SOCIOLOGY 580

DECOLONIZING ANTHROPOCENE IMAGINARIES

colonialism - postcolonialism - globalization

Dr. Sourayan Mookerjea       FALL 2016

Tuesdays 14:00PM -16:50PM Room: TBA

SOC580 is a graduate seminar that gives students the opportunity to encounter and engage with advanced social scientific research in progress and hone their competences in developing their own original research problematic.

Broadly, this course is located at the intersections of postcolonial social/cultural theory and cultural studies. In the seminar this semester, we develop a decolonizing critique of contemporary discourses and imaginaries of the “anthropocene” from the standpoints of subaltern multitudes. The intensification of environmental crises, especially the urgencies of climate change, have provoked new accounts of planetary and geological history as well as new aesthetic and theoretical paradigms ranging from the discourses of the anthropocene, of the new materialism, of the environmental humanities, of green modernization theory and of the circular economy. While these scientific, theoretical, aesthetic and techno-administrative developments often generate provocative insights regarding environmental degradation, more often than not they fail to understand the now longstanding convergence of social and environmental crises. Indeed, as with much economic and even cultural theory, the specificity of social reproduction itself is rendered invisible.

As such, they often result in perspectives that are not only naive, simplistic and phantasmatic but also elitist, colonialist, sexist, racist. Moreover, such imaginaries are fertile media for elite and corporate class strategies of hegemonizing crises. As COP 21 dramatically revealed, an array of corporate interests have awoken to the need to lead what Gramsci theorized as a passive
revolution in order to manage crises and consolidate their power through the new order of things.

Drawing on decolonizing, social reproduction feminist, cultural studies and world system theoretical historical perspectives, this course examines how the globalization of the capitalist mode of social reproduction has given rise to a series of world systemic social crises: social inequality, hunger, conflict, oppression, debt peonage, unemployment, a myriad threats to human health all amidst unprecedented concentrations of wealth and power among transnationally linked social elites. On the other hand, drawing on a world ecology perspective, the course examines the global-local ecological degradations and dangers characteristic of our era. We examine the reasons for thinking that there is a systemic relationship between global social crises and global ecological crises of various kinds and set out to develop a theoretical framework able to comprehend this systemic convergence and generate guiding ideas for social movement engagement with these global crises. We explore the colonialist legacies shaping the convergence of social and ecological crises as well as elite and subaltern responses to them.

Some of the key concepts and ideas we explore in depth include crisis, the commons, enclosures, ecology, environment, contradiction, accumulation, labour, reproduction, labour, capital, praxes, decolonizing sociology, subalternization, reification and dialectical skepticism. Some of the major crises we examine include those of war, refugees, hunger, poverty, debt, food, agriculture, deforestation, desertification, water scarcity, unemployment, urban degradation, toxic bodies, ocean death and especially carbon based energy dependence and climate change.
COURSE READINGS


4. Journal articles available via e-journals at Rutherford Library

5. Readings chosen by student for bibliography and paper/project.

6. Course resources available on the course e-class website

See eclass website for bibliography.

Evaluation of Course Work

Work & Relative Weight

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Work</th>
<th>Percent Relative Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annotated research bibliography</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminar presentation</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminar participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final term paper or intermedia research creation project prospectus</td>
<td>50%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Note that in the evaluation scheme presented above, numerical figures represent percent relative values of each piece of course work; these figures are NOT marks.

_Evaluation & Grading_

As you know, the University of Alberta, Faculty of Arts uses a letter grade system. Over the semester I will evaluate your work by providing you verbal feedback and letter grades for submitted written work, so you have a clear idea of the level of your performance in the course. After I have evaluated all of your course work, including your final paper or project prospectus, I will submit a letter grade from the scale described below based on my judgement of your overall level of performance considered in itself and compared with the work of other students past and present, using the relative weights of each requirement described above.

_Term Paper / Project Prospectus_

Please meet with me to discuss your term paper / intermedia project ideas and it is never too early to do so. The term paper/ project prospectus is due on December 6th, 2016. Approximately 20 pages double spaced with 1” margins all round. Staple hard copies on the upper left hand side with no other binding and keep a back up copy for yourself.

_Evaluation Criteria_

Regardless of your topic, I expect your term paper/ prospectus to be thoroughly researched, rigorously argued, engaging insightfully and substantially with course readings, lectures, and seminar discussions.

I consider “A” papers to be outstanding pieces of work which demonstrate an insightful and comprehensive understanding of the major issues discussed in the seminar and astutely mobilized to illuminate and interrogate the paper’s chosen substantive topic. I consider “A+” papers to be those rare papers that accomplish all of this and demonstrate significant originality in theorization, research and argument as well.
I consider “A-” papers to be excellent performances of study and scholarship which demonstrate solidly insightful understanding of the major issues discussed in the seminar aptly applied to a thoroughly researched and rigorously argued topic chosen.

I consider “B+” papers to be very strong carefully researched and argued papers that demonstrate some familiarity with some of the major issues addressed in the seminar.

I consider “B” papers to be very good papers that are thoroughly researched and coherently presented that tries to work through and connect with aspects of the seminar’s discussion.

I consider a “B-” paper to be a good paper demonstrating sufficient study of the “must read” literature for the topic chosen and argued with enough coherence to be adequate to receive a passing mark in the seminar.

Your final grade will therefore be determined by whether your work over the term can be characterized overall as either:

- A+ Original, exceptional and outstanding in all respects
- A Distinctly outstanding work
- A- Careful, thorough and insightful work
- B+ Excellent, insightful work in most respects
- B Very Good solid work
- B- Good work in most respects
- C+ Good work in some respects
- C Satisfactory work
- C- Satisfactory but significant flaws
- D+ Substantial incomprehension of course material
- D Minimal Pass
- F Fail
COURSE POLICIES

Late Work: To be fair, late course work will be penalized, if prior arrangements are not made.

Plagiarism and Fraud: Plagiarism, cheating and fraud (including misrepresentation of reasons for missed exams and assignments) will be considered a serious violation of academic responsibility and can result in expulsion from the university. (See the Calendar for details, in particular: www.ualberta.ca.secretariat/appeals.htm). I will strive to protect the integrity and value of your work from being undermined by cases of plagiarism. If you are unsure of how to appropriately cite the ideas, work, arguments of others in an academic context, please ask me for assistance.

Missed Term Work
If you miss the midterm or other course requirements due to illness, it is your responsibility to convince me reasonably that this is an excusable absence, and provide me with one of the following documents within two working days of the scheduled exam or course requirement:

For medical illnesses, students can present one of the following:

"University of Alberta Medical Statement" signed by a doctor
"Medical Declaration Form for Students" (for Faculty of Arts students)
"Statutory Declaration" (for students in Faculties other than Arts, to be obtained from home Faculty or the Office of the Registrar)

For other acceptable absences, provide documentation appropriate to the situation. For example:

For a death in the family - a copy of the death certificate
For a car accident - a copy of the accident report
For other serious afflictions - consult with Instructor or Department about appropriate documents

Registered?
Make sure you are correctly and accurately registered in the courses you are taking by checking beartracks. I am not given up-to-date student registration information until it is too late.

University Services for Students

"Students who require accommodations in this course due to a disability affecting mobility, vision, hearing, learning, or mental or physical health are advised to discuss their needs with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) located in 1-80 Students’ Union Building, 492-3381 (phone) or 492-7269 (TTY)."

Required Official University Policy Notices

1. Note the University’s policy on missed exams:

23.5.6 Absence from Exams (University Calendar §23.5.6)

"Excused absence for a missed exam is not automatic and is granted at the discretion of the instructor (in the case of term exams) or the student’s Faculty (in the case of final exams).

Instructors and Faculties are not required to grant excused absences for unacceptable reasons that include, but are not limited to personal events such as vacations, weddings, or travel arrangements. When a student is absent from a term or final exam without acceptable excuse, a final grade will be computed using a raw score of zero for the exam missed. Any student who applies for or obtains an excused absence by making false statements will be liable under the Code of Student Behaviour."

2. Re: Plagiarism, once more:

"The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the
University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour (online at www.governance.ualberta.ca) and avoid any behaviour which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.”

"Don't Do It” sheet at http://tinyurl.com/cheating-plagiarism

"Don't Cheat” sheet at www.governance.ualberta.ca/StudentAppeals/DontCheatsheet.aspx.

3. “Audio or video recording of lectures, labs, seminars or any other teaching environment by students is allowed only with the prior written consent of the instructor or as a part of an approved accommodation plan. Recorded material is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the content author(s).”

4. “Policy about course outlines can be found in §23.4(2) of the University Calendar.”