Fall 2008 Graduate Seminar  
Decolonization and its Aftermath: Globalization from Below  
E58.2211-001 and G41.2900-002  
T 0330PM  0530PM  
14UP 1FL (14 University Place, 1st floor)

Course Instructors:  
Arvind Rajagopal (Media, Culture and Communication)  
Robert J.C. Young (English and Comparative Literature)

The advent of 20\textsuperscript{th} 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. 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 combine a survey of select decolonization movements with analyses of the transformations from anticolonial nationalism through postcolonial developmentalism to the contemporary new world order. The course will consider decolonization in two senses: as the historical achievement of independence in former colonies, and, as a communicational concept illuminating socio-political change. Therefore, in addition to historical and theoretical literature, this course will draw on literature, cinema and other media sources to explore the significance of decolonization in the 20\textsuperscript{th} C and beyond.

The aftermath of the Cold War and the failure of non-alignment in the global South has been marked by the rise of religious and market fundamentalism as well as the emergence of a New World Order. It is increasingly obvious that decolonization has not brought all the freedoms it promised. Rather, it has enabled a deeper infusion of metropolitan technologies of governance, that would have been inhibited if erstwhile colonial structures had remained in place. Nevertheless, there are numerous unforeseen outcomes of the partial but increasing deinstitutionalization of regulatory systems. These are conventionally referred to in terms of democratization, consumer choice and
the new mobility of goods and persons. At the same time, questions of politics begin to move beyond the purview of the state, and pose problems that are also opportunities for democratization.

This course will address a) the persistent legacies of colonization, as well as b) the political status of decolonization, as an initiative that inaugurates new futures, while remaining agnostic about its material outcomes. We will consider decolonization in the historical context of postcolonial development as well as retrospectively, in terms of the new world order, the clash of fundamentalisms, and rise of political violence that we witness today.

Course Requirements
Participants will be required to participate actively in class discussions and make class presentations on the readings. They will write a 5 page midterm research paper, and a final research paper of 13-15 pages that can be a development of the midterm paper. The class size will have no more than 25 students.

Grade Breakdown:
- Class Participation and class presentations: 25%
- Midterm research paper: 25%
- Final research paper: 50%

What follows is a thematic outline for the course, with key and secondary readings under each heading.

PART 1: Decolonization: Prelude and Advent
Themes we will consider in the first part of the course include: the moral and political imagination of decolonization; writings of postcolonial nationalist leaders and the projects of nation-building and citizen-formation that these leaders undertook, and the development of postcolonial infrastructure.

The term 'decolonization' covers a range of very different phenomena, from peaceful transfers of power to violent revolutions; as such there can be no simple account of it. The term refers to the shift of legal and political sovereignty from former imperial powers to their erstwhile colonial subjects. But it also refers to a movement for moral and political justice, a declaration of the solidarity of the colonized, and a liberatory ideology that embraced even countries that were not formally colonized, such as China and Iran.
From the Bandung Conference of Non-Aligned Countries in 1955 to Pan-Africanism and beyond, there arose a new imagination of personhood and of non-western development. It was led by an alliance of political leaders and educated intelligentsia arguing for an alternative model of development that avoided taking sides with either the capitalist or the socialist superpower. Instead they pursued national development through a cosmopolitan confederation that acknowledged a shared experience of colonial oppression, and strove for emancipation from this history.

1. Introduction and Historical Background: Sept 2

Vladimir Lenin, ‘Report on the National and Colonial Question’ (1920)  
http://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/index.htm

Congress of Peoples of the East, Baku, September 1920  
http://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/index.htm

Mao Zedong, Report on An Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan (1927)  
http://www.etext.org/Politics/MIM/classics/mao/sw1/mswv1_2.html

‘On Contradiction’ (1937)  
http://www.etext.org/Politics/MIM/classics/mao/sw1/mswv1_17.html


Recommended Film to be viewed: Battle of Algiers (dir. Gillo Pontecorvo, 1966)

Recommended Reading:  


Special Issue on *Battle of Algiers, Interventions 9:3* (2007)

2. The ‘Third World’, Bandung and What Lay Behind It (1 week), Sept 9

Report of the Bandung Conference (extracts)


**Recommended Reading**


Robert J.C. Young, ‘From Bandung to the Tricontinental’, *historein / ἱστορεῖν*, annual publication of the Cultural and Intellectual History Society, Athens, Greece, 5 (2005), 11-21

3. Nationalists and Their Visions of Decolonization  Sept 16, 23

**September 16:**


**September 23:**


**PART 2: Postcolonial Development and the Makings of a New World Order**

The second part of the course considers how the influence of anticolonial mobilization mutated in the postcolonial period, as the utopian hopes faded and a new world order began to take shape with the end of the Cold War; the rise of political and religious violence; the emergence of a (contested) global neoliberal consensus, and of debates over secular selfhood and religious fundamentalism.
Decades after the achievement of decolonization, it continues to be invoked as a utopian moment in non-western politics, and requires to be adequately understood, even if contemporary events lead us to question the nostalgia surrounding decolonization. In retrospect, it is clear that postcolonial development aimed to make official forms of nationalism dominant even as contestation from below grew. The historiography of decolonization has also been dominated by scholars sympathetic to top-down perspectives generated by postcolonial leaders. Unwittingly, Cold War concerns of isolating zones of East-West influence and viewing the superpower conflict as the overarching frame for understanding global affairs has continued to influence scholarship well past the end of the Cold War.

Against this tendency, recent postcolonial scholarship has emphasized the extent to which colonialism was not only a matter of sovereignty, but as well, of institutions and modes of knowledge that endured past independence, even as nationalists tried to undo colonialism's effects. We should note here some of internal contradictions new nations had to work through. The raison d'être of colonial governance was the racial and cultural incapacity of the colonized to govern themselves. Colonial rulers regarded native conditions as uncivilized and as requiring improvement, while forbidding citizenship and the attendant rights of self-improvement to colonial subjects. Anticolonial movements responded by conceiving of an alternative community, located in the "national state" (as Partha Chatterjee has termed it) that was meant to uplift the community it stood for. The form of representation was electoral democracy, but the means of upliftment was often through organizations and systems of understanding derived from colonial experience. Decolonization thus reproduced a colonial logic at its center, even as it moved past colonialism.


Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard eds. *International Development and*


October 7:


Recommended Reading


October 14 – Columbus Day. No class.

MIDTERM RESEARCH PAPER DUE OCTOBER 21

5. The Formation of National Subjects (2 weeks): Oct 21, 28
October 21:


October 28:


**Recommended Reading**


6. Culture and Everyday Life (1 week)

November 4:


Recommended Film: Xala (dir. Ousmane Sembene, 1975).

**Recommended Reading**

Jyotirindra Das Gupta, *Language Conflict and National Development: Group Politics and National Language Policy in India* (Center for South and Southeast Asia Studies, UC Berkeley) Berkeley: U. Of California Press,


7. Religious Nationalism and Postcolonial Development (1 week): Nov 11


Olivier Roy, *The Politics of Chaos in the Middle East or Globalised Islam (Extract)*


Film: Leila (dir. Dariush Mehrjui, 1996)

**Recommended Reading**


Charles Hirschkind, “Islam, Nationalism and Audition,” and “The Ethics of


8. Popular Violence and State Complicity (1 week), Nov 18


**Recommended Reading**

Philip Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families: Stories from Rwanda*. New York: Picador, 1999


9. New World Order (1 week), Nov 25

David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005

**Recommended Reading**


Weeks 14-15

Class Discussion; Review.