The advent of 20th C. decolonization challenged the way in which world history had been conceived for four centuries, as centered upon the tiny landmass of Western Europe, rather than say, as plural and polycentric. This course is interested in exploring the place of visual media in propagating colonial and postcolonial agenda. Hence it seeks to identify and understand some of the pictorial practices, imagemaking technologies, and visual subjectivities that modern empires have used among “colonizers” and the “colonized.” We will examine the significance of the visual as a factor in practices and concepts of decolonization, inquiring into the ways the visual gets separated or remains within an embodied sensorium, as anticolonial politics grows and mass media expand alongside. South Asia, as the most populous concentration of electoral democracies, will offer a series of historical reference points for the comparative theoretical aims of this class.

Correspondingly, we consider the transformation of these through their entanglement in empire building, nationalist deployments, post-colonial contestations, and transnational globalization. Even while we track the imbricated histories of the visual and the (post)colonial, we want to ask what is specifically “imperial” about the imagemaking technologies and practices that we encounter.

The former view made it difficult to understand how the majority of the world's population mattered to history at all. With the onset of decolonization after the end of World War I, the world began to be seen, first through the lens of the nation, and secondly, as an extensive set of interconnections, where seemingly remote events could have major effects across countries. This course will examine postcolonial visual culture from its emergence as a colonial field of perception, in state surveillance practices, in anticolonial politics and in indigenous culture more generally, and trace some of the lines of force reshaping it over time, that both expressed and complicated a politics of decolonization, through chromolithography, cinema, and television into the postcolonial era.

Week One
Battle of Algiers (dir. Gillo Pontecorvo)
David Prochaska, That Was Then, This Is Now: The Battle of Algiers and After, Radical History Review, Issue 85 (winter 2003): 133–49.

Week 2
Battle of Algiers contd.
Week 3

Frantz Fanon – Wretched of the Earth (pp.7-106; 148-206)

Week Four
Ariella Azoulay, Civil Imagination: A Political Ontology of Photography. Tr. Louis Bethlehem. (pp1-124)

Week Five
Partha Chatterjee, Lineages of Political Society: Studies in Postcolonial Democracy (Preface, Sections II and III)

Week Six
Luise White, Speaking with Vampires: Rumor and History in Colonial Africa (pp. 3-88).

Week Seven
WJT Mitchell. Seeing Through Race (pp. 1-90).

Week Eight
Faisal Devji, The Impossible Indian: Gandhi and the temptation of violence (pp. 1-92; 185-191). 
Rachel Dwyer, “Gandhi on Film,” Public Culture.

Week Nine
Eyal Weizman, The Hollow Land: Israel’s Architecture of Occupation

Week Ten
Eyal Weizman contd. Screening tba.

Week Eleven
Ifikar Dadi, Modernism and the Art of Muslim South Asia

Week Twelve
Visualizing Democracy in South Asia: Christopher Pinney; Rajagopal; Thomas Hansen.

Weeks 13-14
Paper presentations.