This seminar is an experiment in thinking global, a global history of the making of the modern world. Most history courses are organized by nation or region, but in this seminar we seek to read and examine texts that link peoples and places, and consider the movement of ideas, peoples and goods as central to the making of the modern world.

However, in exploring global connections this seminar takes seriously the siren call to pay attention to the formation of political and economic inequalities and the continuous struggles of ordinary people against them - from empires to nation-states, from anti-imperialist nationalist struggles to transnational radical movements, this seminar grapples with the politics of knowledge for understanding, alas, drawing out the very “fugitive” lineages of the past that we may need to shape our collective future.

Over the course of the twentieth century, intellectuals like Ngugi -wa Thiongo called for us to “decolonize the mind”(http://www.swaraj.org/ngugi.htm), and we draw on this idea in the course title to not only refer to the decentering of the West in historical narrative, but also to analyze people’s struggles within the West. By questioning connected histories of transformation, shaped as they have been by cultures of power and resistance, we hope through the readings in this seminar to forge a more profound engagement with the “global” challenges that lie ahead and a renewed imagination for the possibilities of collective change. So come join us in this experiment with vigorous argument and critical hope.

“If history is to be creative, to anticipate a possible future without denying the past, it should, I believe, emphasize new possibilities by disclosing those hidden episodes of the past when, even in those brief flashes, people showed their ability to resist, to join together, occasionally to win. I am supposing, or perhaps only hoping, that our future may be found in the past’s fugitive movements of compassion rather than in its solid centuries of warfare.” -Howard Zinn

Professors
Naoko Shibusawa      Office hrs. F 3-5
Vazira Zamindar          Office hrs. W 9-11
Peter Green 206        Peter Green 001

Decolonizing Minds: Towards a People's History of the World
COURSE OBJECTIVES

Each week of this seminar we will read a monograph that connect different parts of the world, or in other words, think “big.” Thus, a task of the seminar will be to interrogate their narrative threads; their theories, frameworks and arguments, and the selective nature of the evidence they draw upon. As we scrutinize the stories they are telling, we will also examine their implications. Ultimately, our purpose is to think historically and critically beyond the books themselves, in the world we live in. Below are guidelines for discussion, writing and projects that further these objectives.

EVALUATION

The final course grade will be based upon a system of 1,000 pts. We hope that this point system will allow us to calibrate those grades that fall in the + or - range.

A  1,000-900
B  899-800
C  799-700
F  below 700

CLASS PARTICIPATION,  200 pts [20%]

Since this class is a seminar your attendance and active participation in class discussion is crucial to the success of the class. Active participation means that you’ve come to class prepared to discuss the week’s reading at length and contribute to the class discussion.

The class participation grade will be determined in the following way:

Attendance: 100 pts, 10 pts each week

Starting after shopping period: 10 automatic points for attendance. Points for absences can be made up in other areas.

Participation during seminar: 100 pts, 10 pts each week

We will assign participation grades based on:

- frequency of contribution
- diplomacy/tact
- helpfulness in pushing conversation forward/including everyone in the discussion
- thought-provoking questions
- engagement
WEEKLY DISCUSSION PREPARATION: 200 pts, [20%]

Each week you must also submit a DISCUSSION QUESTION based on the readings to Canvas. These questions should not be fact-seeking, but relevant and open-ended so as to sustain a discussion.

1 PRÉCIS or book report of one of the monographs assigned for the course, 200 pts (20%)

The précis should be 600 words, plus or minus 100 words, and contain the following 4 parts:

1. Author’s objective: what research question was the author seeking to answer?
2. Author’s overall thesis or argument--i.e., the author’s answer to his/her research question.
3. Frameworks or theories author used to find his/her answers.
4. Evidence or sources the author used to support argument.
5. If you wish, you may add a fifth part: your assessment or critique of the work. This part is optional for this paper, as we want to make sure you understand the work before you critique it or give us your opinions about it.

The precis should be submitted in the following manner:

1. They are due by 10 pm on the Tuesday before our class.
2. Please email to both professors as an attachment.
3. Be sure to name your document with your last name as the first word (e.g., “Smith Hist 1977 paper 1.doc”) so that we not have dozens of documents with the same name. We will send back papers that are labeled without your surname as the first word in the document title.

FINAL PROJECT, 400 pts (40%)

The final project can be conceptualized in many different ways. The final project is aimed to fulfill the course objective of making connections, but through engagement with the larger world, beyond Brown. One way would be to work on a project that bridges the town/gown divide. In this respect, we can see our class as a space to learn history, but the wider community as a place to learn how structures of power continue to exist. A final project of this type can report on what is or isn’t being done to challenge these structures through a variety of means—e.g., oral histories, websites, film shorts—in order to document what you discover and analyze. Activities in which you might already be involved that extends beyond the university may be a good conduit for the project. We encourage you to work in groups so that the projects can be bigger in scope than can be handled by any one person.

You also have the option of doing a conventional research paper that analyzes primary sources with the aid of secondary sources, or doing a historiographic paper.

The expectation, of course, is that all projects whatever the form, will have the same level of rigor, clarity, and sophistication. As the semester proceeds, we will talk more in depth about the various possibilities for the final project so that you are working on it well before mid-semester. We would like you to have chosen your project idea by March 5th: Please email basic idea with the names of group members to both professors. We will create final project groups on Canvas to facilitate your work.
A one-page, written project update is due March 19th. The update should include:

* defined objectives

*delineated roles for each group member

*update of what you have done: sources consulted, observations made, challenges you face/foresee

You will present your project to the class on April 30th. The final project will be due on May 12th.

TEXTS
Michel-Rolph Trouillot, Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History (Beacon, 1995)
Julian Go, Patterns of Empire: The British and American Empires, 1688 to the Present (Cambridge, 2011)
Ezequiel Adamoysky, Anti-Capitalism: The New Generation of Emancipatory Movements (Seven Stories, 2011)
Sidney Mintz, Sweetness & Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History (Penguin, 1986)
Stephanie Smallwood, Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora (Harvard, 2007)
Kornel Chang, Pacific Connections: The Making of the U.S.-Canadian Borderlands (California, 2012)
Catherine Lutz, ed., The Bases of Empire: The Global Struggle against U.S. Military Posts (NYU, 2009)

COURSE SCHEDULE
Readings marked with an asterisk (*) are available for download on canvas. Please acquire the monographs on your own, either through the library, inter-library, or a bookseller. We will also make all the books available at the library on 3-hr. reserve.

INTRODUCTION
1. Jan 22 Introduction to the class.

2. Jan 29 Politics of Producing History

   Michel-Rolph Trouillot, Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History (Beacon Press, 1995)
   * Howard Zinn, “Objections to Objectivity” in Failure to Quit: Reflections of an Optimistic Historian (1993)

PART ONE: MOVING IDEAS

3. Feb 5 Empire & History

4. Feb 12  Civilization as Ideology

Julian Go, Patterns of Empire: The British and American Empires, 1688 to the Present (Cambridge, 2011)

5. Feb 19  Critiques of Liberalism

Ezequiel Adamoysky, Anti-Capitalism: The New Generation of Emancipatory Movements (Seven Stories, 2011)
*Samir Amin, Global History: A View from the South (Pambazuka Press, 2010), excerpts

*RSA Animate: David Harvey on the Crises of Capitalism (11:11)
*RSA Animate: Slavoj Žižek, "First as Tragedy, Then as Farce" (10:57)
*RSA Animate: Renata Salecl, "Choice" (10:44)

**PART TWO: MOVING THINGS**

6. Feb 26  Commodities

Sidney Mintz, Sweetness & Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History (Penguin, 1986)

7. Mar 5  Modernity & Hunger

*Please choose project by this date.*
Mike Davis, Late Victorian Holocaust: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World (Verso, 2001)

**PART THREE: MOVING PEOPLE**

8. Mar 12  Labor: Free and Unfree

Stephanie Smallwood, Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora (Harvard, 2007)

9. March 19  Immigration & Refugees

*Final Project UPDATE due.*
10. Apr 2  People’s Resistance

*Prasenjit Duara, “The Decolonization of Asia and Africa in the Twentieth Century” in Duara, ed., Decolonization Perspectives from Now and Then (Routledge, 2004)

11. Apr 9  Resisting Military Power

*Al-Jazeera Listening Post: "The military and the media," 12 June 2010 (23:10)

Catherine Lutz, ed., The Bases of Empire: The Global Struggle against U.S. Military Posts (NYU, 2009)

12. Apr 16  Campus Activism


—Apr 23  No class—

13. Apr 30  Presentation of projects

(have students clear schedules so that class can go past 5:20 pm)  Each of you will present to the class what you have been working on.

Final Projects Due: May 12th