

# Postorientalism and Postcolonialism (fall 2015)

## HIST 475/575

Maurus Reinkowski

Monday, 12:40 – 15:30, FASS G048

### Version from 16 November 2015

The term *Postcolonialism* characterizes a loosely defined field of interdisciplinary perspectives, theories and methods that deal with dimensions of colonial rule in the past and its effects into the immediate present. Postcolonial Studies venture to deconstruct potent discourses and patterns of representations crafted by colonial rule in the 19th and early 20th century. Postcolonial Studies have had a deep imprint on humanities and social sciences in the last decades. Some knowledge of this current of thought is elementary for being able to grasp and handle a greater part of the research literature in the field of Middle Eastern Studies. Much less established is the term *Postorientalism*.<sup>1</sup> But there cannot be any doubt that the question of a viable postorientalist approach, building upon Edward Said's criticism, is of great importance to students of the 'Middle East' and the 'Islamic world'.

Students in this class will meet with the 'usual suspect' Edward Said and his book *Orientalism*, but will also gain insight into other important aspects of postcolonial literature, such as *Subaltern Studies* originating in the attempt of South Asian scholars to come to terms with the legacy of British colonial rule. On the whole, the seminar intends to make students acquainted with the challenging intellectual style so characteristic of postcolonial studies (and sometimes on the verge of being incomprehensible). During roughly the last third of the term we will discuss how to apply the theoretical insights of Postcolonial Studies onto the fields of Middle Eastern, Ottoman and Southeast European studies. The amount of reading material will vary according to the level of difficulty.

#### Grade assessment

1 essay (until 25 December 2015)	(40)
1 mid-term exam (7th week)	(30)
1 final exam (14th week)	(30)

#### On writing the class papers

Paper topics can be selected from all 11 topics dealt with within the framework of this seminar. As specific paper topics are not listed in this syllabus, but are to be concretized you are requested to discuss with me your preferred topic selection until 15 November (I will be available in my office on Monday, 10-12 am). For the rules of writing the essay please see APPENDIX I at the end of this syllabus.

#### Show-up policy

Presence at the exams in the 7th and 14th week is precondition for successful participation in the course. From the second unit on 28 September onwards students may miss the class up to 2 times. On the whole, students who are not present (for reasons whatever) during at least 8 of the 10 remaining thematic week units in this course will receive the mark *fail*. Students are thus advised to be very careful about squandering too early their two non-show options.

---

<sup>1</sup> Dabashi, Hamid, *Post-Orientalism: Knowledge and Power in Time of Terror*. New Brunswick, N.J. u.a.: Transaction Publ. 2009, uses explicitly the term *Postorientalism*, but the book is a rather disappointing collection of disconnected essays.

## **1 Entering the Field** (14 Sept)

On the genesis of the term Postcolonialism. Getting an overview concerning the various currents of postcolonial theories. Understanding what postcolonial theory has to criticize about earlier scholarship. Situating postcolonial studies in the wider field of critical scholarship.

Young, Robert J.C., *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford et al.: Blackwell 2003, 1-92 (introduction, chapter 1: Subaltern knowledge, 2: History and power, from below and above, 3: Space and land, 4: Hybridity).

## **2 Bayram week** (21 Sept)

### **3a What is Colonialism?** (28 Sept)

Colonialism is a distinctively new form of rule. Colonialism is intimately connected to the historically singular peak of European dominance in the 19th and early 20th century, but also to many other phenomena such as the rise of global economy. On the other hand, colonialism is rooted in the tradition of empire, i.e. the manifold types of imperial rule in human history. We will try to understand the continuities, but also 'innovations' that the new type of colonial hegemony brought about.

Burbank, Jane / Cooper, Frederick, *Empires in World History. Power and the Politics of Difference*, Princeton et al.: Princeton University Press, 2010, 287-329, 472-474 (chapter 10: Imperial repertoires and myths of modern colonialism)

### **3b Where is the Middle East?** (28 Sept)

As much of the debate in the class will refer again and again to the concept of the 'Middle East' we include here a session on the question of how to define the term Middle East and of how to assess its historical and political uses. In particular we will debate the particular feature of 'unpracticability *cum* unavailability' of the term Middle East.

Davison, Roderic, Where is the Middle East?, *Foreign Affairs* 38. (1959-60), 665-675; Khalil, Osamah F., The Crossroads of the World: U.S. and British Foreign Policy Doctrines and the Construct of the Middle East, 1902-2007, *Diplomatic History* 38.2. (2014), 299-344.

## **4 Said's Critique of Orientalism** (5 Oct)

This session that will be devoted to reading the introductory chapter of Edward Said's *Orientalism* and becoming acquainted with Said's main arguments. We also want to understand the intellectual background of Edward Said and the academic-intellectual context in which the book was written.

Lockman, Zachary, *Contending Visions of the Middle East. The History and Politics of Orientalism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2004, 182-214, 285-288 (chapter 6: Said's Orientalism: A book and its aftermath); Said, Edward, *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1-28 (chapter 1: Introduction).

## **5 The Critique of the Critique of Orientalism** (12 Oct)

A work as important as Said's *Orientalism* could not remain without criticism. We omit the polemical aspects such as the exchanges between Bernard Lewis and Edward Said and look into Zachary Lockman's lucid analysis of how *Orientalism* affected the field of Middle Eastern Studies. Furthermore we read two critiques of Said's work by S.J. Al-Azm and A. Rotter.

Azm, Sadik Jalal al-, Orientalism and Orientalism in Reverse, *Khamsin* 8 (1981), 5-26; Lockman, Zachary, *Contending Visions of the Middle East. The History and Politics of Orientalism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2004, 215-267, 288-292 (chapter 7: After Orientalism?); Rotter, Andrew J., Saidism without Said: Orientalism and U.S. Diplomatic History, *The American Historical Review* 105.4. (2000), 1205-1217

## **6 Critiques of Postcolonial Studies (19 Oct)**

There is not such a thing as a homogeneous and consistent critique of Postcolonialism, but all critics plead for new orientation and substantial modification. We conclude the first part of the seminar with reading a major invective written by Jean-François Bayart, a French specialist of African studies, against the underlying premises of Postcolonialism and two more nuanced statements on the heuristic shortcomings of Postcolonial Studies by Frederic Cooper and Arif Dirlik.

Bayart, Jean-François, Postcolonial Studies. A Political Invention of Tradition?, *Public Culture* 23.1. (2011), 55-84; Cooper, Frederic, Postcolonial Studies and the Study of History, in: A. Loomba et al. (edd.), *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond*. Durham N.C.: Duke University Press 2005, 401-422; Dirlik, Arif, The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism, *Critical Enquiry* 20.2. (1994), 328-356, reprinted in: Mongia, Padmini (ed.), *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory. A Reader*. London et al.: Arnold 1996, 294-320.

## **7 Mid-Term Exam (26 Oct)**

## **8 The Rise of Subaltern Studies (2 Nov)**

Subaltern Studies are a huge field with many important proponents. Possibly the 'most famous' three among them are Partha Chatterjee, Dipesh Chakrabarty and Gayatri Chakravorty. Necessarily there must be a selection from the large oeuvre of Subaltern Studies. We will start with two of the 'foundational' texts by G.C. Spivak and P. Chatterjee.

Chatterjee, Partha, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1986, 1-35 (chapter 1: Nationalism as a Problem in the History of Political Ideas); Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, Can the Subaltern Speak?, in: Nelson, Cary / Grossberg, Lawrence (edd.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988, 271-313.

## **9 Subaltern Studies in Full Blossom (9 Nov)**

In this second unit on the Subaltern Studies we read two chapters from Dipesh Chakrabarty's *Provincializing Europe*, one of the most influential and popular works of Subaltern Studies, showing the field in its 'full blossom'. Concomitantly, we will read two articles about the development of Subaltern Studies and its 'holy trinity' (Chatterjee, Chakrabarty, Spivak).

Chakrabarty, Dipesh, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton et al.: Princeton University Press 2000, 27-46, 97-113, 265-268, 275-277 (chapter 1: Postcoloniality and the artifice of history; 4: Minority histories, subaltern pasts); Krishnan, Sanjay, The Place of India in Postcolonial Studies: Chatterjee, Chakrabarty, Spivak, *New Literary History. A Journal of Theory & Interpretation* 40.2. (2009), 265-280; Prakash, Gyan, Writing Post-Orientalist Histories of the Third World: Perspectives from Indian Historiography, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 32.2. (1990), 383-408.

## **10 British Colonialism in Egypt** (16 Nov)

Mitchell's books is an early prominent case of applying postcolonial theory on Middle Eastern history respectively European imperialism in the Middle East in the 19th century. We read once chapter of *Colonising Egypt* and take also up the discussion of British imperialism in Egypt in Said's *Orientalism*.

Mitchell, Timothy, *Colonising Egypt*. Cambridge et al.: Cambridge University Press (1988), 34-62, 184-190 (chapter 2: Enframing); Said, Edward, *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books 1978, 31-49, 73-92, 356-357, 359-360 (chapters 1.1: Knowing the Oriental, 1.3: Projects); M.W. Daly, The British Occupation, 1882-1922, in: M.W. Daly (ed.), *Cambridge History of Egypt, vol. 2: Modern Egypt from 1517 to the End of the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge et al: Cambridge University Press 1998, 239-251.

## **11 cancelled** (23 Nov)

## **12 Postcolonialism and Ottoman Studies** (30 Nov)

Taking the example of the Ottoman Empire we will discuss the heuristic value of Postcolonial Studies for mostly 'non-colonial empires' in the 19th and early 20th century. We read three of the most substantial contributions that strive to bring together and 'cross-fertilize' the fields of historical studies of the Ottoman Empire and Postcolonial Studies.

Deringil, Selim, "They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery": The Late Ottoman Empire and the Post-Colonial Debate, *Comparative Study of Society and History* 45.2. (2003), 311-342; Göçek, Fatma Müge, Parameters of a Postcolonial Sociology of the Ottoman Empire, in: *Decentering Social Theory. Political Power and Social Theory. A Research Annual* 25. (2013), 73-104; Makdisi, Ussama, Ottoman Orientalism, *American Historical Review* 107.3. (2002), 768-796.

## **13 Whither Postcolonialism?** (7 Dec)

We have already come across three examples of outspoken critics of Postcolonial Studies. Critique of Postcolonial studies has not subsided in the last few years. It has been put forward with particular thrust from theoreticians in the Marxist tradition such as Vivek Chibber. We read also a short essay by Robert J.C. Young (the postcolonial theorist that we have met in the first unit) on possible venues of further research in postcolonial perspective.

Chibber, Vivek, *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital*, London: Verso, 2013, 1-27 (chapter 1: Postcolonial theory and subaltern studies); Chibber, Vivek, Making sense of postcolonial theory: a response to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 27.3. (2014), 617-624; Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, Postcolonial theory and the specter of capital [book review], *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 27.1. (2014), 184-198, Young, Robert J.C., Postcolonial Remains, *New Literary History* 43. (2012), 19-42.

## **14 Final Exam** (14 Dec)

## **Appendix I: Rules for Writing the Essay**

1. Select only one topic.
2. Please inform me about the topic selection until 15 November.
3. The essay has to be submitted until 25 December.
4. The essay should be double-spaced and the font-size should be 12 Times New Roman. The paper is expected to be approx. 8-10 pages long.
5. The introduction has to describe the paper topic and its importance for the field of Postcolonial and Postoriental Studies.
6. The main part of the paper ought to describe, discuss, and analyze the main issues related to the paper topic. While doing this, please take the reading material of the whole course into consideration.
7. Insert subject headlines within the paper text.
8. Please develop your own independent opinion concerning the topic and include it to the conclusion part.