

NON-WESTERN PERSPECTIVES ON IR

Winter 2020

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Course Description

This seminar challenges the assumptions found in the 'canonical' readings of IR Theory. It draws on a plethora of Non-Western thinkers such as Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, Al-Afghani, Gandhi, Soekarno, Kwame Nkrumah, and Edward Said, among others. The course thus introduces students to several important political figures and concepts/issues from the non-Western world. It seeks to foster a sustained engagement with non-Western political views, voices and perspectives. It also aims to engage questions, such as: what would a non-Western IR theory look like? Or, to put it differently, what would a genuinely *international* theory look like, one that included a diversity of voices, histories, and worldviews? The course thus intends to offer an alternative framework for thinking about international politics that is more accurately 'international.'

Course Objectives

By the end of the course students should be able to:

- Think critically about the main assumptions of the IR discipline
- Interrogate the Eurocentrism of the field
- Understand the centrality of race, gender and class to past and contemporary processes in world politics
- Think outside the Western-centric boundaries of the discipline

Required Materials and Texts

- All required materials will be posted on A2L.
- Recommended textbook:

Randolph Persaud and Alina Sajed (eds), *Race, Gender, and Culture in International Relations. Postcolonial Perspectives*, Routledge, 2018 (**e-book**). In the syllabus, it appears as Persaud & Sajed.

Class Format

Weekly seminar

Course Evaluation – Overview

- Participation 40%
- Critical response paper 20%
- Take-home exam 40% (TBA)

Course Evaluation – Details

Participation (40%)

PLEASE NOTE THAT ATTENDANCE TO THE SEMINAR IS COMPULSORY, NOT OPTIONAL. IF A STUDENT ACCUMULATES MORE THAN 3 ABSENCES, THEY WILL FORFEIT 50% OF THE ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION GRADE.

Normally, the discussion of readings will be divided into two or three parts each week.

A.1 Discussion of readings

All students will be expected to prepare a summary statement before class for each reading. Each statement will have the following components:

1. List of key concepts and terms
2. Summary statement (four sentences maximum) of the author's main argument. This statement should be written in your own words as far as possible. It should not be borrowed directly from the text of the reading.
3. 1 or 2 issues or questions in the reading that are important and merit some discussion and that you would like to be addressed by class time permitting. Formulate these in the form of a question.

Note that all three of these components should be focused on understanding the readings well, and not on criticizing them. Criticism should only follow in class when we have a good understanding of what the author is arguing.

The leader of the discussion should use this principle in calling upon class members to speak:

General Note: given the relatively large size of the seminar and the short times available for discussing a reading, facilitators should ensure that every member of class wishing to make a statement is heard before a member who has already made a statement on the given topic is asked to speak again. Use this rule in each of the discussions of concepts, main argument, other questions, and strengths and weaknesses of the reading.

The leader of the discussion should begin with the following questions:

1. *These are the several key concepts and terms that I noticed in the reading such as . . . Are any of these unclear to any of you? Are there any other key concepts that you noted that need to be clarified? (If one or more are unclear) Can anyone help us clarify the meaning of <problematic concept(s)>.*

Advice: try to keep this part of the seminar to about 10 minutes. Use your discretion here. If a concept or term brought up is interesting but not central to the reading, then suggest that we come back to it if we have time. If a concept is

integral to the argument (see below), you can reserve its discussion for when we get to the next step.

2. *Would any member of the class like to give us their statement on what the main argument of the author is? Would anyone like to add something to what <the first person> has said? Do you agree or disagree that we have captured the key aspects of the argument?*

Advice: Try to avoid starting off with your own statement of the argument. See if you can draw it out from members of the class first. You can add some of your own understanding as the argument proceeds. As you see the discussion being finished or beginning to get into key issues arising from the argument, move to the third step.

3. *I would like now to identify some of the key issues that arise out of the reading and that we might discuss. One of these might be . . . Are there any others that we might take up?*

Advice: Your goal here is to get as many key issues discussed as is possible. Try to draw in members of the class who have not had a chance to speak. The aim here is to improve understanding of the reading, not to criticize it. If members move to critique, stop them and say we will do that soon. Keep an eye on your watch or the clock. You want to reserve time for a critical discussion of the reading.

4. *With our understanding of the argument and the various issues related to the argument, we can now spend a few minutes to reflect critically on the reading. Are there any points that are particularly problematic in your understanding? Are there any points that are particularly useful or persuasive?*

Advice: It is important here to ensure that members of the seminar get a chance to comment on both the weaknesses and the strengths of the given reading. Don't just concentrate on the weaknesses.

Allocation of the participation grade:

- a) Leading discussions 10%

(For some thoughts on leading discussions, see Appendix B below)

- b) Participation in seminar discussions 20%

(For some information on the difference between evaluating participation and evaluating knowledge and understanding, see Appendix A below).

- c) Handing in of summary statements 10%. These will be prepared for each of the substantive discussions of the readings, **starting with week 2 (January 17)**, hence 10 in total. To receive credit, these summaries must be submitted electronically prior to the class (**by midnight before class**). Members of the class are permitted one 'heavy burden' week without losing points here. In taking a "heavy burden" week, students are not expected to hand in summaries. They should try, however, as best as possible, to do the readings and participate in the discussions. Students taking a 'heavy burden' week must inform me **by the Monday** preceding the class when they are taking the option.

Critical response paper (20%)

One relatively short analytical paper is required. The paper is to be **5 pages in length** (Times New Roman, 12, double spaced, 1-inch margins), and must be written as a reaction/response to any of the weekly readings of the student's choice. This entails that the students choose any of the weeks on which they wish to write. **ONCE YOU HAVE SELECTED YOUR TOPIC YOU HAVE ONE WEEK TO COMPLETE THE PAPER** (FOR EXAMPLE, IF YOU HAVE CHOSEN TO WRITE A PAPER ON WEEK 3 (THE RACIAL CONSTITUTION OF IR), JANUARY 24, YOUR PAPER WILL BE DUE ONE WEEK AFTERWARDS, WHICH IS JANUARY 31.

Late assignments will be subject to a penalty of 3 points out of a grade of 100 for every day they are late.

Take-home exam (40%)

At the last class, a take-home examination composed of 7 questions will be handed out. Students will be asked to answer three of these seven questions. Each answer will be limited to 1500 words.

Late submission of the exam will be subject to a penalty of 3 points out of a grade of 100 for every four hours it is late (to a maximum of 15 points).

Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

Week 1 (January 10)

Introduction – no readings required.

Week 2 (January 17)

What should a *non-Western* IR look like? Theoretical assumptions and challenges

- ❖ Sankaran Krishna, "Postcolonialism and its relevance for International Relations in a globalized world" (ch. 2), in Persaud & Sajed. (**e-book**)
- ❖ Robert Vitalis, 'Birth of a Discipline' in D. Long and Brian C. Schmidt (eds), *Imperialism and Internationalism in the Discipline of International Relations*, SUNY Press, 2005.

- ❖ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, “An Unthinkable History. The Haitian Revolution as a Non-Event” in *Silencing the Past. Power and the Production of History*, Beacon Press, 1995, pp. 70-107.

Notes: Summary statements submission begins.

Week 3 (January 24)

The racial constitution of IR

- ❖ S. Vucetic & R. Persaud, “Race in International Relations” (ch. 3), in Persaud & Sajed. (e-book)
- ❖ W.E.B. Du Bois, “[The African Roots of War](#)”(e-link)
- ❖ Ta-Nehisi Coates, “[The Case for Reparations](#)”, *The Atlantic*, May 21, 2014 (e-resource)

Notes: Summary statements submission.

Week 4 (January 31)

Liberal theory and the constitution of contemporary world order

- ❖ Woodrow Wilson, “[The Fourteen Points](#)”
- ❖ John Hobson, “Racist and Eurocentric Imperialism: racist-realism, racist-liberalism, and ‘progressive’ Eurocentric liberalism/Fabianism, 1919-1945” in *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics: Western International Theory 1760-2010*, Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- ❖ Domenico Losurdo, “Liberalism and Racial Slavery: A Unique Twin Birth”, in *Liberalism: A Counter-history*, Verso, 2011, 35-65.

Notes: Summary statements submission.

Week 5 (February 7)

Nationalism and state-building

- ❖ Soekarno, *Nationalism, Islam and Marxism*, pp. 35-62, Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1970.
- ❖ Frantz Fanon, “On National Culture,” in *The Wretched of the Earth*, Grove Press, 2004.

Notes: Summary statements submission.

Week 6 (February 14)

Anti-colonialism/anti-imperialism in IR

- ❖ Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, pp. 29-78, Monthly Review Press, 2001.
- ❖ Edward Said, ‘Introduction’ and ‘Knowing the Oriental’ in *Orientalism*, Vintage Books, 1979, 1-73.

Notes: Summary statements submission.

Week 7 (February 21)

READING WEEK

Week 8 (February 28)

Film-screening + class discussion: Raoul Peck, I Am Not Your Negro (film/documentary).

Notes: **Summary statement submission after class.**

Week 9 (March 6)

Revolution and Political Violence

- ❖ Frantz Fanon, "On Violence" in *The Wretched of the Earth*, Grove Press, 2004.
- ❖ Mahatma Gandhi, "Non-Violence" and "National Independence is Not Enough" in L. Fischer (ed.) *The Essential Gandhi*, Vintage Books, 2002.
- ❖ Sankaran Krishna, "A Postcolonial Racial/Spatial Order: Gandhi, Ambedkar and the Construction of the International" in A. Anievas, N. Manchanda and R. Shilliam (eds) *Race and Racism in International Relations: Confronting the Global Colour Line*, Routledge, 2014.

Notes: Summary statements submission.

Week 10 (March 13)

Poverty/Inequality in IR

- ❖ Naeem Inayatullah and David Blaney, "Race and Global Inequality" (ch. 7), in Persaud & Sajed. (**e-book**)
- ❖ Arturo Escobar, "The Problematization of Poverty: The Tale of Three Worlds and Development" in *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*, Princeton University Press, 1994, pp. 21-54.

Notes: Summary statements submission.

Week 11 (March 20)

Feminism and the condition of women

- ❖ Aytak Akbari-Dibavar, "Race, Gender, and International Relations" (ch. 4), in Persaud & Sajed (**e-book**).
- ❖ [Revolutionary Hope: Conversation between James Baldwin and Audre Lorde](#), *Essence Magazine*, 1984.
- ❖ Sara Salem, "On Transnational Feminist Solidarity: The Case of Angela Davis in Egypt." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 2018, vol. 43, no. 2, pp. 245-267. (**e-journal**)

Notes: Summary statements submission.

Week 12 (March 27)

NO CLASS – INSTRUCTOR ATTENDING CONFERENCE.

Week 13 (April 3)

Indigenous Perspectives

- ❖ Hayden King, “Discourses of conquest and resistance. International Relations and Anishinaabe diplomacy” (ch. 8), in Persaud & Sajed (**e-book**).
- ❖ Nick Estes, “Prologue: Prophets” and “Internationalism” (ch. 6), in *Our History Is the Future: Standing Rock Versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance*, Verso, 2019.

Notes: Summary statements submission.

Course Policies

Submission of Assignments

Critical response papers should be handed in during class. Take-home exams should be emailed to the instructor prior to the deadline.

Grades

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

MARK	GRADE
90-100	A+
85-90	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F

Late Assignments

Late assignments will be subject to a penalty of 3 points out of a grade of 100 for every day they are late.

Late submission of the take-home exam will be subject to a penalty of 3 points out of a grade of 100 for every four hours it is late (to a maximum of 15 points).

Absences, Missed Work, Illness

In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work”.

Avenue to Learn

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

Turnitin.com

In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. Students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via Avenue to Learn (A2L) plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty. Students who do not wish to submit their work through A2L and/or Turnitin.com must still submit an electronic and/or hardcopy to the instructor. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com or A2L. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more information please refer to the [Turnitin.com Policy](#).

Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous or Spiritual Observances (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the RISO policy. Students requiring a RISO accommodation should submit their request to their Faculty Office normally within 10 working days of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests

University Policies

Academic Integrity Statement

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty

- Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- Improper collaboration in group work.
- Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services \(SAS\)](#) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University’s Policy for [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#).

Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student’s own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

Course Modification

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

Appendix A: Evaluation of Participation

Part of the participation grade will come from an evaluation of how much a given class member contributed to the seminar. Remember that evaluation of participation is different from evaluation of knowledge or understanding of a set of given readings. My evaluation of your knowledge and understanding will come from the short paper and the final examination. If you wish to check out how well you are doing in your participation, you might ask yourself the following questions:

- Did I initiate a topic or question?
- Did I provide some information when it was needed?
- Did I give some positive opinions or reactions?
- Did I give some negative opinions or reactions?
- Did I ask for positive or negative opinions or reactions?
- Did I confront someone whom you thought was wrong?
- Did I try to restate what someone else had said to ensure I and others understood?
- Did I ask someone else to restate what he or she had said?
- Did I give examples when they were needed?
- Did I ask others to provide some examples?
- Did I try to synthesize or summarize a part of the discussion?
- Did I ask if someone might synthesize or summarize a part of the discussion?
- Did I sponsor, encourage, help or reward others in the group?
- Did I relieve tension in the group by cracking a joke or calling for a break at an appropriate time?

Appendix B: Leading a discussion

Preparing to lead a discussion, you must be familiar with the assigned material. "Familiar with" is just the right phrase. You need not have mastered the material; after all, a goal of discussion is to move everyone towards mastery, that is, to improve everyone's (even the leader's) understanding.

To prepare for discussion (leadership or participation), first read and study the assignment, underlining the more important or interesting points, and making notes in the margins. Then think about and write down some of the main issues that the author raises and a few questions pertinent to the issues. Then go back over your notes and the text and note the key concepts or terms and then try to put the author's argument into your own words.

Getting Started

Class has started and your name has been drawn from the hat. How do you begin? Simply clear your throat and begin with the questions everyone has been asked to address. Before you know it, the hard part -- getting started -- is done.

One word of caution: Start out on a positive note. Avoid beginning with an apology for being poorly prepared or for finding the reading difficult. Treat the day's topic as having real value. Openers like "I didn't get much out of this" or "I don't agree with anything the author said" will stifle, rather than promote, discussion. Remember that a time for critical evaluation will come at the end, but only after the class has worked on its understanding of the author's arguments. If you treat the readings as worthwhile, your classmates will follow your lead, join you in examining the day's assignment, and thus make your job easier.

Sustaining Discussion

Discussions need some urging to keep them moving. A discussion leader can often keep things moving with only modest prodding, giving the class its head when things are going well. Of course, if you can contribute something useful, do so; but other kinds of comments or actions on your part can sustain the discussion just as well as an injection of insight. Here are some suggestions:

- 1) Get students to talk to each other. Ask for a response to the most recent comments. (Anyone have a response to A's opinion?) Or ask a specific student to respond. (B, do you agree with A?)
- 2) Get students to defend or explain their opinions. (Why do you say that? What's your evidence or reasoning?)
- 3) Encourage an exploration of differing points of view. When you hear conflicting views, point them out and get the holders of those views to discuss their differences. Perhaps ask a third person to sum up the two positions.
- 4) Keep the class on the subject. If you are even halfway familiar with the material, you know when the discussion is no longer connected to it. Just say so. (We've gotten pretty far from the readings; let's get back on the subject.) Or simply consult your list of questions. Any sensible response to one of your questions is bound to be pertinent.
- 5) Try to give as many persons in the class as possible a chance to speak. Keep a list of who wishes to speak. Ensure that all those who have not spoken who are on your list get to speak first before a colleague gets a chance to speak an additional time.
- 6) Point to a particular passage in the text relevant to a comment made by one person, or to a discussion among several. This might be a passage that challenges, or sums up and confirms, the views being expressed.
- 7) Don't fill every silence with your own voice. Any discussion will lapse occasionally. It is not your job as leader to avoid all silence. Some quiet periods are productive. Students who are not so quick to speak will frequently get the chance they need when others are quiet. If the silence gets too heavy, take advantage of the other students' lists of questions. (C, give us one of the questions you brought to class.)

Remember, as discussion leader you do not have to be the brains for the class. You are not expected to know it all; the class is full of students who have read the same assignment that you have read. Your job is to give them a chance to talk about it and

thus give others the benefits of their thinking. If any one student begins to do all the talking, gently correct this problem by bringing other students into the discussion. You are there to steer, to keep the class reasonably near the center of the path, by pulling a rein when needed, by loosening the reins when it keeps to the trail, by reining it in when it threatens to gallop away to greener subjects. If students are talking to each other about the reading material, things are going well; relax, listen, and contribute when you can.