

**AMST 801/HIST 700: The U.S. Colonial Present**  
**Tues 3:30-5:20**  
**Professor Lisa Lowe**



Jacob Lawrence, "...Is Life so dear or peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Patrick Henry, 1775," Panel 1 (1955); Struggle Series, 1954–56. Egg tempera on hardboard. Collection of Harvey and Harvey-Ann Ross. © The Jacob and Gwendolyn Lawrence Foundation, Seattle/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo, Bob Packert/ Peabody Essex Museum

Settler colonialism, slavery, racialized immigration, and imperial war have been integral to the emergence of the U.S. nation, state, and economy, and the consequences of these histories continue today. In this interdisciplinary graduate seminar, we examine the relevance of these historical and ongoing formations to the founding and development of the United States, giving attention to the independence of each, as well as to their differences, convergences, and contestations. We consider the strengths and limits of different analytic frames for understanding these histories of settlerism, enslavement, and empire. Keeping in view the contemporary social crises of public health, economic austerity, racial state violence, and authoritarian government, we pay attention to the durability of colonial forms, their convergence and repetition, and consider how contemporary struggles may identify links and solidarities that liberal and colonial logics disallow. The seminar includes readings in history, anthropology, political theory, literature, films and other media, as well as guest visits from scholars whose work we are reading.

This interdisciplinary graduate seminar will be taught remotely, due to risks of infection and contagion during the current COVID-19 pandemic; enrollment will be limited, and permission of the instructor is required.

## Schedule of Readings

(\*indicates that this text is available on Canvas site)

[#indicates this text is available for purchase at Yale Bookstore]

### Week 1

Sept 1: colonial pasts in the present

- \*Aníbal Quijano and Immanuel Wallerstein, “Americanness as a concept, or the Americas in the modern world-system” (1992)
- \*Alyosha Goldstein, “Toward a Genealogy of the U.S. Colonial Present,” (1-30) *Formations of U.S. Colonialism* (Duke UP, 2014)
- \*Angela Davis, “Slavery, Civil Rights, and Abolitionist Perspectives Toward Prison,” *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (Seven Stories, 2003), 22-39
- \*Adom Getachew, “Colonialism Made the Modern World,” *New York Times*, July 27, 2020

#### Further reading:

- \*Nick Estes, “The Empire of All Maladies” *Baffler*, No. 552 (July 2020)

### Week 2

Sept 8: settler colonialism, property, Indigenous struggle

#### Read:

- #Nick Estes, *Our History Is the Future* (Verso, 2019)
- \*John Locke, Essay Two, Chs. I-IX, from *Two Treatises of Government* (1689)
- \*K-Sue Park, “Conquest and Slavery as Foundational to the Property Law Course” (2020)
- \*Joanne Barker, “Confluence: Water as an Analytic of Indigenous Feminisms” (2020)
- \*Tiffany Lethabo King, Introduction to *The Black Shoals* (2019)

#### Further reading:

- \*Patrick Wolfe, “After the Frontier: Separation and Absorption in U.S. Indian Policy” (2011)
- \*Brenna Bhandar, Introduction, *Colonial Lives of Property: Law, Land, and Racial Regimes of Ownership* (Duke, 2018)

### Week 3

Sept 15: representing Indigenous North Americas: history, ethnography, documentary

#### Read:

- \*Jean O’Brien, Introduction, Chs 1-2, (xi-104) *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians Out of Existence in New England* (Minnesota, 2010)
- \*#Audra Simpson, Chs 1, 4, 6 (1-35, 95-114 147-176) in *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* (Duke, 2014)
- \*Hayden White, “Noble Savage Theme as Fetish,” *Tropics of Discourse* (Johns Hopkins, 1978)

#### View:

- \*Obomsawin, “Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance” (1993)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mhvx51s\\_ZV8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mhvx51s_ZV8)

#### Further reading:

- \*Bruce Lenman, “Colonial Wars and Imperial Instability, 1688-1793,” *The Eighteenth Century*
- \*David Chang, “Borderlands in a World at Sea: Concow Indians, Native Hawaiians, South Chinese in Indigenous, Global, and National Spaces” (2011)
- \*Glen Coulthard, “From Wards of the State to Subjects of Recognition?” in *Theorizing Native Studies*, A. Simpson and A. Smith, eds. (Duke, 2014)
- \*Joanne Barker, “The Specters of Recognition” in *Formations of United States Colonialism*, A. Goldstein, ed. (Duke, 2014)

#### **Week 4**

Sept 22: memory, literature, visual culture

##### Read:

#Louise Erdrich, *LaRose* (Harper, 2016)

\*Laura Wexler, Ch. 3, (94-126) *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of U.S. Imperialism* (North Carolina, 2000)

\*Richard Henry Pratt, “Kill the Indian, and Save the Man” (1892):

<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/4929/>

##### View:

\*Edward S. Curtis, *The North American Indians* (1907-30):

<http://curtis.library.northwestern.edu/curtis/toc.cgi>

\*Carlisle Indian School Digital Resources: <http://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/teach/analyzing-and-after-photographs-exploring-student-files>

\*Kent Monkman, “(mistikôsiwak) Wooden Boat People” (2019-):

<https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2019/great-hall-commission-kent-monkman>

\*Will Wilson, CIPX: <http://willwilson.photoshelter.com/index>

##### Further reading:

\*Brenda Child, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian families, 1900-1940* (Nebraska, 1998)

\*Nick Estes, “A Vision for the Future” (on Monkman): <https://aci-iac.ca/the-essay/a-vision-for-the-future-by-nick-estes>

\*Mishuana Goeman, “Intro: Gendered Geographies and Narrative Markings” (pp. 1-40) in *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations* (Minnesota, 2013)

#### **Week 5**

Sept 29: slavery, trade, war, revolt

##### Read:

\*#Vincent Brown, *Tacky’s Revolt: The Story of an Atlantic Slave War* (Harvard, 2020)

\*Stephanie Smallwood, “Turning African Captives to Atlantic Commodities” (33-64) in *Saltwater Slavery: Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (Harvard, 2007)

\*Thomas Jefferson, Query XIV “Laws,” from *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785)

\*Walter Johnson, “To Remake the World: Slavery, Racial Capitalism, & Justice,” *Boston Review* (Feb 2018): <http://bostonreview.net/forum/walter-johnson-to-remake-the-world>

##### View:

\*Vincent Brown, “Slave Revolt in Jamaica, 1760-1761: A Cartographic Narrative (2012):

<http://revolt.axismaps.com/>

Guest:

Vincent Brown, Charles Warren Professor of History, and Professor of African and African American Studies, Harvard University: <https://scholar.harvard.edu/vbrown/bioev>

Further reading:

- \*Vincent Brown, "Mapping a Slave Revolt: Visualizing Spatial History through the Archives of Slavery," *Social Text* 125 (Sept 2015): 134-141
- \*Vincent Brown, "Social Death and Political Life in the Study of Slavery" (2009)
- Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Harvard, 2017)
- C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (Vintage, 1963)

**Week 6**

Oct 6: gendered racial capitalism, the afterlife of slavery

Read:

- \*#Sarah Haley, *No Mercy Here: Gender, Punishment, and the Making of Jim Crow Modernity* (North Carolina, 2016)
- \*Saidiya Hartman, "The Belly of the World: A Note on Black Women's Labors," *Souls* 18.1 (2016): 166-173
- \*Ruha Benjamin, "Black Afterlives Matter: Cultivating Kinfulness as Reproductive Justice," in *Making Kin Not Population*, A. Clark & D. Haraway, eds. (2018), repub. *Boston Review*: <http://bostonreview.net/race/ruha-benjamin-black-afterlives-matter>

Guest:

Sarah Haley, Associate Professor of African American Studies and Gender Studies, UCLA  
Director, Center for the Study of Women Black Feminism Initiative, UCLA:  
<https://afam.ucla.edu/faculty/sarah-haley/>

Further reading:

- \*#Saidiya Hartman, Introduction (3-16), Chs. 2-4 (49-124), *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford, 1997)
- \*Jennifer Morgan, "*Partus sequitur ventrum*: Law, Race, and Reproduction in Colonial Slavery," *Small Axe* 22 (2018): 1-17
- \*Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe" (1987)
- Angela Davis, *Women, Race, and Class* (Random House, 1981)

**Week 7**

Oct 13: rememory

Read:

- #Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (Random House, 1987)
- \*Kimberly Juanita Brown, Intro, Chs. 1-2, *The Repeating Body: Slavery's Visual Resonance in the Contemporary* (Duke, 2015)

View:

Carrie Mae Weems, *The Louisiana Project* (2003):

<http://carriemaeweems.net/galleries/louisiana.html>

Guest:

Kimberly Juanita Brown, Associate Professor of English, Dartmouth College,  
Co-director of Dartmouth Consortium of Studies in Race, Migration, and Sexuality:

<https://english.dartmouth.edu/people/kimberly-juanita-brown>

Further reading:

- \*Avery Gordon, “her shape and his hand” (3-30) and “not only the footprints but the water too” (137-192) in *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minnesota, 2008)
- \*Dennis Childs, *Slaves of the State: Black Incarceration from the Chain Gang to Penitentiary* (Minnesota, 2015)
- \*Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Beacon, 1995)

**Week 8**

Oct 20: black reconstruction, radicalism, abolition

Read:

- \*#W. E. B. Du Bois, Chs I-IV (3-83) and Chs XIV (580-636), XVI-XVII (670-729), *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (Free Press, 1935, 1962)
- \*Cedric Robinson, Introduction, Foreword (Kelley) (i-xxvi) and Ch. 6 “Historical Archaeology” (121-354) *Black Marxism: Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (North Carolina, 2000)
- \*Stuart Hall, “Gramsci’s Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity” (1985)
- \*Robin D. G. Kelley, “Solidarity is Not a Market Exchange,” Part 1, *Rethinking Marxism*, 30.4 (Oct 2018): 568-598
- \*Sarah Haley, “Abolition,” *Keywords in African American Studies* (2018)

Further Reading:

- \*AAIHS: *Black Perspectives* online forum, “The Imprisoned Black Radical Tradition”:  
<https://www.aaihs.org/tag/ibr/>
- \*Davarian Baldwin, “The Reparations Movement in Higher Education” (2020)
- \*Davarian Baldwin and Emma Crane, “Cities, Racialized Poverty, and Infrastructures of Possibility,” *Antipode* (2020)
- \*Robin D.G. Kelley, “John Brown’s Body: Abolition Democracy Against Perpetual War,” Toni Morrison Lecture, Princeton University (2015)  
<https://aas.princeton.edu/academics/aas-lecture-series/toni-morrison-lectures>
- Gaye Johnson & Alex Lubin, eds., *Futures of Black Radicalism* (Verso, 2017)

## Week 9

Oct 27: racial capitalism, continental imperialism, comparative colonialisms

### Read:

\*#Manu Karuka, *Empire's Tracks: Indigenous Nations, Chinese Workers, Transcontinental Railroad* (California, 2019)

### Further Reading:

\*Manu Vimalassery, A. Goldstein, and J. Hu Pegues, "On Colonial Unknowing," *Theory & Event* (2016)

\*Robert Nichols, "Disaggregating Primitive Accumulation"

\*Alyosha Goldstein, "On Reproduction of Race, Capitalism, and Settler Colonialism"

\*Iyko Day, "Being or Nothingness: Indigeneity, Antiracism, Settler Colonial Critique," *Critical Ethnic Studies* (2015)

## Week 10

Nov 3: abolition feminism

### Read:

#Brenna Bhandar & Rafeef Ziadah, eds. *Revolutionary Feminisms* (Verso, 2020)

\*Ruth Wilson Gilmore, "Globalisation and U.S. Prison Growth: from Military Keynesianism to Post-Keynesian Militarism," *Race & Class* (1999)

### Guests:

Brenna Bhandar, Senior Lecturer, School of Law, SOAS, University of London:

<https://www.soas.ac.uk/staff/staff86676.php>

Rafeef Ziadah, Lecturer, Politics and International Studies, SOAS, University of London:

<https://www.soas.ac.uk/staff/staff61083.php>

## Week 11

Nov 10: detention, war, sanctuary

### Read:

\*A. Naomi Paik, Intro and Part I, *Rightlessness: Testimony and Redress in U.S. Prison Camps Since WWII* (North Carolina, 2016)

\*#A. Naomi Paik, *Bans, Walls, Raids, Sanctuary* (California, 2020)

\*Kelly Lytle Hernandez, Introduction, *City of Inmates: Conquest, Rebellion, and the Rise of Human Caging in Los Angeles* (North Carolina, 2017)

### Guest:

A. Naomi Paik, Associate Professor of Asian American Studies, History, and Gender & Women's Studies, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign:

<https://asianam.illinois.edu/directory/profile/anpaik>

### Further Reading:

"Fort Sill is a Site of Ongoing Trauma," *Densho* (2019):

<https://densho.org/fort-sill-is-a-site-of-ongoing-trauma/>

## Week 12

Nov 17: counter-insurgency, policing, empire

### Read:

\*#Laleh Khalili, *Time in the Shadows: Confinement in Counterinsurgencies* (Stanford, 2013)

\*Mahmood Mamdani, Ch. 2-3 (63-177) *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim* (Random House, 2004)

### View:

\*Shahzia Sikander, “Parallax”:

[https://www.maharam.com/stories/sharma\\_shahzia-sikander-parallax](https://www.maharam.com/stories/sharma_shahzia-sikander-parallax)

### Further reading:

\*Stuart Schrader, *Badges Without Borders: How Global Counterinsurgency Transformed American Policing* (California, 2019)

\*Stuart Schrader, “Trump Has Brought America’s Dirty Wars Home,” *New Republic* (July 21, 2020): <https://newrepublic.com/article/158580/trump-portland-dirty-wars>

Nikhil Singh, *Race and America’s Long War* (California, 2017)

## Nov 24 - holiday

## Week 13

Dec 1: war, history, diasporic memory

### Read:

#Ahmed Saadawi, *Frankenstein in Baghdad* (Penguin, 2018)

\*Gayatri Gopinath, Introduction (1-18), *Unruly Visions: Aesthetic Practices of Queer Diaspora* (Duke, 2018)

### View:

\*Mohamad Hafez, “Unpacked: Refugee Baggage”