reading ahead of class.

## Prerequisites & Restrictions

This is an advanced seminar open to graduate students, U-3 honours students, and other advanced undergraduates with the permission of the instructor. Students must have taken at least two courses in political theory or political philosophy, at least one of which must be at the upper-level.

Please note that this is a demanding, reading-intensive seminar. The assigned reading is heavy and may at times seem onerous. We will read 11 books over the course of a 13-week semester, and in a typical week, the assigned reading will be about 200 pages, sometimes more. Students are expected to have read and digested the material prior to class, which means that you should reserve 10-20 hours per week to prepare for this class.

## Required Texts

All texts are available electronically through the McGill library.

For students who prefer to read print copies and are interested in purchasing the books, a limited number of copies are available at **The Word Bookstore, 469 Milton Street** (cash or cheque only). I recommend that you get the books you wish to buy early in the semester.

## Assignments and Grades

Written assignments for this course will consist of (i) six short reflection papers; (ii) a seminar paper proposal (not graded); and (iii) a 15-20 pp. seminar paper due at the end of the semester.

Your grade is further composed of (iv) an oral presentation; and (v) class participation.

**Reflection papers** should be 1-2 pages in length (double-spaced). They are interpretive-analytical pieces of writing about the assigned readings. They may cover the entirety or only a part of the assigned text. They are neither summaries of the readings nor opportunities for rambling narratives based on free association. As the name suggests, reflection papers demand that you demonstrate your understanding of the material and your ability to analyze it. Analysis may involve identifying and critically assessing: (1) the main problems/questions an author raises; (2) the central claims and arguments; (3) explicit and implicit assumptions; (4) the evidence presented; (5) the strengths and weaknesses of an argument and/or possible counterarguments. Note that reflection papers are not primarily concerned with your reading experience, your feelings about the readings, or your opinions.

**Paper proposals** should be 2-3 pages in length (double spaced). They ought to (1) outline a question or problem; (2) articulate a tentative thesis; (3) offer a tentative paper outline; and (4) identify relevant literature.

**Seminar papers** can take a variety of forms, and further instructions will be made available later in the course.

Your written work will be graded on originality, reasoning and argument, organization, clarity of exposition, and style. A detailed grading rubric will be posted on myCourses. Everything is graded on the letter grade scale (A to F), and final grades are computed using the 0-4 GPA scale.

Grade	Grade Points
A	4.0
A-	3.7
B+	3.3
B	3
B-	2.7
C+	2.3
C	2.0
D	1.0
F	0

Final grades are calculated according to the following schedule. Students must receive a passing grade (D) in each of the following grade categories to receive a passing grade for the course.

Reflection papers	20%
Seminar paper	50%
Presentation	10%
Class participation	20%

## Rules and Policies

All **assignments** are due on the dates indicated in the syllabus. **Late papers** will be docked one third of a letter grade for every 24 hours late, including weekends. Extensions are available only for serious and documented reasons, and they must be requested ahead of time. No extensions will be granted on (or after) an assignment's due date. Do not send assignments via email unless otherwise instructed.

Reflection papers are due without exception at the beginning of class on the date of the assigned reading covered in the paper. **No late reflection papers will be accepted under any circumstances.**

As this is a seminar, **attendance** is critical. Students with three or more absences should not expect a passing grade.

You are responsible for having read the assigned texts prior to the class meeting. Prepare for class by taking notes and by thinking about questions, ideas, or problems that arise in your reading. Be sure to bring books (print or electronic versions) to class.

McGill University values **academic integrity**. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the [Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures](#). Please note that I take plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty seriously, and your work will be reviewed for potential plagiarism issues by means of text-matching software.

Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant-e a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté.

As the instructor of this course I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and the [Office for Students with Disabilities](#) (514)398-6009.

## Class Schedule

Jan 8 Please note that the first class meeting is substantive with a full load of assigned reading!

### **The Colonial History of International Law**

Antony Anghie, [Imperialism, Sovereignty, and the Making of International Law](#) (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 1-195

Jan 15 **The Colonial History of International Law**

Antony Anghie, [Imperialism, Sovereignty, and the Making of International Law](#) (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 196-320

- Jan 22      **The Colonial History of the Rule of Law**  
Keally McBride, [Mr. Mothercountry: The Man Who Made the Rule of Law](#) (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016)
- Jan 29      **Imperial Ideology and Social Theory**  
Karuna Mantena, [Alibis of Empire: Henry Maine and the Ends of Liberal Imperialism](#) (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010)
- Feb 5        **Freedom Struggles (1)**  
Susan Buck-Morss, [Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History](#) (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009)
- Feb 12      **Freedom Struggles (2)**  
Neil Roberts, [Freedom as Marronage](#) (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2015)
- Feb 19      **The Category of Blackness**  
Achille Mbembe, [Critique of Black Reason](#), translated by Laurent Dubois (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017)
- Feb 26      **Anti-Colonial Genealogies**  
Timothy Brennan, [Borrowed Light: Vico, Hegel, and the Colonies](#) (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014)
- Mar 5        Reading Week
- Mar 12      **Settler Freedom and Imperial Power**  
Aziz Rana, [The Two Faces of American Freedom](#) (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), pp. 1-175
- Mar 19      **Settler Freedom and Imperial Power**  
Aziz Rana, [The Two Faces of American Freedom](#) (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), pp. 176-348  
PAPER PROPOSALS DUE!
- Mar 26      **"Healing" Settler Colonialism**  
Dian Million, [Therapeutic Nations: Healing in an Age of Indigenous Human Rights](#) (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2013)
- Apr 2        Easter Monday
- Apr 9        **Liberal Imperialism and the Discourse of Disavowal**  
Jeanne Morefield, [Empires Without Imperialism: Anglo-American Decline and the Politics of Deflection](#) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014)
- Apr 16      **Domestic Colonies**  
Barbara Arneil, [Domestic Colonies: The Colonial Turn Inward](#) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018)
- April 23     SEMINAR PAPERS DUE by 12PM (418 Ferrier) or in my mailbox in 414 Leacock