HIS 381/AFR 381/WGS 394: Subaltern Epistemologies

Toyin Falola

Thursday: 3.30-6:30 pm
Venue: GAR 1.122
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Course Description:

The graduate seminar focuses on subaltern epistemologies and evaluates the arguments and roles of subaltern theories in various disciplines through a global context. Course readings evaluate subaltern arguments and how they contribute to the knowledge of their respective regions and fields. The course readings transcend local histories and reflect broad theoretical ideas across the disciplines as manifest in different global cultures including literature, history, religion, politics, economics, gender, and identity. Students will be expected to critique the readings and engage in a lively discussion designed to advance their research. Students are expected to engage in vigorous debates, generate original critiques, and produce a conceptually strong paper that may become a part of a dissertation project.

Course Objectives:

The course has several objectives: (1) Students will acquire an in depth knowledge of subaltern theories and their importance to the development of various disciplines; (2) Students will learn, assess, and debate how subaltern epistemologies have been engaged in the existing literature; (3) Acquire knowledge on methods of applying subaltern theories to research; (4) Understand a variety of topics such as indigenous knowledge production, situated knowledge(s), community research methods, subaltern public spaces, queer epistemology, and many other approaches to and from various marginalities. (5) Complete a paper that evaluates a body of literature relevant to the student’s work in terms of subaltern epistemologies.

Class Format:

This course will be conducted in weekly seminars. As we only meet once a week, and our topics of discussion change every week, attendance is mandatory. Seminars will include extensive discussion and student presentations. Discussion will focus on the assigned readings and peer critiques of student projects.

Grade Breakdown: Research Option

- Class Participation: 30%
- Class Presentations: 20%
- Project (definition, draft, and final): 50%

Project Options (choose one of the following four):

1) Review of four books, which are not part of the class readings. [no less than 15 pages]
2) A 15-page essay based on student’s dissertation field using both primary and secondary sources.
3) A historiographical essay on cumulative analysis of texts on
   a) any of the themes covered in class.
   b) any theme of interest to the students. [no less than 15 pages]
4) A conceptual critique of the texts read in the class. [no less than 15 pages]

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

PART A: SUBALTERN CLUSTERS

Week 1: 18 January

Key Concepts: The Origin of Subaltern Studies

(**Understand structuralism and its impact)

Antonio Gramsci, Selections from Prison Notebooks, pp. 52-120.
——— “Chandra’s Death” in Subaltern Studies Vol. 5.

Week 2: 25 January

Reflections on the Development of the Field

GUEST LECTURERS: Dr Abimbola Adelakun with Abikal Borah

(**influences of Deconstruction and post-structuralism)


**Week 3: 1 February**

**Application**

(The relationship of subaltern studies and post-colonial theories)

**GUEST LECTURERS:** Dr Abimbola Adelakun with Abikal Borah


**Week 4: 8 February**

**Impact on Nationalist Historiography**


**Week 5: 15 February**

**Critiques of Subaltern Studies: The Marxist Onslaught**


Timothy Brennan, “Antonio Gramsci and Postcolonial Theory: “Southernism”,”


**PART B: NEW CURRENTS AND CURRENCIES**

**Week 6: 22 February**


**Week 7: 1 March**


**Week 8: 8 March**

**Vernacular Epistemologies and Organic Intellectuals**


**15 March:** Spring Break

**PART C: EMERGING FRONTIERS**

**Week 9: 22 March**

**Intersectionality: Race, Class, and Gender**

29 March: Conference Participation/Volunteering if willing.

Week 10: 5 April

Influences on Sexuality Studies

Guest Lecturer: Dr. Neville Hoad


Week 11: 12 April

Activists and Politics: Fela Anikulapo as A Case Study


PART D: NEW VOICES

Week 12: 19 April

Student Intervention: Students will in material from their respective fields of interest for class discussion.

Week 13: 26 April

Student Intervention: Students will provide materials from their respective fields of interest for class discussion.

Week 14: 3 May

Student Intervention: Students will provide materials from their respective fields of interest for class discussion.
APPENDIX

Seminar Participation:

A substantial component of your grade will be based on your active contribution to our weekly meetings. Showing up for class does not count for class participation. On a weekly basis you will be expected to do all the required readings and be prepared to present on the material. We will discuss the readings and assign students to present and lead the discussion. Presenters will send elaborate discussion points two days before class. Those who do not participate or miss classes or are habitually late will lose all 15 points.

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism:

You are expected to be familiar with and abide by the University's regulations. It is expected that you know the definition of plagiarism. You may not collaborate with any individuals on the writing of your research paper. You are responsible for being sure that others do not plagiarize your work. Research papers are to be composed independently.