

# Decolonial Theory & Praxis: From Resistance to “Re-Existence”

## *Upper-Level Course Outline*

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### What is this course?

Decolonial theory designates a broad category of thinking that attempts to analyze and critique Western Eurocentric patterns of knowledge and coloniality. Aníbal Quijano introduced the concept of “coloniality” in 1989 to describe colonial systems of power and their capacities to develop racial, gendered, and social hierarchies throughout colonized worlds. Decolonial theory seeks to challenge the logic of modernity by examining the history of colonialism, the hegemony of Western Eurocentric paradigms of knowledge, and examine emancipatory alternatives. Decolonial theory is a rich intellectual history that cannot be fully exhausted in this course, so our primary focus will include: examining decoloniality’s theoretical foundations, its Marxist and feminist lenses, its development through Black, Latin American, and Indigenous theory and practice, and also contemporary examples of decoloniality in action.

An important insight that our class will uncover and discuss what Adolfo Albán calls *re-existence*, namely, the process through which groups make salient the realities of oppression and marginalization while at the same time rebuilding and reconstituting life so as to bring about self-determination and human dignity. *Re-existence* goes beyond resistance by building self-governed alternatives to our current colonial order and imaging a possible world *from below*.

We will also consider the collapsing of the distinction between decolonial *theory* and *praxis*. We will examine how decolonial praxis can inform decolonial theory—recognizing that decolonial practices are plural, varied, and context dependent; and we will examine how decolonial theory informs decolonial practices throughout the globe. Following Mignolo and Walsh, our examinations throughout this course will be “rooted in the praxis of living and in the idea of theory-and-as-praxis and praxis-and-as-theory, and in the interdependence and continuous flow of movement of both” (Migolo and Walsh, 7).

### Learning Objectives:

By the end of this course, all students will have developed the following knowledge and capacities:

- Students will be able to identify and express the basic elements of decolonial thought and theoretical commitments
- Students will be able to apply, in critical and creative ways, decolonial theory to contemporary social and political issues
- Students will wrestle with the complexities of decolonial strategies, including issues of violence versus nonviolence, and students will be able to wrestle with those ideas in concert with others in the classroom
- Students will be able to clearly articulate their values in writing and in person
- Students will develop an understanding of decoloniality *in action*, including the capacity to examine and critically analyze contemporary decolonial movements

## Reading Schedule:

### Week 1 – Introducing Decoloniality and Strategizing for Learning

Day 1 – Course Introduction

Day 2 – Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Chapters 1 and 2

### Week 2 – Theoretical Introductions to Decoloniality

Day 1 – Aníbal Quijano, “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality”

Enrique Dussel, “Eurocentrism and Modernity (Introduction to the Frankfurt Lectures)”

Day 2 – Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, “Decolonization is not a metaphor”

Theresa Stewart-Ambo and K. Wayne Yang, “Beyond Land Acknowledgement in Settler Institutions”

### Week 3 – Decoloniality In/As Praxis

Day 1 – Walter Dignolo and Catherine Walsh, *On Decoloniality*, pp. 1-56

Day 2 – Walter Dignolo and Catherine Walsh, *On Decoloniality*, pp. 57-104

### Week 4 – The Decolonial Option

Day 1 – Walter Dignolo and Catherine Walsh, *On Decoloniality*, pp. 105-152

Day 2 – Walter Dignolo and Catherine Walsh, *On Decoloniality*, pp. 153-end

### Week 5 – Negritude and Racial Capitalism

Day 1 – Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*

Day 2 – Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism*, Introduction and Chapter 1

Audre Lorde, “The Masters Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House”

### Week 6 – Necropolitics and The Elimination of the Native

Day 1 – Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, Introduction and Chapter 3

Day 2 – Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native”

### Week 7 – Decolonizing Epistemologies

Day 1 – Gayatri Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”

Linda Alcoff, “The Problem of Speaking for Others”

Day 2 – Madina Tlostanova and Walter Dignolo, “Global Coloniality and the Decolonial Option”

### Week 8 – Decolonial Feminisms

Day 1 – María Lugones, “Toward a Decolonial Feminism” and “The Coloniality of Gender”

Day 2 – María Lugones, “Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System”

Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands: La Frontera*, Chapter 2

### Week 9 – Colonialism, Violence, and Liberation Part I

Day 1 – Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, including Jean-Paul Sartre’s “Preface”, and Part I, “On Violence”

Day 2 – Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Part II, “The Grandeur and Weakness of Spontaneity”

### **Week 10 – Colonialism, Violence, and Liberation Part II**

Day 1 – Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Part III, “The Trials and Tribulations of National Consciousness”

Day 2 – Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Parts IV and V, “On National Culture” and “Colonial War and Mental Disorders”

### **Week 11 – Non-Violence and Civil Resistance**

Day 1 – Kurt Schock, “Nonviolent Action and Its Misconceptions: Insights for Social Scientists”  
Mahatma Gandhi, “The Practice of Satyagraha or Civil Disobedience” and “Satyagraha as a Means of National Defense”

Day 2 – Sean Chabot and Stellan Vinthagen, “Decolonizing Civil Resistance”

### **Week 12 –Decolonial “Re-Existence” Part I: Zapatismo and the Landless Workers Movement**

Day 1 – Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN), “Sixth Declaration of the Selva Lacandona”

Neil Harvey, “Practicing autonomy: Zapatismo and decolonial liberation”

Day 2 – Sean Chabot and Stellan Vinthagen, “Rethinking Nonviolent Action and Contentious Politics: Political Cultures of Nonviolent Opposition in the Indian Independence Movement and Brazil’s Landless Workers Movement”

Leandro Vargara-Camus, “The MST and the EZLN Struggle for Land: New Forms of Peasant Rebellions”

### **Week 13 – Decolonial “Re-Existence” Part II: *Buen Vivir* and Standing Rock**

Day 1 – Eduardo Gudynas, “Buen Vivir: Today’s Tomorrow”

Alberto Acosta and Mateo Martínez Abarca, “Buen Vivir: An Alternative Perspective from the Peoples of the Global South to the Crisis of Capitalist Modernity”

Day 2 – Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, “The Great Sioux Nation and the Resistance to Colonial Land Grabbing”

Emma Norman, “Standing Up for Inherent Rights: The Role of Indigenous-Led Activism in Protecting Sacred Waters and Ways of Life”

Investigate and explore the Environmental Justice Atlas’s “Blockadia” map

### **Week 14 – Decolonial “Re-Existence” Part III: The Prison-Industrial Complex and Abolitionism**

Day 1 – Angela Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?*, pp. 1-59

Day 2 – Angela Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?*, pp. 60-115