

Marielle Debos  
Tuesday 4:40- 6:40pm with exceptions  
Room: F520

## **Science, Expertise, and Power: Postcolonial Perspectives**

The seminar offers an introduction to the postcolonial scholarship. It does this by exploring the production and circulation of knowledge, science, expertise about and in the Global South. The seminar is divided into two units. With the first unit, we will explore the de/postcolonial and feminist thought from a variety of theoretical perspectives. Where is knowledge produced? What is the place of South-based scholars? Of female scholars from the South? What does it mean to “decolonize” methodologies and the curriculum? What is an ethical research? The second unit is thematic. We will pursue our analysis of the politics of knowledge production by focusing on some prominent concepts of international aid. When were notions such as “development,” “poverty,” or “failed states” construed? By whom? What are the assumptions and central arguments underlying international development and humanitarianism? In contrast with the mainstream narrative that portrays the Global South as a place without science nor technology, we will consider it as a source of conceptual as well as technological innovation. We will also see how postcolonial spaces provide us with crucial insights into the workings of the world at large.

### **Course requirements**

The success of the seminar depends on the commitment and involvement of all participants. You are expected to complete the readings, and arrive in class prepared to participate in the discussions. Mutism it not an option. You are also expected to limit your laptop use to consultation of readings.

The seminar is taught in English. One of the objectives is to help you acquire skills that will be crucial for your future career -- whether you pursue a PhD or not. Therefore, students who are not fluent in English are encouraged to enroll in the class. I will help you express your opinions and thoughts. The written assignments can be either in English or French.

### **Assignments**

#### Assignment for students writing a Master thesis

You write an essay based on the readings of the two texts assigned in the sessions below. Your essay should also discuss other academic articles and books relevant to this issue.

Essays are due on the day on the session you chose.

Guidelines to write the essay:

- Start by asking yourself questions such as: Why should these two texts be read together? What questions do they address? Do the authors have the same theoretical framework or not? What is their methodology? Do they defend the same argument? Why? Are these texts a key contribution to their field? Why? In your opinion, what text is the most convincing? Who would benefit from the reading of these texts? To what extent are they helpful for your own research?
- You should also be attentive to the context of the publication: Who are the authors? When and where were the texts published?
- Your essay should be more than a summary of the two texts. It should be an academic review.

### Assignments for students doing an internship

You can either write an essay based on the required readings (see above) *or* work on a project related to technologies in/from the Global South.

You can write an essay but also make a poster, write a scenario for a video, or shoot the video.

You can work on your own or in a team of 2 or 3. Be ready to present your essay, poster, or video in class.

### **Session 1. Introduction – 24 September**

Introduction to feminist and de/post-colonial perspectives on the production of knowledge.  
Presentation of the assignments.

## **PART 1. Knowledge and Science in Question**

### **Session 2. The invention of “the Orient” – 1<sup>st</sup> October**

Required reading for all: - Said Edward, *Orientalism*, London, Penguin, 1977. (Focus on part I of the introduction).

#### Recommended readings:

Fanon Frantz, *Peaux noires, masques blancs*, Paris, Le Seuil, (1952) 2015. (See also the special issue « Mobiliser Fanon », *Politique africaine*, n°143, 2016).

Mazrui Ali A., “The Re-Invention of Africa: Edward Said, V. Y. Mudimbe, and beyond”, *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 36, n° 3, Autumn, 2005, pp. 68-8.

Mbembe Achille, *Sortir de la grande nuit : Essai sur l'Afrique décolonisée*, Paris, La Découverte, 2010.

Mudimbe V-Y., *The Invention of Africa : Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge*, Bloomington, Londres, Indiana University Press – James Currey, 1988: Chapter 1. “Discourse of Power and Knowledge of Otherness”.

Spivak Gayatri Chakravorty, “Can the Subaltern Speak ?”, in Cary Nelson, Lawrence Crossberg (eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1988, pp. 271-313.

### **Session 3. The decolonial/postcolonial feminist critique – 8 October**

#### Required readings:

For all: - Abu-Lughod, Lila, “Writing against Culture,” in Fox Richard G. (ed.), *Recapturing*

*Anthropology: Working in the Present*, School of American Research Press, 1996, pp. 137-162.  
For students writing an essay, also read: - Medie, Peace, Kang, Alice, “Power, Knowledge and the Politics of Gender in the Global South,” *European Journal of Politics and Gender*, Vol. 1, n°1-2, pp. 37-54.

Recommended readings:

Abu-Lughod, Lila, *Do Muslim women need saving?*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 2013.

Mohanty, Chandra Talpade, “Under Western eyes: feminist scholarship and colonial discourses”, *boundary*, Vol. 2, n°12/13, 1984, pp. 333-358.

Yuval-Davis, Nira, “Situated Intersectionality and Social Inequality”, *Raisons politiques*, 2015/2 (N° 58), pp. 91-100.

**Session 4. Decolonizing methodologies – 15 October**

Required readings:

For all: - Smith, Linda Tuhiwai, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, New York, London, Zed Books, 2008 (1999), introduction, pp. 1-17.

For students writing an essay, also read: - “Roundtable: Ethical?! Collaboration?! Keywords for our contradictory times”, *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, Vol. 31, n°3, 2019. (The JCAS published a collection of short essays on the ethics of knowledge production about and from Africa).

Recommended readings :

Decolonizing the University : The African politics reading list :

<http://democracyinafrica.org/decolonising-the-university-the-african-politics-reading-list/>

“The Bukavu series”, a collection of essays by researchers on/from the DRC, 2019:

<https://www.gicnetwork.be/silent-voices-blog-bukavu-series-eng/>

Boulbina Seloua Luste, Cohen Jim (ed.), « Décoloniser les savoirs : Internationalisation des débats et des luttes », *Mouvements*, n° 72, hiver 2012.

Sanchez Andrew, “Canon Fire : Decolonizing the Curriculum”, *The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology*, Vol. 36, N° 2, Autumn 2018, pp. 1–6.

**Session 5. Technologies from the South – FRIDAY 18 October 10am-noon**

Required readings:

For all: - Hecht Gabrielle, *Being Nuclear: Africans and the Global Uranium Trade*, MIT Press & Wits University Press, 2012. (Translation into French: *Uranium africain : Une histoire globale*, Paris, Le Seuil, 2016) : Read the introduction, and focus on pp. 22-36.

For students writing an essay, also read: - Mavhunga Clapperton Chakanetsa (ed.), 2017, *What Do Science, Technology, and Innovation Mean from Africa?*, MIT Press, 2017, introduction.

Recommended readings:

Breckenridge Keith, Hecht Gabrielle, Serlin David, “Confronting African Histories of Technology: A Conversation with Keith Breckenridge and Gabrielle Hecht,” *Radical History Review*, 127, January 2017, pp. 87-102.

Comaroff Jean, Comaroff John, *Theory from the South: Or, How Euro-America Is Evolving Toward Africa*, Paradigm, 2012.

Du Bois W.E.B, *The world and Africa: An Inquiry into the Part which Africa has Played in World History*, New York, Viking Press, 1947.  
Hecht Gabrielle (ed.), *Entangled geographies: Empire and Technopolitics in the Global Cold War*, MIT Press, 2011

Holidays: 28 October- 3 November

## **PART II. Critical Perspectives on Key Concepts of International Aid**

### **Session 6. “Democratization” – 22 October**

#### Required reading :

For all: - Abrahamsen Rita, “Discourses of Democracy, Practices of Autocracy: Shifting meanings of democracy in the aid-authoritarianism nexus”, in Tobias Hagmann & Filip Reyntjens (eds.), *Aid and Authoritarianism in Africa: Development without Democracy*, London, Zed Books, 2016, pp. 21-43.

#### Recommended readings:

Bush Sarah S., *The Taming of Democracy Assistance: Why Democracy Promotion Does Not Confront Dictators*, Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Cheeseman Nic, Klaas Brian, *How to Rig an Election*, Yale University Press, 2018.

Nyabola Nanjala, *Digital Democracy, Analog Politics: How the Internet Era is Transforming Politics in Kenya*, London, Zed Books, 2018.

Petric Boris (ed.), *Democracy at Large : NGOs, Political Foundations, Think Tanks and International Organizations*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

Mitchell, Timothy, *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil*, London, Verso, 2011.

### **Session 7. “Development” and “Poverty” – 5 November**

#### Required readings :

For all: - Sarr Felwine, *Afrotopia*, Paris, Philippe Rey, 2016: chapitre 1 « Penser l’Afrique » et 2 « contre la marée », pp. 9-28.

For students writing an essay, also read: - Roy Ananya, *Poverty Capital: Microfinance and the Making of Development*, Routledge, 2010: Chapter 1. “Small Worlds: The Democratization of Capital and Development”

#### Recommended readings :

Escobar, Arturo, *Encountering development: The making and unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton studies in culture/power/history. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1995.

Ferguson James, *The Anti-politics Machine: Development, De-politicisation and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Goldman Michael, *Imperial Nature : The World Bank and Struggles for Social Justice in the Age of Globalization*, Yale University Press, 2005.

Jerven Morten, *Poor numbers: How we are misled by African development statistics and what to do about it*, Cornell University Press, 2013.

Nubukpo Kako, « Entre les plans d’émurgence sans vision et des visions sans émergence : la difficile appropriation par l’Afrique de ses trajectoires de développement », propos recueillis par Boris Samuel, *Politique africaine*, n°145, 2017, pp. 51-64.

Rodney, Walter, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1972.

### **Session 8. The “failed” state FRIDAY 8 November 2-4pm**

#### Required reading :

For all: - Hill Jonathan, “Beyond the other? A postcolonial critique of the failed state thesis”, *African Identities*, n°3, 2005, pp. 139-54.

#### Recommended readings :

Debos Marielle, *Living by the Gun in Chad: Combatants, Impunity and State Formation*, Londres, Zed Books, 2016: Chapter 6.

Grimm Sonja, Lemay-Hébert Nicolas, Nay Olivier (eds.), *The Political Invention of Fragile States: The Power of Ideas*, London: Routledge, 2014.

Hagmann Tobias, Péclard Didier (eds), *Negotiating Statehood: Dynamics of Power and Domination in Africa*, Malden MA, Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.

Marchal Roland, “Atomisation des fins, radicalisation des moyens : de quelques conflits africains”, *Critique Internationale*, n°6, hiver 2000, pp. 159-175.

The fragile state index : <http://global.fundforpeace.org/index.php>

### **Session 9. “Peaceland” and the “good intentions crowd” – 12 November**

#### Required readings :

For all : - Autesserre Séverine, *Peaceland : Conflict Resolution and the Everyday Politics of International Intervention*, Cambridge University Press, 2014, introduction.

For students writing an essay, also read: - Lombard Louisa, *State of Rebellion : Violence and intervention in the Central African Republic*, Londres, Zed Books, 2016: Chapter 1 “Conflict and the state in the peace-kept world”.

#### Recommended readings:

Duffield Mark, *Development, Security and Unending War: Governing the World of Peoples*, Polity Press, 2007.

Mosse David (ed.), *Adventures in Aidland: The Anthropology of Professionals in International Development*, New York/Oxford, Berghahn Books, 2011.

Daho Grégory, Duclos Nathalie, Jouhanneau Cécile, “Political Sociology of International Interventions: Peacebuilders and the Ground”, *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, Vol. 13 n°3, 2019, pp.

Richards Paul, *No Peace, No War, an Anthropology of Contemporary Armed Conflicts*, Oxford : James Currey, Athens : Ohio University Press, 2005.

### **Session 10. Epistemologies of the South – 19 November**

(This class belongs to the part 1. However, for practical reasons, it takes place later in the semester)

Intervention de Lionel Zevounou, maître de conférences en droit public, Université Paris Nanterre, « Le CODESRIA (conseil pour la recherche en sciences sociales en Afrique) à la croisée des chemins »

#### Recommended readings :

Bachir Diagne Souleyman, Amselle Jean-Loup, *En quête d'Afrique (s) : Universalisme et pensée décoloniale*, Paris, Albin Michel, 2018.

De Sousa Santos Boaventura, *The End of the Cognitive Empire: The Coming of Age of Epistemologies of the South*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2018.

Mamdani Mahmood, "The Africa University", *London Review of Books*, vol. 40, n°14, July 2018, pp. 29-32.

Zevounou Lionel, « 'L'Afrique dans le monde' et 'le monde en Afrique' : jalons pour un programme de recherche pluridisciplinaire sur le droit », *Bulletin du CODESRIA*, CODESRIA, 2017, pp. 9-11.

## **Session 11. The World Bank and the Construction of Knowledge – 26 November**

Guest: Sidy Cissokho, University of Edinburgh: « De Dakar à Washington DC: trajectoire de recherche sur et à la Banque mondiale »

### Recommended readings :

Cissokho, Sidy, « Réformer en situation de 'décharge' : les transports publics à Dakar durant les mandats d'Abdoulaye Wade », *Politique africaine*, Vol. 126, n° 2, 2012, pp. 163-184.

Goldman, Michael. "The Birth of a Discipline: Producing Authoritative Green Knowledge, World Bank-Style", *Ethnography*, Vol. 2, n°2, 2001, pp 191-217.

Lavigne Delville, Philippe, « Pour une anthropologie symétrique entre 'développeurs' et 'développés' », *Cahiers d'Études Africaines*, 202-203(2), 2011, pp. 491-509.

Moretti Franco, Pestre Dominique, "Bankspeak: The Language of World Bank Reports, 1946–2012", *Stanford Literary Lab*, 2015.

## **Session 12. A Biometric future? 17 December**

### Required readings :

- For all: Donovan Kevin, « The Biometric Imaginary: Bureaucratic Technopolitics in Post-Apartheid Welfare », *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 41, n°4, 2015, pp. 815-833.

For students writing an essay, read also: Breckenridge Keith, *Biometric State: The Global Politics of Identification and Surveillance in South Africa, 1850 to the Present*, Cambridge University Press, 2014, introduction.

### Recommended readings:

Awenengo Dalberto, Séverine, Banégas, Richard, Cutolo, Armando, « (Bio)maîtriser les identités ? État documentaire et citoyenneté au tournant biométrique », dossier spécial de *Politique Africaine*, n°152, 2018.

Breckenridge Keith, *Biometric State: The Global Politics of Identification and Surveillance in South Africa, 1850 to the Present*, Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Magnet, Soshana Amielle, *When biometrics fails: Gender, Race and the Technology of Identity*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2011.

Marko Ferenc David, « 'We are not a failed state, we make the best passports' : South Sudan and Biometric modernity », *African Studies Review*, Vol. 59, n. 2, 2016, pp. 113-132