

Alternative proposal for PEI Summer Institute, May 2019
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Postcolonialism and Political Economy of the Middle East

How do we read “postcolonialism” for political economy of the Middle East? Like neoliberalism, postcolonialism means many things to many people in many different ways. Buried in these concepts are multiple trajectories of thought that, when untangled, offer signposts for future research. In this session, we will offer a roadmap for thinking through dilemmas for a “postcolonial political economy of the Middle East” 40 years since the publication of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* and writings of Guha and Spivak in what became “subaltern studies.”

This seminar is experimental and ridiculously ambitious, pulled together in an effort to speak to a shared set of concerns amongst projects submitted by participants. Since I don’t know you, I don’t know what will be obvious and what will be new. We will find out together in this *slightly* condensed version of a semester long class I taught at Princeton in Spring 2019 called “Postcolonialism without Colonies: Marx, Subaltern Studies, and Theory from the Levant.” Together, we will discuss the pitfalls and potentials of “postcolonialism” as a rubric for thinking *from* regions of the former Ottoman Empire as a locus for theory making, rather as a region *onto* which theories will be applied.

We will begin with a brief revisit to classic texts that most or all of you will have read (Marx, Said, Guha, Spivak). Please review as you see fit. We will focus, then, on the critiques of subaltern studies and Orientalism by those most closely identified with a “political economy” (aka Marxist or materialist) perspective and then on issues left out by the “political economy” critique. We will then move to discussions of sovereignty (as one of the key issues implicitly (under)theorized in discussions of colonialism and postcolonialism) and alternative approaches to sovereignty from scholarship in “comparative empires.” Finally, we will discuss a few texts taking up, in different ways, the question of “postcolonialism” and the Ottoman Empire.

Since this is too much material to read for one seminar, please focus on what is most helpful for you. The presentation should present the line of thought in a way that makes it unnecessary to have read everything.

I. Marx’s Capital: Volume I, Penguin Edition. (contact instructor for page assignment for you)

Chapter 1: “The Commodity” [*assuming you all know it: maybe review section on expanded reproduction
Chapter 31, “The Genesis of the Industrial Capitalist”

II. Early statements of “subaltern studies”

Ranjit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, eds., *Selected Subaltern Studies*. Oxford University Press, 1988.
Preface by Edward Said,
Introduction, Spivak, pp. 3-33.

Part I, Methodology, Guha, pp. 35-88.

III. Edward Said's Orientalism and the Critique by Aijaz Ahmed

*Aijaz Ahmad, "Orientalism and After: Ambivalence and Cosmopolitan Location in the Work of Edward Said," in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 27, No. 30 (Jul. 25, 1992), pp. 98-116. https://www.jstor.org/stable/4398691?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents

[note this is the original publication of Ahmad's critique. You can read whatever version you have in later collections, although it is also informative to read it in the original version]

IV. Sovereignty and the Question of Colonialism(s)

Dieter Grimm, *Sovereignty: The Origin and Future of a Political and Legal Concept*, (Columbia University Press, 2015).

Anthony Pagden, *The Burdens of Empire: 1539 to the Present*. Cambridge University Press, 2015.
Introduction

Antony Anghie, "Colonialism and the birth of international institutes: the Mandate System of the League of Nations," in *Imperialism, Sovereignty, and the Making of International Law*, Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Lauren Benton. 2010. *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400-1900*. Cambridge University Press.

Chapter 1, Anomalies of Empire, pp. 1-39

*Chapter 2, Treacherous Places, Atlantic Riverine Regions and the Law of Treason," pp. 40-103. (skim)

Chapter 5, Landlocked, pp. 222-278.

V. Postcolonialism in/of/from The Ottoman Empire?

Özgür Türesay. "The Ottoman Empire Seen through the Lens of Postcolonial Studies: A Recent Historiographical Turn." *Revue d'histoire moderne contemporaine*. 2013/2 (No. 60- 2). https://www.cairn-int.info/article-E_RHMC_602_0127--the-ottoman-empire-seen-through-the-lens.htm

Selim Deringil. "They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery" The Late Ottoman Empire and the Post-Colonial Debate." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. Vol. 45, No. 2 (Apr. 2003), pp. 311-342.

Zeynep Gülsah Çapan and Ayse Zarakol. "Postcolonial colonialism? The Case of Turkey," in Epstein, Charlotte (ed.) *Norming the World: Postcolonial Critiques of the Concept of 'Norms' in International Relations*. London and New York: Routledge. <http://aysezarakol.weebly.com/uploads/4/3/9/0/43905477/capan-zarakol-postcolonial-pre-proofs.pdf>

Fatma Müge Göçek. 2013. "Parameters of a Postcolonial Sociology of the Ottoman Empire, in Julian Go (ed.) *Decentering Social Theory* (Political Power and Social Theory, Volume 25). Emerald Group Publishing Limited, pp. 73-104.