

## **Introduction to Decolonial thinking and decolonising methodologies**

Seminar Sommersemester 2018

MA Medienkulturanalyse

Heinrich-Heine Universität Düsseldorf

*Wann: Mittwochs von 12:30 bis 14 Uhr*

*Wo: Raum 2303.01.63 (Z 46)*

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***Hinweis: diese Veranstaltung findet in Englischer Sprache statt! Aufgaben dürfen aber auf Deutsch geschrieben bzw. präsentiert werden.***

In this course we will attempt to re-frame our research apparatuses by looking beyond the canon of Eurocentric research methodologies in the humanities. The wider field of post- and de-colonial studies offers us an opportunity to understand the assets of research and proposes a re-historicising of them towards a non-colonial, non-eurocentric research standpoint. Hence throughout the semester we will revisit key authors on the deconstruction of colonial apparatuses and their influence on research methods, and will also explore key ideas and concepts in decolonising research. The course will be mostly focused on the concept of the “colonial matrix of power” – a framework developed mainly by Latin American decolonial theorists – but will expand and present students to different schools of thought within decolonial thinking from the Global South, as well as with propositions for research methods stemming from Indigenous thought. Offered as a provocative reflection on research methodologies in and for Cultural Studies, this will not provide students with new “research toolkits” or closed frameworks, but rather will encourage the development of a critical standpoint towards undertaking research in a European context within an increasingly decolonising world.

### **By the end of the semester you should:**

- be able to understand the political and cultural implications of the world seen as a colonial, constructed narrative;
- have a good notion of contemporary discourses in decolonial theories and key terminologies;
- critically analyse European/Eurocentric scholarship in and for Cultural Studies;
- critically engage with research lenses stemming from a decolonising standpoint;
- be able to exercise your first steps into “border thinking,” or thinking the world as/in relation.

### **Syllabus**

This course is designed to take 15 (fifteen) meetings, from April 11 to July 18. We meet every Wednesday from 12:30 to 14 at room 2303.01.63. The following is a rough plan of subjects I would like to tackle together with you over the semester; these are subject to (minor) changes, according to your own pace and interests.

Every Wednesday afternoon starting right after our first meeting on April 11, I will post on the Semesterapparat a short list of required and recommended readings for the upcoming week. You are required to engage with that material throughout the week, and send two to three questions pertaining the

reading material and its relationship with the theme of the upcoming class by **no later than Tuesday 16:00** to my e-mail\* (see above). I will then use these questions for guiding the discussion. These questions should also be part of your semester journal – see below for details on that.

*\*Please use the subject line “DT2018” and your last name on the e-mail, so that I can easily sort it on my inbox.*

## **Week 1, April 11 2018**

### *Class Introductions*

Brief discussion on pedagogical and analytical methods for this class; brief intro to decoloniality through the question: “what constitutes the human?” in different ontological and historical terms.

### *In-class discussion:*

- Dussel, E., 1993. Eurocentrism and Modernity (Introduction to the Frankfurt Lectures). *boundary 2* 20, 65–76.
- Weheliye, A.G., 2014. Introduction: Now in *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*. Duke University Press Books, Durham, pp.1–16
- Madley, B., 2005. From Africa to Auschwitz: How German South West Africa Incubated Ideas and Methods Adopted and Developed by the Nazis in Eastern Europe. *European History Quarterly* 35, 429–464.

### *Watching:*

- Ibeyi – Deathless [from the album *Ash*]  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yN8TUgkPnbU>
- JLin – Carbon 7 (161) [from the album *Black Origami*]  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cxPBqUh3kSU>

## **Week 2, April 18 2018**

### *An introduction to research lenses: feminist theories of science*

We will talk about the necessity of situating our gazes as the very starting point of any research endeavor; for this we will start from feminist scholarship that might not necessarily be placed within decolonial theories, but have nevertheless contributed to discursive shifts in the humanities.

### *Required readings:*

- Haraway, D., 1988. Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. *Feminist Studies* 14, 575–599.
- Ahmed, S., 2010. Orientations Matter, in: Coole, D.H., Frost, S. (Eds.), *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*. Duke University Press, pp. 234–258.

### *Recommended readings:*

- Nnaemeka, O., 2005. Bodies that Don’t Matter: Black Bodies and the European Gaze, in: Eggers, M., Kilomba, G., Pesche, P., Arndt, S. (Eds.), *Mythen, Masken Und Subjekte: Kritische Weisssenschaftsforschung in Deutschland*. Unrast, Münster, pp. 90–104.
- Mulvey, L., 1975. Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema. *Screen* 16, 6–18.

*In-class discussion:*

- Teresa María Díaz Nerio – Hommage à Sara Bartman (2008)  
<http://www.reactfeminism.org/entry.php?l=lb&id=238&e=a>
- Robin Rhode – Pan's Opticon Studies (2009)  
<http://art.daimler.com/en/artwork/robin-rhode-pans-opticon-studies-2009/>

**Week 3, April 25 2018**

*An introduction to research lenses, part 2: intersectionality*

Here we shift to encounters with different matrixes of power and oppression, stemming mostly from intersectional, black feminist theories; we will also draw a few parallels to what decoloniality seeks to achieve.

*Required reading:*

- Williams, Kimberlé Crenshaw. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color". In: Martha Albertson Fineman, Rixanne Mykitiuk, Eds. *The Public Nature of Private Violence*. (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 93-118.

*Required watching:*

- Livingston, J., 1991. Paris Is Burning.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=18GBwfW68Lk>

*NOTE: The documentary is also available on the German Netflix (so you can watch it with subtitles). There's also more links available on YouTube (but no subtitles except for Spanish).*

*Recommended readings:*

- Salem, S., 2016. Intersectionality and its discontents: Intersectionality as traveling theory. *European Journal of Women's Studies*.
- Crenshaw, K., 1989. Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics. *The University of Chicago Legal Forum* 140, 139–167.

*In-class discussion:*

- Madonna – Vogue (from the album "I'm Breathless", 1990)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GuJQSAiODqI>

**Week 4, May 2 2018**

*From lenses to systems: a general intro to World-Systems*

Understanding the world as a set of shifting geopolitical constructs: what does "third world" mean? Global South? Periphery? And their impacts on scholarship.

*Required readings:*

- Wallerstein, I., 2004. *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction*, New. ed. John Hope Franklin Center Book, Durham.
- Castro-Gómez, S., 2007. The Missing Chapter of Empire. *Cultural Studies* 21, 428–448.

*Listening session:*

- Fatima Al-Qadiri – Asiatisch (2016)  
<https://fatimaalqadiri.bandcamp.com/album/fatima-al-qadiri-asiatisch-hdbcd024>

*Recommended reading:*

- Feldman, S., 2001. Intersecting and Contesting Positions: Postcolonialism, Feminism, and World-Systems Theory. *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 24, 343–371.

**Week 5, May 9 2018**

*The colonial matrix of power*

In this class we start unravelling the key theme of our lenses to decolonial theory for this seminar: “the colonial matrix of power” and its historiography.

*Required reading:*

- Tlostanova, M.V., Mignolo, W.D., 2009. Global Coloniality and the Decolonial Option. *Kult* 130–147.
- Walsh, C., 2012. “Other” Knowledges, “Other” Critiques: Reflections on the Politics and Practices of Philosophy and Decoloniality in the “Other” America. *TRANSMODERNITY: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World* 1.

*Recommended reading:*

- Quijano, A., 2000. Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America. *Nepantla: Views from South* 1, 533–580.

*Suggested reading (fiction):*

- Ursula K. LeGuin, “Sur” (1982)

*Suggested watching:*

- Francis Alÿs, *The Politics of Rehearsal [AKA Ensayo 2]* (2005)  
[http://ubu.com/film/alys\\_politics.html](http://ubu.com/film/alys_politics.html)

**Week 6, May 16 2018**

*The colonial matrix of power, part 2: Epistemic Disobedience and Border Thinking*

An introduction to epistemic disobedience as understood by the Latin American decolonial project, and a conversation on methods for “border thinking.”

*Required readings:*

- Anzaldúa, G., 1987. La conciencia de la mestiza: Towards a new consciousness. In: *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. ed. Aunt Lute Books. pp.77–91
- Anzaldúa, G., 2015. Flights of the Imagination: Rereading/Rewriting realities. In: *Light in the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*. Duke Univ Pr, Durham, North Carolina. pp.23–46

*Recommended reading:*

- Mignolo, W.D., Tlostanova, M.V., 2006. Theorizing from the Borders: Shifting to Geo- and Body-Politics of Knowledge. *European Journal of Social Theory* 9, 205–221.

*Suggested watching/listening:*

- M.I.A. – Borders (2016)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r-Nw7HbaeWY>

*In-class listening and discussion:*

- Anzaldúa, Gloria E. Readings at the Poetry Center of the University of Arizona, Wednesday, October 23, 1991.  
<https://voca.arizona.edu/readings-list/417>

*Assignment: Divided in pairs or trios, you will select a cultural artifact that relates to the themes discussed in class so far, in particular from Weeks 4 to 6, and write down your own questions about it to be discussed in two weeks. It can be anything: from a personal object, an everyday object, a book, an artwork, a song, a movie – you name it. Please send me your choice of artifact until May 22nd – so we all have time to get familiar with it –, and then prepare a 10-minute maximum presentation addressing and reflecting on your questions for May 30th.*

**Week 7, May 23 2018**

*The colonial matrix of power, part 3: the production of race*

Here we analyze the implications of the colonial matrix of power in the construction of race as a supposedly “biological” imperative, the emergence of white supremacist pseudosciences and the institutional foundations of racism.

*Required readings and listening:*

- Roberts, D., 2012. The Invention of Race. In: *Fatal Invention: How Science, Politics, and Big Business Re-create Race in the Twenty-first Century*. The New Press, New York; London. pp.15–52
- Fanon, F., 1952[2009]. The Fact of Blackness, in: Back, L., Solomos, J. (Eds.), *Theories of Race and Racism: A Reader*. Routledge, London; New York, pp. 326–335.  
*Content Warning for extensive use of the N-word in the above text.*
- Does A DNA Test Make You Indigenous? Podcast with Kim TallBear (2017)  
<http://wunc.org/post/does-dna-test-make-you-indigenous#stream/0>

*Recommended reading:*

- Teju Cole – A True Picture of Black Skin (2015)  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/22/magazine/a-true-picture-of-black-skin.html>

*Suggested listening:*

- Saul Williams – Down for some Ignorance (2015)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LCOUpWeB5Qo>
- Moor Mother – Boiler Room London Performance (2017)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OgyhcFdmwK0>

*In-class discussion and watching:*

- Weasel, L.H., 2004. Feminist Intersections in Science: Race, Gender and Sexuality through the Microscope. *Hypatia* 19, 183–193.

- M.I.A. – Born Free (2010)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IeMvUlXyz8>

### **Week 8, May 30 2018**

*Assignment presentation/discussion.*

### **Week 9, June 6 2018**

*Assignment presentation/discussion (continued).*

### **Week 10, June 13 2018**

*The colonial matrix of power, part 4: the production of gender*

In this class we discuss how coloniality produces gender systems that sustain the hegemony of “man,” but also its implications in the matrixes of power in colonial systems.

*Required readings:*

- Oyewumi, O., 1997. Visualizing the Body: Western Theories and African Subjects. In: *Invention Of Women: Making An African Sense Of Western Gender Discourses*. University of Minnesota Press. pp. 1–30
- Davis, A.Y., 1983. Racism, Birth Control and Reproductive Rights, in: *Women, Race, Class*. Vintage, New York, pp. 353–367.

*Recommended reading:*

- Lugones, M., 2006. Heterosexualism and the Colonial / Modern Gender System. *Hypatia* 22, 186–209.

*Recommended watching:*

- The Pain & Empowerment of Choosing Your Own Gender: Alok Vaid-Menon  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j7Gh2n9kPuA>
- DarkMatter – White Fetish  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oEjLegrOqqY>

### **Week 11, June 20 2018**

*The colonial matrix of power, part 5: the production of culture*

Coloniality also produces “culture” by erasure. In this class we will delve into a few examples that surround language, linearity, legitimacy, and the processes of synthesis and fragmentation colonized cultures have gone through.

*Required readings:*

- Glissant, E., 1997. Expanse and Filiation. In: *Poetics of Relation*. Univ of Michigan Pr, Ann Arbor. pp.47–62
- Glissant, E., 1997. The Relative and Chaos. In: *Poetics of Relation*. Univ of Michigan Pr, Ann Arbor. pp. 131–140

*Recommended reading:*

- Anzaldúa, G., 2015. Border Arte. In: *Light in the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*. Duke Univ Pr, Durham, North Carolina. pp.47–64

*Watch and listen:*

- Criolo – Duas de Cinco/Cóccix-ência (2013)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MctVS9wh26Y>
- Tanya Tagaq – Retribution (2016)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xNYTA6SV6tM>

*Final assignment (for those requiring a Modulabschlussprüfung): Alone or in pairs, you will produce either a 20-minute “audio paper,” or a 10-minute short film, or a 3000–3500-words position essay. There is also a possibility of combining two of these formats (to be discussed case-by-case). Send me a 1–2 page proposal (with references) by July 3. Due date is **August 17, 2018**; nevertheless, you should prepare a presentation to the class for our last meeting.*

**Week 12, June 27 2018**

*Decolonization is not a metaphor: indigenous land, border abolitionism, and the prison-industrial complex*

We will revisit the key differences between decoloniality and decolonization, and how the latter is an urgent struggle that expands from our discussions in terms of theories.

*Required reading:*

- Tuck, E., Yang, K.W., 2012. *Decolonization is not a metaphor*. Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society 1.

*Recommended reading:*

- Davis, A.Y., 2003. Introduction. In: *Are Prisons Obsolete?* Seven Stories Press, New York.

*Recommended watching:*

- Indigenous Films from the NFB's catalogue in Canada  
<http://www.cbc.ca/arts/there-s-a-massive-free-catalogue-of-indigenous-films-online-and-we-have-6-picks-to-get-you-started-1.4623884>

**Week 13, July 4 2018**

*Decolonizing apparatuses: on assembling new research methods*

We will revisit “border thinking” and read it through what we learned throughout the semester; we will also briefly engage with propositions for anti-oppressive research methodologies for the humanities.

*Required readings:*

- Anzaldúa, G., 2015. Putting Coyolxauhqui Together. In: *Light in the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*. Duke Univ Pr, Durham, North Carolina.
- Smith, L.T., 2012. Twenty-Five Indigenous Projects. In: *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, Second Edition. ed. Zed Books Ltd, London.
- Todd, Z., n.d. An Indigenous Feminist’s Take On The Ontological Turn: “Ontology” Is Just Another Word For Colonialism. *Journal of Historical Sociology* 29, 4–22. <https://doi.org/10.1111/johs.12124>

*Recommended reading:*

- Ahmed, S., 2006. The Nonperformativity of Antiracism. *Meridians* 7, 104–126.

*Recommended watching:*

- Trinh T. Minh-ha – Reassemblage (1983)  
[http://www.ubu.com/film/minh\\_reassemblage.html](http://www.ubu.com/film/minh_reassemblage.html)

*In-class discussion and watching:*

- Chen, N.N., 1992. “Speaking Nearby:” A Conversation with Trinh T. Minh-ha. *Visual Anthropology Review* 8, 82–91. <https://doi.org/10.1525/var.1992.8.1.82>
- Kamasi Washington – Truth (2017)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rtW1S5EbHgU>

**Week 14, July 11 2018**

*Review + Tutorial + Journal hand-in*

Open class for discussion and review of one or more themes you wish to go deeper into, as well as AP proposals. All journals have to be handed in.

**Week 15, July 18 2018**

*Tutorial and Farewell*

Discussion of AP proposals. All journals will be returned.

**Grading and Evaluation criteria**

The most important part of the material you will be asked to produce during the semester is a research journal. *This (together with the assignment due May 30th) is what secures your Beteiligungs-nachweis for this course.* This should be a physical notebook (no smaller than A5 format) in which you will add questions, reflections, images, thoughts, scribbles, anything you find important for our in-class discussions and your engagement with course material. The questions you should send in every week are also to be included in your journal, as well as a brief reflection of each class (not a retelling of the class in your own words but rather your own thoughts). These do not necessarily need to follow formal academic writing— you are free to create this journal in any way you want. By the end of our last class you have to hand your journal in (properly identified with your name), and I will return it to you by the end of the Semester.

For those that would like to have a *Modulabschlussprüfung* from this class, the final assignment is what guarantees your grade. Please see details above.

**Class policies**

This is a class in which we will potentially discuss sensitive political topics that may or may not challenge your preconceptions about the world and the production of knowledge in and about it. Therefore we want to create an environment in class that allows students to exchange ideas and discuss positions, all the while making sure that a respectful relationship is constructed amongst you, as well as with myself. Long story



short: **racist, sexist, xenophobic, transphobic comments will not be tolerated.** Please let me know should you want to be addressed by a pronoun that is different from the one you are registered with.

Students are responsible for handing in questions and assignments in due time. If you cannot come to class please let me know in advance per e-mail; same goes if you cannot deliver an assignment on time, and require a different due date – I will try to accommodate that depending on the urgency of your absence. Needless to say, academic integrity is expected from you in relation to plagiarism, originality, tone, and content of your participation both in-class and in assignments.

In case I am late to class, I will try to communicate that to you in due time. If that is not possible, please allow for up to thirty minutes before leaving and use this time to catch up with readings and questions. If it turns out that I may miss the class completely, I will notify you in advance.