

## MPhil in Politics and International Studies

University of Cambridge

### Module: Decolonising Politics and International Relations

**Module organiser:** Dr Stephanie Diepeveen

**Contact details:** [snd31@cam.ac.uk](mailto:snd31@cam.ac.uk)

**Office hours:** by appointment

#### Course Abstract:

Over the past few years, there has been growing attention to the unequal power relations and western dominance in the study of International Relations (IR) and Politics, and how they have become embedded in our institutions, theories and methods. This module explores different approaches to decolonising IR and Political Studies, and the problems, contexts and histories that have given rise to different critiques and approaches to the disciplines. It will look in depth at how different scholars globally have confronted and addressed power in the discipline, through different intellectual traditions (e.g. postcolonialism, particularism and pluralism) and different regional schools (Latin America, South Asia, Africa). This module aims to provide space to engage in critical discussions about power in academic inquiry, from institutional structures, to classroom dynamics, to theory and method, and help in developing a more critical eye to the challenges and possibilities of different approaches to and visions of IR and Political Studies.

#### Background and Structure

Decolonising academia is not a new project. Alongside independence movements in the 1960s, decolonising forms of knowledge production, and considering and confronting power in global politics, has been interwoven into academic and political projects in different places globally. Arguably western academics and institutions have come quite late in giving attention to decolonising academic knowledge production. Even still, such attention remains limited within the disciplinary structure of IR and Politics. A view that decolonising is a critical issue in the disciplines remains arguably still largely at the fringes.

The aim of this module is to unpack the problems, approaches and dimensions of what it means to decolonise the disciplines of Politics and IR. There diverse origins to critiques of dominant work in the disciplines – including critical theory, postmodernism, postcolonialism and feminism, among others. The diversity of work that can be crudely clustered into a decolonising agenda is more than can be covered within one module. Given this, this module is intended to be an entry point into different approaches. It aims to provide a window into the diversity of work within decolonising projects, exploring their challenges, limitations and possibilities.

Decolonising Politics and IR has two broad dimensions, which will be covered in this module:

1. Shifting *what* we know about how the world works, historically, and into the present and future
2. Shifting (disrupting) how we study politics and IR

These two dimensions run through the different weeks, with an emphasis on one or the other each week. It is not possible to separate them fully, as ideas about one implicate and justify the other.

The readings and seminars move back and forth between IR and Politics scholarship, without necessarily clearly differentiating between the two. Both disciplines appear throughout the module, as scholars wrestle with different aspects of each discipline, and sometimes the institutions and norms governing both. The distinction between the two disciplines is not a primary concern for this module. However, what is important in reflecting on the possibilities of different decolonial approaches, is to be precise when reviewing different scholarly works, about how the problems are defined, where the scholar is positioned, and from what evidentiary base. In this sense, it is important to consider where an author begins from within the disciplines as we map out and explore possibilities and challenges in decolonising politics and international relations.

Overarching questions that will guide the module include:

- What do we tend to emphasise when we view and study the world in IR and Politics?
- What is obscured, hidden or devalued in ways of viewing and studying the world?
- What is privileged and what is not? What is harmful about current institutional structures and approaches to the study of politics and IR, and to whom?
- What would it take to change the discipline to shift power dynamics? What disruptions are required, and with what implications?
- Can we imagine what political studies and IR could look like if it were decolonised?

## Seminars and readings

The themes/topics covered include:

1. What is the problem: origins of a call for decolonising IR and Political Studies
2. Regional Perspectives and theories: Postcolonialism and Sub-Altern Studies
3. Regional Perspectives and theories: African and Latin American approaches to IR
4. What is left for 'mainstream' IR history and theories?
5. Institutions and classrooms
6. Decolonising methods
7. Feminist IR; and IR and Politics in the context of the climate crisis

This module intends to provide space to consider and push the boundaries of what we study in politics and IR, how we study it and what constitutes legitimate forms of knowledge production. Power is a central theme. Recognising this, it is crucial that we all come to the seminars ready to participate, open to being challenged or uncomfortable at times, and willing to listen and respect the positions and experiences of everyone in the course.

Seminar attendance is mandatory and attendance will be recorded. Time to articulate and agree shared expectations and guidelines for seminar engagement will be allocated in the first seminar. Please do get in touch with me if you have any concerns. Time will be allocated periodically during the seminar to reflect on what works around the seminar format. Also, I am available to meet after the seminar and by appointment.

Core readings for each week are identified in **\*\*bold**, though they are open for alteration depending on the group's interests. Everyone is expected to read core readings in advance, and reflect on them in the context of the questions set out for that week, and by drawing on your wider reading, interests and experiences.

Everyone in the seminar will be given a chance to lead on a specific topic of interest. This will mean taking a more active role in directing the discussion that week. I encourage you to do this in pairs. After the first week, everyone will be given a chance to pick a seminar topic that interests them that they would like to consider in more depth and help to facilitate the discussion. Once seminar topics

have been chosen, I'll arrange times to meet with each of you in advance to discuss and review your seminar theme, and potential readings or areas that you would like the group to focus on. This is intended to give you space to direct the module to areas of interest to you, and also provide some practice in leading and facilitating seminar discussions.

### **Learning outcomes**

- Understand the diversity and complexity of decolonisation as a process; and its history within Politics and IR
- Understand, analyse and use a range of different approaches to decolonisation in academia
- Critically assess and engage with 'decolonial' methods in empirical and theoretical analysis
- Compare and contrast the framing, approach and possibilities of different approaches to decolonising politics and IR
- Guide a seminar discussion and debate around a particular topic of interest, and contribute to reflections on power dynamics within the seminar structure

### **Assessment**

Assessment will be by one 3,000 word essay. Potential essay questions include:

1. Can the study of politics be decolonised without the practice of politics being decolonised?
2. How can we reimagine the international when the global North sets the practices, institutions and central concepts?
3. What role do stories play in understanding politics from the global South?
4. Is feminist IR decolonial IR?
5. Is decolonising political studies necessarily violent?
6. What space is left for western enlightenment scholarship in making sense of colonised/postcolonial worlds?
7. The global colour line is the primary dividing line in IR. Discuss.
8. How radical is postcolonialism?
9. Reflecting on Amina Mama's essay (2007): Is it ethical to study Africa?
10. Does giving voice to marginalised 'voices' mean holding critical views of world politics and/or IR?

### **Respectful classroom conduct**

This module aims to create space to interrogate power in the structure and study of International Relations and Politics. Given we are all working from within this discipline, the content discussed will inevitably intersect with personal experiences and relative positions of power. In order to facilitate an open, respectful and inclusive discussion it is important for all of us to be sensitive to one another's experiences and perspectives. The first seminar will include time to agree on some ground rules for how to engage with one another through the seminar, specifically if/when more challenging and likely uncomfortable issues emerge. I'll also provide space a couple of times mid-way through the course for anonymous feedback, which can be taken into account to adapt the course structure, in order to improve the seminar as a space to honestly discuss power dynamics that underpin our discipline.

### **Resources for support at Cambridge (not exhaustive!)**

#### **Decolonise movements/networks**

- Sociology - <https://decolonisesociology.com/>

- Libraries - <https://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/about-library/diversifying-collections-and-practices/cambridge-university-libraries-decolonisation>
- History and Philosophy of Science - <https://www.hps.cam.ac.uk/news-events/seminars-reading-groups/decolonise>  
<https://decoloniseenglish.wordpress.com/decolonising-english/>
- Cambridge Decolonise Network - <https://www.facebook.com/DecoloniseCambridge/>

**End everyday racism project/resource** - a resource to anonymously share experiences of racism at Cambridge to add to a collection of stories from around the university, at <https://racismatcambridge.org/>

**Cambridge inquiry into the legacies of enslavement** - <https://www.v-c.admin.cam.ac.uk/projects/legacies-of-enslavement>

**The Black Cantabs Research Society** - a counter-history project created by students at the University of Cambridge in 2015 with two aims. The historical basis of the project is to uncover and preserve the legacies of Black alumni of the University of Cambridge. The political aim of the project is to critically intervene in the constructed narrative of Cambridge, and to place Black students in the institution's past, present, and future, at <https://www.blackcantabs.org/>

## Week 1: What is the problem: origins of a call for decolonizing Politics and IR

The first seminar has two main aims. First, it is aimed at beginning a discussion about what a seminar should look like that engages seriously with questions of power in the study of politics and IR. How do we want this seminar to be structured and organised? How can we make this into a space for disruptive and challenging discussions, particularly around some topics that are likely to invoke some personal and immediate concerns? Second, it provides a set of readings that help to lay out the broad landscape in the disciplines and in wider political events in which discussions about decolonising disciplines of IR and politics have taken place.

Key questions to consider around the core readings:

- What is the problem that the authors identify? What is the extent of the problem?
- What are points of contention and points of agreement in how issues of colonisation and decolonisation are framed and approached?

### Core readings

**\*\*Bell, D., 'Writing the World: Disciplinary History and Beyond,' *International Affairs*, 85/1 (2009)**

**\*\*Capan, Zeynep Gulsah (2017) Decolonising International Relations?, *Third World Quarterly*, 38:1, 1-15, DOI: [10.1080/01436597.2016.1245100](https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2016.1245100)**

**\*\*Tickner, Arlene B. and Karen Smith (eds.). *International Relations from the Global South. Worlds of Difference. Introduction***

### Further reading:

#### *On the problem*

Bevir, M., 'Political Studies as Narrative and Science, 1880-2000,' *Political Studies*, 54/3 (2006)

Hobson, John M. *The Eurocentric conception of world politics: Western international theory, 1760-2010*. Cambridge University Press, 2012.

#### *On how to respond*

Jones, Branwen Gruffydd. *Decolonizing International Relations*. Rowman & Littlefield, **Introduction**.

Krishna, S (2012) *Decolonising International Relations*. Available at: <http://www.e-ir.info/2012/10/08/decolonizing-international-relations/>

Sabaratnam, Meera (2011) 'IR in Dialogue... but Can We Change the Subjects? A Typology of Decolonising Strategies for the Study of World Politics.' *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 39 (3). pp. 781-803.

Sabaratnam, Meera (2019) 'Postcolonial and Decolonial Approaches.' In: Baylis, John, Smith, Steve and Owens, Patricia, (eds.), *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

#### *On the discipline and colonialism generally*

Buzan, B., & Lawson, G. (2015). *The global transformation: History, modernity and the making of international relations*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Connell, R., *Southern Theory: Social Science and the Global Dynamics of Knowledge* (Polity, 2008)

- Hoffmann, Stanley. "An American Social Science: International Relations." *Daedalus* 106, no. 3 (1977): 41–60.
- Muppidi, Himadeep. *The Colonial Signs of International Relations*. London: Cinco puntos press, 2012.
- Pasha, M. K., & Murphy, C. N. (2002). Knowledge/power/inequality. *International Studies Review*, 4(2), 1-6.
- Seth, S. (2011). Postcolonial Theory and the Critique of International Relations. *Millennium*, 40(1), 167–183. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0305829811412325>
- Blaut, J. M. (1993). *The colonizer's model of the world: Geographical diffusionism and Eurocentric history*. New York: Guilford.
- Doty, R. L. (1997). *Imperial encounters: The politics of representation in North-South relations*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
-

## Week 2: Regional perspectives Part 1: South Asia and the Middle East

This week and next week focus on different approaches to IR and Politics that have developed in different regions of the Global South. They serve as entry points to explore different approaches to decolonising politics and /or IR. The lines drawn between the seminars are somewhat arbitrary, and have been drawn with an aim to facilitate conversation of different experiences, ideas and histories to Politics and/or IR. Given limited time and scope, we will explore scholarship around four regions, acknowledging the notable absence of East Asia and the Pacific, Central Asia and Eastern Europe, and indigenous studies from North America, Australia and New Zealand.

The first seminar in this section gives a background to regional approaches to studying politics and IR. It then introduces two bodies of work, loosely tied with the Middle East and South Asia: 1) postcolonialism and 2) subaltern studies.

Key questions to consider around the core readings:

- What does postcolonialism offer to the study of politics and international relations? What might limitations of this approach be?
- What does subaltern studies offer the discipline? What was the context in which it arose, and what was it challenging and trying to rescue? What are its possibilities and limits?

---

### Core Readings

**\*\*Acharya, Amitav. "Global International Relations (IR) and Regional Worlds." *International Studies Quarterly* 58, no. 4 (2014): 647–659**

**\*\*Dabashi, Hamid. *The Arab Spring: The End of Postcolonialism*. Zed Books Limited.**

**\*\*Epstein, C. (Ed.). (2017). *Against international relations norms: postcolonial perspectives*. London: Routledge. Introduction.**

**\*\*Brennan, T. (2014, September-October). Subaltern stakes. *New Left Review*, 89, 67–87.**

**\*\*Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the subaltern speak?" (1988).**

---

### Further Reading

#### ***Background on regional IR***

Acharya, A. (2011). Dialogue and discovery: In search of international relations theories beyond the West. *Millennium—Journal of International Studies*, 39(3), 619–637.

Acharya, A., & Buzan, B. (2010). *Non-Western international relations theory: Perspectives on and beyond Asia*. London: Routledge.

Grosfoguel, Ramón. "Decolonizing post-Colonial Studies and paradigms of political Economy: Transmodernity, Decolonial Thinking, and Global Coloniality." *Transmodernity* 1, no. 1 (2011): 1–36

Pasha, Mustapha in Seth, S. (2013). *Postcolonial theory and international relations: A critical introduction*. London: Routledge.

Santos, Boaventura de Sousa. 2018. *The End of the Cognitive Empire: The Coming of Age of Epistemologies of the South*. Durham: Duke University Press Books.

#### ***Postcolonialism***

- Adib-Moghaddam, A. (2011). *A metahistory of the clash of civilisations: Us and them beyond Orientalism*. London: C. Hurst.
- Biswas, Shampa (2007) 'Empire and Global Public Intellectuals: Reading Edward Said as an International Relations Theorist,' *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 36, pp 117-133
- Hinnebusch, R. (2013). The politics of identity in Middle East international relations. In L. Fawcett (Ed.), *International relations of the Middle East* (3d ed., pp. 148–166). Oxford: Oxford University Press. OR Halliday, F. (2005). *The Middle East in international relations: Power, politics and ideology*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.
- Moore-Gilbert, B. (1997). *Postcolonial theory: contexts, practices, politics*. London, New York: Verso.
- Said, Edward, "Orientalism Reconsidered", *Race and Class* 27 (2), 1985
- Scott, D. (1999). *Refashioning futures: Criticism after postcoloniality*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Seth, S. (2013). *Postcolonial theory and international relations: A critical introduction*. London: Routledge. Introduction.

### **Subaltern studies**

- Ayoob, M. (2002). Inequality and theorizing in international relations: The case for subaltern realism. *International Studies Review*, 4(3), 27–48.
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh. *Minority Histories, Subaltern Pasts*, *Postcolonial Studies* 1:1 (1998), 15-29
- Chatterjee, Partha. "After Subaltern Studies." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 47, no. 35, 2012, pp. 44–49.
- Chatterjee, Partha. (1993). *The nation and its fragments: Colonial and postcolonial histories* (Vol. 4). Princeton University Press.
- Guha, R. (1982). *Subaltern studies: Writings on South Asian history and society*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Guha, Ranajit. *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency; Dominance without hegemony: History and power in colonial India OR Not at Home in Empire*. *Critical Inquiry*, Spring, 1997, Vol. 23, No. 3, *Front Lines/Border Posts* (Spring, 1997), pp. 482-493



## Week 3: Regional Perspectives Part 2: Africa and Latin America, and decolonial thought, border thinking and world systems theory

Politics around independence and decolonisation in Africa and Latin America generated their own forms of political thought and ideas, intertwined with political projects. From the African continent, the violence of the colonial experience was a particular concern, and how to decolonise the mind. From Latin America, we consider World Systems Theory and dependency theory, as well as border thinking, put forward by Walter Mignolo and others, about how to overcome colonial patterns of thought and knowledge production.

Key questions to consider around the core readings:

- What do the different authors see as key challenges to decolonising? What is decolonising and what does it require?
- How do experience and positionality help to reveal different aspects of IR and politics?
- What views or voices might still be missing?

---

### Core Readings

**\*\*Pillay, Suren. (2018) Thinking the State from Africa: Political Theory, Eurocentrism and Concrete Politics, *Politikon*, 45:1, 32-47**

**\*\*Mama, Amina (2007) Is it ethical to study Africa? Preliminary thoughts on scholarship and freedom. *African Studies Review* 50(1): 1–26.**

**\*\*Grosfoguel, Ramón. Colonial Subjects : Puerto Ricans in a Global Perspective. Berkeley: university of California press, 2003.**

**\*\*Mignolo, Walter D. 2011. "Geopolitics of sensing and knowing: on (de)coloniality, border thinking and epistemic disobedience". *Postcolonial Studies* 14(3): 273–283**

**\*\*Quijano, Aníbal. "Coloniality of power and Eurocentrism in Latin America." *International Sociology* 15, no. 2 (2000): 215–232.**

### Further reading

#### *Africa*

Ahluwalia, P. (2005). Out of Africa: Post-structuralism's colonial roots. *Postcolonial Studies*, 8(2), 137–154.

Amadiume, Ifi. 2000. Daughters of the Goddess, Daughters of Imperialism: African Women Struggle for Culture, Power and Democracy. Zed Books.

Appiah, Kwame Anthony. "Is the Post- in Postmodernism the Post- in Postcolonial?" *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 17, no. 2, 1991, pp. 336–357.

Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press. 2004

Gallagher, J., Death, C., Sabaratnam, Meera and Smith, K. (2016) 'Teaching Africa and international studies: Forum introduction.' *Politics*, 36 (4). pp. 441-452.

Mbembe, A. (2003). Necropolitics. *Public Culture*, 15(1), 11–40.

Mudimbe VY (1990) *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge*. Bloomington, IN: James Currey.

Nkrumah, K. (1966). *Neo-colonialism: The last stage of imperialism*. New York: International Publishers. Introduction.

Nyerere, Julius. Ujamaa.

Sajed, A. (2013). Postcolonial encounters in international relations: The politics of transgression in the Maghreb. London: Routledge.

Senghor, Léopold Sédar. Theory of Negritude.

Thiong'o, Ngũgĩ wa. Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature. Harare; Zimbabwe: Zimbabwe publishing House, 1987

### ***Latin America***

Apel, Karl-Otto, et al. Thinking from the underside of history: Enrique Dussel's philosophy of liberation. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000.

Coronil, F. (2008). Elephants in the Americas? Latin American postcolonial studies and global decolonization. In M. Moraña, E. D. Dussel, & C. A. Jáuregui (Eds.), *Coloniality at large: Latin America and the postcolonial debate* (pp. 396–416). Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Escobar, Arturo. "Beyond the Third World: Imperial Globality, Global Coloniality and Anti-Globalisation Social Movements." *Third World Quarterly* 25, no. 1 (2004): 207–230

Mignolo, Walter (2011) 'Epistemic Disobedience and the Decolonial Option: A Manifesto,' *Transmodernity*, 44-66.

Mignolo, Walter. *Local Histories / Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges and Border Thinking*. Princeton: University of Princeton Press, 2012.

Quijano, Aníbal . 2007. "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality." *Cultural Studies* 21 (2-3): 168–78.

Tickner, A. B. (2003). Hearing Latin American voices in international relations studies. *International Studies Perspectives*, 4(4), 325–350.

Wallerstein, Immanuel. "World system versus world-systems: A critique." *Critique of Anthropology* 11.2 (1991): 189-194.

## Week 4: What is left for 'mainstream' IR history and theory?

This seminar provides an introduction to potential issues with existing histories and theories in Politics and IR. The readings in this seminar tackle two challenges in what to do with existing scholarship. First, it explores how we might re-write and re-imagine histories, and what this would look like. Second, readings consider how we might engage (or not) with existing theories if taking a decolonial agenda seriously.

Key questions to consider around the core readings:

### History

- What could it look like to write race and racism back into global political histories?
- Are there limits in what is possible? What tools and approaches are required?

### Theory

- Is there space for western thinkers in a decolonised discipline?
- Is universalism dead? Should it be?
- Does it matter who uses different theorists?

## Core Readings

### History

- \*\*Anievas, Alex, Nivi Manchanda, Robbie Shilliam (eds.), *Race and Racism in International Relations: Confronting the Global Color Line* (Routledge, 2014). Introduction and Chapter 6**
- \*\*Krishna, S. (2001). Race, amnesia, and the education of international relations. *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 26(4), 401–424.**
- \*\*Ling, L. H. M. *Postcolonial International Relations: Conquest and Desire Between Asia and the West* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).**

### Theory

- \*\*Sabaratham, Meera (2020) 'Is IR Theory White? Racialised Subject-Positioning in Three Canonical Texts.' *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 49 (1). pp. 3-31.**
- \*\*Vasilaki, Rosa. Provincialising IR? Deadlocks and Prospects in Post-Western IR Theory. *Millennium*. Volume: 41 issue: 1, page(s): 3-22**

## Further Reading

### *Re-reading and re-writing history*

- Chowdhry, G., & Nair, S. (2003). Introduction: Power in a postcolonial world: Race, gender, and class in international relations. In *Power, postcolonialism and international relations: Reading race, gender and class* (pp. 1-32). Taylor and Francis.
- Du Bois, William Edward Burghardt. *The souls of black folk*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1903. Forethought and Of Our spiritual strivings.
- Getachew, Adom. "Universalism after the Post-Colonial Turn: Interpreting the Haitian Revolution," *Political Theory* 44 (December 2016): 821–845.

Getachew, Adom. *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton University Press, 2019).

Gilroy, P. (1993). *The black Atlantic: Modernity and double consciousness*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Laffey, M., & Weldes, J. (2008). Decolonizing the Cuban Missile Crisis. *International Studies Quarterly*, 52(3), 555–577.

Mitchell, Timothy (1991) *Colonising Egypt*, Berkley: Univ. of California Press, Preface and Chapter 1

### ***Confronting western theorists and theories***

Chakrabarty, Dipesh. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009

Diepeveen, Stephanie. 2021. *Searching for a New Kenya*. Cambridge University Press. Introduction

Hobson, J. M. (2007). Is critical theory always for the white West and for Western imperialism? Beyond Westphalian towards a post-racist critical IR. *Review of International Studies*, 33(S1), 91–116.

Hobson, J. M. (2012). *The Eurocentric conception of world politics: Western international theory, 1760–2010*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Hutchings, Kimberly. “Dialogue between Whom? The Role of the West/non-West Distinction in promoting Global Dialogue in IR.” *Millennium-Journal of International Studies* 39, no. 3 (2011): 639–647.

Inayatullah, N., & Blaney, D. L. (2004). *International relations and the problem of difference*. New York: Routledge.

Kayaoglu, T. (2010). Westphalian Eurocentrism in international relations theory. *International Studies Review*, 12(2), 193–217.

Runciman, David, Talking Politics: [History of Ideas podcast on Carl Schmitt](#).

Shani, G. (2007). “Provincializing” critical theory: Islam, Sikhism and international relations theory. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 20(3), 417–433.

Shani, G. (2008). Toward a post-Western IR: The Umma, Khalsa Panth, and critical international relations theory. *International Studies Review*, 10(4), 722–734.

Tansel CB. Deafening silence? Marxism, international historical sociology and the spectre of Eurocentrism. *European Journal of International Relations*. 2015;21(1):76-100.

## Week 5: Institutions and classrooms

Decolonising politics and IR is about more than the theories we use, what we study and the methods deemed robust and legitimate. An important area of contention within decolonising movements is around the power dynamics embedded within the institutions, spaces and discussions through which disciplinary activity takes place.

This week includes a series of readings in relation to Rhodes Must Fall in the UK, as a way into debating the nature, importance and issues at stake in decolonising the classroom and the academic institutions. They cover decolonisation of curriculum, classrooms, and universities/institutions.

Key questions to consider around the core readings:

- What are the problems and how do they manifest in the academic institution and classroom?
- What would a decolonised classroom look like? What is required? What is possible?
- Are there any direct implications that we can take up for how this seminar is structured?

### Core Readings

**\*\*Freire, P 2003. Pedagogy of the oppressed. New York, NY: Continuum.**

**\*\* Decolonising International Relations – some Pedagogical Reflections . (2018).**

<https://thedisorderofthings.com/2018/03/04/decolonising-international-relations-some-pedagogical-reflections/#more-16822>

**\*\*Sabaratnam, Meera (2015) 'Staging a Battle, Losing the Wars? International Studies, 'Science' and the Neoliberalisation of the University.' *Millennium - Journal of International Studies*, 43 (3). pp. 975-979.**

**\*\* Chigudu, Simukai. (2020) Rhodes Must Fall in Oxford: a critical testimony, *Critical African Studies*, 12:3, 302-312, DOI: [10.1080/21681392.2020.1788401](https://doi.org/10.1080/21681392.2020.1788401)**

### Further Reading

#### *Curriculum and pedagogy*

Choat, S. Decolonising the political theory curriculum. Politics. October 2020.  
doi:10.1177/0263395720957543

hooks, bell (1994) 'Theory as Liberatory Practice' in Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom (New York: Routledge), pp. 59-75.

Langdon, Jonathan (2013) Decolonising development studies: reflections on critical pedagogies in action, *Canadian Journal of Development Studies / Revue canadienne d'études du développement*, 34:3, 384-399

Zembylas, Michalinos. Decolonial possibilities in South African higher education: Reconfiguring humanising pedagogies as/with decolonising pedagogies. *South African Journal of Education*, Volume 38, Number 4, November 2018 1

#### *Institutions*

Hare, Nathan. "A Conceptual Proposal for a Department of Black Studies". In *Shut it Down! A College in Crisis*. Washington D.C: U.S. Government Printing Office (1969)  
<https://archive.org/download/shutitdowncolleg00orririch/shutitdowncolleg00orririch.pdf> ·

Mngxitama, Andile. "Is a Decolonised University Possible in a Colonial Society?", in O. Rutazibwa & R. Shilliam (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Postcolonial Politics* (Routledge, 2018) \*

Routley, L. (2016). Teaching Africa, presenting, representing and the importance of who is in the classroom. *Politics*, 36(4), 482–494.

Said, Edward. "On the University / ل ج م ة " *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, 25 (2005) ·

### ***Rhodes must fall***

Athinangamso Nkopo, Tadiwa Madenga & Roseanne Chantiluke, "Skin Deep: The Black Women of Rhodes Must Fall in Oxford", in RMF Oxford (eds.), *Rhodes Must Fall* (Zed Books, 2018) \*

<https://www.qeh.ox.ac.uk/content/rhodes-must-fall-dignity-honour-values> and then Simukai Chigudu the following week

Mary Beard, "Cecil Rhodes and Oriel College, Oxford." *The Times Literary Supplement*. A Don's Life (blog). December 20, 2015. <https://www.the-tls.co.uk/cecil-rhodes-and-oriel-collegeoxford/>

Rahul Rao, "On Statues (III)." *The Disorder Of Things* (blog). August 23, 2017.  
<https://thedisorderofthings.com/2017/08/23/on-statues-iii/>.

Will Hutton, "Cecil Rhodes Was a Racist, But You Can't Readily Expunge Him From History." *The Guardian*, December 20, 2015.

### ***Other contemporary resources***

Long read on debates over decolonising minds and curricula:

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/feb/19/soas-philosophy-decolonise-our-minds-enlightenment-white-european-kenan-malik> and

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2019/jan/30/students-want-their-curriculums-decolonised-are-universities-listening>

Debates at Cambridge and media representation: *Daily Telegraph* Admits 'Decolonise' Cambridge Curriculum Story Was Wrong As Student Lola Olufemi Condemns Newspaper.

[https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/telegraph-lola-olufemi\\_uk\\_59f1fe0fe4b077d8dfc7eaf9](https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/telegraph-lola-olufemi_uk_59f1fe0fe4b077d8dfc7eaf9)

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/may/07/cambridge-university-britain-slavery>

Resources on decolonising SOAS: <https://blogs.soas.ac.uk/decolonisingsoas/>

## Week 6: Methods and sources

How do we determine what are legitimate sources in IR and Politics, and methods for making sense of them? Decolonising agendas raise questions about knowledge production: what is considered legitimate, and who decides on what basis?

The readings this week explore in detail how we might 'read' different sources as forms of knowledge. For core readings this week, please read Chowdhry on contrapuntal reading, plus one of the fiction or nonfiction pieces detailed at the end, where authors combine in various ways personal experience, fiction and official historical narratives (e.g. Achibe, wa Thiongo, Anzaldúa, Achebe). If there are other authors that you would prefer, please let me know the week before and we can expand this week's reading options.

Key questions to consider around the core readings:

- What different insights come through different forms of presentation and narration?
- Can different sources be incorporated into existing institutions and norms of scholarly rigour? How? Is anything lost?

### Core Readings

**\*\*Chowdhry, G (2007). Edward Said and contrapuntal reading: Implications for critical interventions in international relations. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 36(1): 101–116.**

*Plus one of the following (or another source – biographical, novel, audio-visual, etc - of your preference)*

**Achebe, Chinwe. 1958. *Things fall apart*.**

**Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. *Americanah: A Novel*. First edition. ed. new york: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013.**

**Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Light in the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*. Durham and london: Duke university press, 2015.**

**Muppidi, Himadeep. *Politics in Emotion: The Song of Telangana*. Abigdon: Routledge, 2014. Introduction and Chapter 1**

**Thiong'o, Ngugi wa. Various. Possible choices include: *In the name of the mother: Reflections on writers and empire*; *Penpoints, Gunpoints, and Dreams: Towards a Critical Theory of the Arts and the State in Africa*; *A Grain of Wheat*. See: <https://ngugiwathiongo.com/books/>**

### Further Reading

Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. The danger of a single story, TED Talk

Cox, R. W. (1983). Gramsci, hegemony and international relations: An essay in method. *Millennium*, 12(2), 162–177.

Grayson Kyle, Matt Davies and Simon Philpott, (2009), "Pop Goes IR? Researching the Popular Culture- World Politics Continuum", *Politics*, 29(3), 155-163

Penttinen, Elina, *Joy and International Relations: A New Methodology*, (Routledge, 2013.)

- Rosenow, Doerthe (2019) Decolonising the Decolonisers? Of Ontological Encounters in the GMO Controversy and Beyond, *Global Society*, 33:1, 82-99, DOI: 10.1080/13600826.2018.1558181
- Schoon, Alette, Hayes Mawindi Mabweazara, Tanja Bosch & Harry Dugmore (2020) Decolonising Digital Media Research Methods: Positioning African Digital Experiences as Epistemic Sites of Knowledge Production, *African Journalism Studies*, 41:4, 1-15, DOI: [10.1080/23743670.2020.1865645](https://doi.org/10.1080/23743670.2020.1865645)
- Shahi, D., & Ascione, G. (2015) Rethinking the absence of post-Western international relations theory in India: “Advaitic monism” as an alternative epistemological resource. *European Journal of International Relations*, 22(2), 313–334.
- Teer-Tomaselli, Ruth.2018.“The Four-Leafed Clover: Political Economy as a Method of Analysis”. In *The Palgrave Handbook of Media and Communication Research in Africa*, edited by Bruce Mutsvairo, 131–152. Cham, Switzerland: Springer
- Walter, Maggie & Michele Suina (2019) Indigenous data, indigenous methodologies and indigenous data sovereignty, *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 22:3, 233-243.



## Week 7a: Feminist IR

This seminar considers the intersection of feminist IR and decolonial IR. The core readings highlight some overviews of how feminist approaches to challenging IR and Politics (mainly IR). Feminist approaches have played key roles in unpacking hidden biases and power dynamics in theory and method in IR and politics. Yet, their intersection with decolonial agendas – particularly how they intersect with race and racism isn't necessarily so straightforward.

The Core Readings focus on some overview articles, but if you are interested in this topic I strongly suggest you combine this with one of the longer writings by a feminist IR scholar to reflect on how they approached their work, and how it differs from other scholarship that you have covered. (e.g. Adzaldúa, Davis, Oyewumi).

Key questions to consider around the core readings:

- What forms of power are highlighted and addressed in feminist IR approaches?
- How do different forms of subjugation/subjectification intersect?
- Is this a decolonial project? When are (or not) feminist approaches decolonial?

---

### Core Readings

**\*\*Chowdhry, G, Ling, LHM (2010) Race(ing) International Relations: A critical overview of postcolonial feminism in International Relations. In: Denmark, R (ed.) The International Studies Encyclopedia, International Studies Association. Available at: [http://www.isacompendium.com/subscriber/uid=5662/tocnode?id=g9781444336597\\_yr2013\\_chunk\\_g978144433659717\\_ss1-2](http://www.isacompendium.com/subscriber/uid=5662/tocnode?id=g9781444336597_yr2013_chunk_g978144433659717_ss1-2)**

**\*\*Lugones, María. "Toward a Decolonial Feminism." *Hypatia*, vol. 25, no. 4, 2010, pp. 742–759.**

**\*\*Zalewski, Marysia (1998) "Where is Woman in International Relations: 'To Return as Woman and Be Heard'," *Millennium*, 27(4), pp. 847-867.**

---

### Further Reading

Agathangelou, AM (2017) From the colonial to feminist IR: Feminist IR studies, the wider FSS/GPE research agenda, and the questions of value, valuation, security, and violence. *Politics and Gender* 13(4): 739–746.

Anzaldúa, Gloria, ed., *Making Face, Making Soul/Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Women of Color*. San Francisco: Aunt lute Foundation, 1990.

Chisholm, A, Stachowitsch, S (2017) (Re)Integrating feminist security studies and feminist global political economy: Continuing the conversation. *Politics & Gender* 13(4): 710–715.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé. (1995) Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color, in Kimberlé Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, and Kendall Thomas (eds) *Critical Race Theory*. New York: The New Press. ??

Davis, Angela Y. *Women, race, & class*. London: Vintage, 2011. Introduction.

Enloe, C., Lacey, A., & Gregory, T. (2016). Twenty-five years of Bananas, Beaches and Bases: A conversation with Cynthia Enloe. *Journal of Sociology*, 52(3), 537-550.

Enloe, Cynthia. *Bananas, beaches and bases: Making feminist sense of international politics*. University of California Press, 2014 (*earlier work on feminism and IR*)

- Harman, S (2018) Making the invisible visible in International Relations: Film, co-produced research and transnational feminism. *European Journal of International Relations* 24(4): 791–813.
- Lugones Maria. (2016) The Coloniality of Gender. In: Harcourt W. (eds) *The Palgrave Handbook of Gender and Development*. Palgrave Macmillan, London
- Martin de Almagro M, Ryan C. Subverting economic empowerment: Towards a postcolonial-feminist framework on gender (in)securities in post-war settings. *European Journal of International Relations*. 2019;25(4):1059-1079. ??
- Motta, Sara C (2016) 'Decolonising Critique: From Prophetic Negation to Prefigurative Affirmation', *Social Sciences for an 'Other' Politics: Women Theorising without Parachutes*, Palgrave Macmillan, London/New York 33-48 (*on race and feminism*)
- Oyewumi, Oyeronke. 1997. *The invention of women: Making African sense of Western discourses*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press
- Tickner, J. A. (2005). Gendering a discipline: Some feminist methodological contributions to international relations. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 30(4), 2173-2188.
- Weber, Cynthia, 'Why Is There No Queer IR Theory?' *European Journal of International Relations*, March 2015 vol. 21 no. 1 27-51. (*on sexuality and gender in IR specifically*)
- Weber, Cynthia. Queer Intellectual Curiosity as International Relations Method: Developing Queer International Relations Theoretical and Methodological Frameworks , *International Studies Quarterly*, Volume 60, Issue 1, March 2016, Pages 11–23, <https://doi.org/10.1111/isqu.12212>
- Weber, Cynthia. *Queer International Relations*. oxford: oxford university press, 2016.

## Week 7b: Futures of IR and Politics: Climate change and a decolonial agenda

The final topic covered considers the future of IR, with attention to the climate crisis. The suggested core readings provide three perspectives on IR in the context of climate change.

Key questions to consider around the core readings:

- What do the readings focus on around the future of IR and Politics in the context of a changing climate?
- Can we bring discussions from previous weeks to explore the context of climate change?

General questions for the final seminar:

- What would a decolonial future look like?
- Where might we effectively begin in order to imagine a future IR and political studies? Can there be 'one' discipline?

---

### Core Readings

**\*\*Burke, Andrew et al. (2016) 'Planet Politics: A Manifesto from the End of IR,' Millennium: Journal of International Studies, 44 issue: 3, page(s): 499-523.**

**\*\*Darlene Miller & Rebecca Pointer (2019) Decolonising South African Universities: Challenging the Anthropocene and Re-Centring Indigeneity, South African Review of Sociology, 50:3-4, 22-41.**

**\*\*Potter E, Miller F, Lövbrand E, et al. A manifesto for shadow places: Re-imagining and co-producing connections for justice in an era of climate change. Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space. December 2020. doi:10.1177/2514848620977022**

---

### Further Reading

Acharya, Amitav and Barry Buzan. Conclusion: On the possibility of a non-Western IR theory in Asia

Asiyanbi, Adeniyi. Decolonising the environment: race, rationalities and crises, 7 August 2019.

<http://siid.group.shef.ac.uk/blog/decolonising-the-environment-race-rationalities-and-crises/>

Chakrabarty, Dipesh. 'Climate and Capital', Critical Inquiry 41, No. 1 (2014): 1-23.

Chimni, B. S. (2006). Retrieving "other" visions of the future: Sri Aurobindo and the ideal of human unity. In B. Gruffydd Jones (Ed.), *Decolonizing international relations* (pp. 197–217). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Fey M, Poppe AE, Rauch C. The nuclear taboo, Battlestar Galactica, and the real world: Illustrations from a science-fiction universe. *Security Dialogue*. 2016;47(4):348-365.

Ghosh, Amitav. *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (University of Chicago Press, 2016).

Ling, L.H.M. (2014) *The Dao of World Politics: towards a post-Westphalian, worldlist international relations*, London: Routledge, Chapters 1-4, pp 10-70.

Oppenheimer M.F. (2021) *The Turbulent Future of International Relations*. In: Ankersen C., Sidhu W.P.S. (eds) *The Future of Global Affairs*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.