Course description

This seminar will examine two key concepts—“racial formation” and “coloniality of power”—as they are used to situate and analyze the politics of subaltern peoples in Latin America. First, we will develop a theoretical genealogy for the study of racial hierarchies and racism in Latin America, paying special attention to how certain concepts “travel” and resonate in their new locations while others do not. Is “racial formation” more aligned with Gramsci and “coloniality of power” with Foucault? Why has the concept of “coloniality of power” emerged as an epitomizing frame for understanding racial subordination in Latin America, while “racial formation” theory has prospered in the north, but only occasionally crossing the Rio Grande? The second objective is to trace the reverberations of these theoretical genealogies in our understanding of racial and ethnic identity as underlying principles for the enactment of oppositional politics. We will develop a framework for understanding identity politics, both generally and in Latin America, with a special emphasis on struggles for autonomy. Has “autonomy” (in a wide variety of guises) become the principal idiom in the politics of racially subordinated peoples? If so, what theoretical and political consequences follow?

Course texts

The following books will be required reading, and are on order at the Coop:

(Grandin 2004) *The Last Colonial Massacre. Latin America in the Cold War*  
(Blaser 2010) *Storytelling Globalization from the Chaco and Beyond.*  
(Asher 2009) *Black and green: Afro-Colombians, development, and nature in the Pacific lowlands.*  
(French 2009) *Legalizing Identities: Becoming Black or Indian in Brazil's Northeast*

Course requirements

All participants are required to: attend weekly seminar sessions; participate actively in seminar discussions; take responsibility for special preparations for two weeks over the course of the semester (details to be explained the first day); produce weekly “annotated bibliographies” in preparation for all but four sessions; write three analytical essays (5-7 pp. double spaced), each corresponding to one section of the seminar. Grades will be assigned according to the following: analytical essays 20% each for a total of 60%; presentations, notes and participation, 40%.
Outline of Weeks

1. Jan. 18—Introduction

Listen to: Keynote address to the VI Forum of Philosophy in Maracaibo, Venezuela, by Alvaro Garcia Linera, Vice President of Bolivia:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jkSRvfyfZp4
Read: Article on the TIPNIS affair:

The Turn to Identity Politics

2. Jan. 25—From Class to Cultural (Racial?) Politics

(de Lauretis 1990), pp. 115-150
(Guha 1988), pp. 45-88
(Hale 1997), pp. 567-90
(Hall 1996b), pp. 596-632
(West 1990), pp. 19-36

Optional / Supplementary
(Laclau 1977)
(Escobar 1992)

3. Feb. 1—Identity and Political Subjectivity: a Gramsci-Foucault Counterpoint

(Gramsci 1971), pp. 228-264; 322-343
(Hall 1996a), pp. 413-440
(Foucault 1983), pp. 208-226
(Foucault 2004), pp. 229-245
(Moore 2005), pp. pp. 1-29

Optional / Supplementary
(Simon 1991)
(McNay 1994)
(Wilderson 2003), pp. 225-240

4. Feb. 8—Unsettling Identities

(Mohanaty 2000), pp. 29-66
(Harvey 1993), pp. 41-66
(Brubaker and Cooper 2000), pp. 1-47
(Clifford 2000), pp. 94-113
(Hall 2000), pp. 209-241

Optional / Supplementary
(Moya 2002)
(Hall 1995), pp. 63-69
(Butler, Laclau, and Zizek 2000)

**Paper #1 Due: Monday, Feb. 13 at 5:00 p.m.**

**Interlude #1: Feb 15**
The Identities of “Occupy!” Politics
TBA

Racial Formation and the Coloniality of Power

5. Feb. 22—Legacy of the Cold War

(Grandin 2004) *The Last Colonial Massacre. Latin America in the Cold War*

Optional / Supplementary
(Torres-Rivas 1983), pp. 1-33
(Torres-Rivas 2011), pp. 42-72

6. Feb. 29—Coloniality of Power

(Quijano 2000), pp. 533-580
(Lugones 2010), pp. 369-390
(Mignolo 2011), pp. xi-76
(Escobar 2004), pp. 207-230
(Rivera Cusicanqui 2010), pp. 52-76

Optional / Supplementary
(Quijano 2007)
(Grosfoguel 2004)

7. Mar. 7—Racial Formation Theory

(Collins 2004), pp. 103-126
(Wiegman 1999), pp. 115-150
(Gordon 2007), pp. 93-97
(Wilderson 2010), pp. 1-53
(Omi and Winant 2001), pp. 123-145; 455-459
**Optional / Supplementary**
(Winant 2004)
(Combahee 1983)
(Mullings 2005)

8. Mar. 21—Locating race and racism in Latin America

(Bonilla-Silva 2002), pp. 3-16
(Goldberg 2009), pp. 199-244
(Smith 1997), pp. 483-509
(Vargas 2004), pp. 443-470
(Wade 2001), pp. 845-865.

**Optional / Supplementary**
(Harris 1964)
(Knight 1990)
(Hernandez Castillo 2008), pp. 75-113

**Paper #2 Due: Monday, March 26 at 5:00 p.m.**

**Interlude #2: March 28**

anarchist / communitarian / post-colonial alternatives

(Lotringer 2007), pp. v-vi, 8-21
(Holloway 2002), pp. 1-42, 140-215
(Esteva 2007), pp. 129-144
(de Sousa Santos 2010), pp. 25-112

**Race, Identity and Autonomy**

9. Apr. 4—Racial hierarchy and Maya Vindication in Guatemala

(Ajxup, Rogers, and Hurtado 2010), pp. 173-200
(Bastos 2010), pp. 317-55
(Gonzalez n.d.), pp. 1-27
(Hale 2006), pp. 137-166
(Smith 1995), pp. 723-249

10. Apr. 11—Race, Identity and Violence in Jamaica


11. Apr. 18—Indigenous subjectivities and “ontological” autonomy

(Blaser 2010) *Storytelling Globalization from the Chaco and Beyond.*
Without a unified concept of woman, or, minimally, a family resemblance among gender-related terms, it appears that feminist politics has lost the categorical basis of its own normative claims. What constitutes the “who,” the subject, for whom feminism seeks emancipation? If there is no subject, who is left to emancipate? …[T]he political critique of the subject questions whether making a conception of identity into the ground of politics, however internally complicated, prematurely forecloses the possible cultural articulations of the subject-position that a new politics might well generate.

(J. Butler 1990: 327)

Even up to the 1960s, identities were, in a sense clearly defined and unproblematic. One knew who was who, so to speak, and how he or she was defined as a member of a group. One also knew what to do and how to do it (Development or Revolution, depending on one’s perspective). But this is no longer true.

(A. Escobar 1992: 82)

I use ‘identity’ to refer to the meeting point, the point of suture, between on the one hand the discourses and practices which attempt to ‘interpellate’, speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be ‘spoken.’

(S. Hall 1996: 5)
Works Cited
Ajxup, Virginia, Oliver Rogers, and Juan Jose Hurtado
Asher, Kiran
Bastos, Santiago
Blaser, Mario
Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo
2002  We are all Americans!: the Latin Americanization of racial stratification in the USA.  Race and Society 4:3-16.
Brubaker, Rogers , and Frederick Cooper
Butler, Judith, Ernesto Laclau, and Slavoj Zizek
Clifford, James
Collins, Patricia Hill
Combahee, River Collective
de Lauretis, Teresa
de Sousa Santos, Boaventura
Escobar, Arturo
Esteva, Gustavo
Foucault, Michel
French, Jan Hoffman.
Goldberg, David Theo
Gonzalez, Ramón
n.d. From the “Indian Problem” to the “Youth Problem”: Anti-Indian racism and class prejudice in post-war Guatemala.


Harris, Marvin 1964 Patterns of Race in the Americas. New York: Walker.


Mignolo, Walter D.
Mohanty, Satya P.
Moore, Donald S.
Moya, Paula M. L.
Los Angeles
Mullings, Leith
Omi, Michael, and Howard Winant
Quijano, Anibal
Rivera Cusicanqui, Silvia
Simon, Roger
Smith, Carol A.
Thomas, Deborah A.
Torres-Rivas, Edelberto
Vargas, João
Wade, Peter
West, Cornell
Wiegman, Robyn
Wilderson, Frank
Winant, Howard