PSCI 367:

Decolonizing International Relations

Williams College Spring 2022

TuFr 1:10pm – 2:25pm Instructor: Beth Wellman (she/her/hers)

Room: Horn Hall 103C Email: biw1@williams.edu

Zoom Meeting ID: 870 323 5454 Office: 205 Schapiro Hall

Passcode: 3G0589 Student Hours: Tu/Fr 11-1

Course Description

The Oxford English Dictionary defines Decolonization as “the withdrawal from its colonies of a colonial power; the acquisition of political or economic independence by such colonies.” The emergence of an international system of sovereign states–the core foundation of international relations–presumes the process of dismantling systems of domination, extraction, and exclusion ended long ago. However, there is increasing recognition that International Relations in all forms, including theory, research, and policy, continue to be structured by traditional paradigms of power (e.g. white, male, elite).

This course begins with the premise that knowledge is embedded within, and often reproduces, power hierarchies. Thus, this class is organized as a collaborative investigation with the aims of: 1) examining how whiteness and other historically dominant perspectives shape International Relations theory and research areas; 2) expanding and improving our understanding of International Relations through different lenses (e.g. race, class, gender, disability, indigenous, queer, subaltern); and 3) exploring the implications of a more inclusive approach to International Relations, both within the classroom as well as contemporary decolonization movements in the US and around the world.

Our engagement in decolonization will also apply to identifying and dismantling established hierarchies within classroom dynamics. As you’ll see from the remainder of the syllabus, much of our readings and structure of the course will be developed and determined together as a learning community. This class is a lot about unlearning, what constitutes ‘knowledge,’ and imagining alternative pathways.

Learning Objectives

* Understand dominant IR theories, concepts, and research areas, their racialized and engendered qualities, as well as the implicit erasures. Understand the historical development of modern International Relations scholarship.
* Apply a diversity of theoretical lenses (e.g. indigenous, feminist, queer) to IR concepts and research topics to broaden and challenge existing questions and methodologies.
* Think critically about processes of learning and power dynamics produced therein; interrogate the premise of decolonization and its appearance in higher education praxis; participate in the de/re-construction of power within this course.
* Reflect on your personal epistemological values and blind-spots.

Course Structure and Format

Our class features both in-person and online components. Our scheduled course time will be primarily discussion based (we will take turns facilitating). *You are expected to have completed readings and other assignments prior to class*. Most classes will be held in-person; there will be at least a few days where we hold class remotely.

Difference Power and Equity (DPE) Notes:

Successfully completing this course fulfills the DPE requirement (though I hope it is only one of *many* DPE courses you take during your time at Williams!). The course’s main objective is to expand and improve our understanding of International Relations through different theoretical lenses (e.g. race, class, gender, disability, indigenous, queer, subaltern). The course addresses how knowledge and praxis both establish and reproduce power dynamics inside and outside of the classroom context. This class will provide you the opportunities to critically identify, decenter, and deconstruct dominant lenses as well as the ability to apply a more inclusive approach centering a more expansive range of theoretical perspectives and knowledge production.

Course Assessments

**Course Participation**

Every student must not only attend class, but actively participate in course discussions and activities within the classroom and shared spaces online (e.g. GLOW discussion threads). Critical to active participation is asking questions—of the readings, of fellow students, of me.

Active participation also includes:

* Interventions that indicate substantive and original thinking.
* Insights that integrate evidence from the readings in support of the argument you are making.
* Comments and questions to the group that further and deepen the conversation, particularly with regard to evaluating the strengths, limitations and scope conditions of theories or cases under discussion.
* Engaging with other class members’ ideas and constructive feedback on their projects. If disagreeing with others’ ideas, disagreements are stated clearly and respectfully.

**Reflection Essays**

Throughout the course you will be asked to reflect on your thinking about international relations and world politics, your expectations for learning, and how this course is challenging and changing your perspective (or not!). We will decide as a course if we want to (optionally) share these with each other to build community and dialogue.

Reflection Essay 1 (Origins and Expectations) due February 8

Reflection Essay 2 (Interventions and Inspirations) due April 5

Reflection Essay 3 (Final Annotation and Assessment) due May 20

**Collaborative Learning and Course Design**

The Final Project will be for you to design a “Decolonized” Introduction to World Politics (PSCI 202) syllabus. Many of the components of the course structure and format we will decide collaboratively throughout the semester (e.g. learning objectives, themes, assessments and grading breakdown); others you will decide on your own (e.g. course description, assigned readings for each theme, course organization).

In the second half of the course, you will work in a small group to facilitate our learning about a key concept or case in International Relations (as determined by our class TBD). For your resource sharing day (between April 12 – April 22) your group may (or may not!) assign resources to cover prior to class, organize and facilitate class as you believe best meets your teaching objectives through a decolonized framework, and develop an extended annotated reading/resource list on your topic for your fellow classmates to draw from as they create their syllabi.

You will each present your individual syllabi during the last two weeks of the course, drawing attention to a favorite reading or element of your project. Your final paper will be an annotated reflection of the syllabus and an overall assessment of your participation in the course. *Additional details TBD.*

Course Policies

**Learning During a Pandemic**

We are living through a difficult moment right now. COVID-19 in all of its waves is still an ever-present reality. There continues to be a lot of stress, uncertainty, and upheaval; the toll on mental health is cumulative. In no way are we “back to normal.”

I am fully committed to making sure that you learn everything you are hoping to learn from this class. I will make whatever accommodations I can to help you get through the semester, especially as you (and I) may encounter unforeseen challenges. Please let me know if you are unable to attend class due to COVID.  I will work with you to develop a plan that allows you to continue making progress in the course during your time in isolation/quarantine.

Recognizing when you are over your head, reaching out when you need additional support: these are actions of courage and strength. Do not suffer in silence. We will figure it out.

**Classroom Inclusivity**

Many topics covered in the course can be controversial, divisive, and often difficult.

Creating a community of respect, inclusion, and support is integral to the success of this course. The Williams community embraces diversity of age, background, beliefs, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, and other visible and nonvisible categories. I welcome all students into this class and am committed to creating an environment where people feel supported, and a diversity of experiences and learning styles are acknowledged and valued. We will work together as a class to establish ground-rules for discussion, and I will check in to assess what’s working (and what’s not) and adjust the course to better meet the needs and interests of the class. My student hours (whether in-person outside or on Zoom) is also, always, a safe haven if for anyone who believes they are being treated with prejudice.

**Community Health**

Creating an in-classroom community during a pandemic requires a stronger commitment than usual to protecting our own well-being in order to safeguard each other’s health. In an attempt to keep our classroom environment as healthy as possible, you will be required to wear a mask at all times in the classroom*.* If you feel sick, please do not come to class. I will be happy to work with you to make sure you can make up any missed portions of class. We must navigate the next few months as a community.

**Health/Accessibility resources**:

Students with disabilities of any kind who may need accommodations for this course are encouraged to contact Dr. GL Wallace (Director of Accessible Education) at 413.597.4672.  Also, students experiencing mental or physical health challenges that are significantly affecting their academic work or well-being are encouraged to contact me and to speak with a dean so we can help you find the right resources.  The deans can be reached at 413.597.4171. Finally, I will listen and believe you if someone is threatening you. If you are experiencing sexual assault, domestic violence, or stalking, please talk with me and I will listen to you, support you, and connect you with resources.

**Computer Use in Class**

Given mounting evidence of the benefits of [taking notes by hand](http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2014/05/to-remember-a-lecture-better-take-notes-by-hand/361478/) I highly recommend using a pen and paper in class, especially as a break from staring at a screen. It is also difficult for all of us not to get distracted by email, etc. If you believe it is best for your learning, you are welcome to use your computer in our seminar for note taking and referencing reading material. Internet should be switched off, phones should be on silent and out of reach during class. If laptops become too distracting I reserve the right to change this policy.

**Recording in-person classes**

Classes may be recorded for the benefit of students enrolled remotely and those who may be unable to attend live.  I will inform you whether the course or any particular sessions are being recorded.  By participating with your camera on, using a profile image, or with audio unmuted, you are consenting to having your video, image, and audio recorded. I also hope you will email me a thing that brings you joy—a song, youtube video, book, recipe, etc.—before the first class to show me you’ve read the syllabus. If you do not want to be recorded, please be sure to keep your camera off, do not use a profile image, and keep your microphone muted.  Students who choose to not be recorded may participate by means of the chat feature.

**Late work policy**

Please let me know by email if you are not going to be able to submit an assignment on time, the earlier the better. An email request for an extension should state a) why the assignment will be late and b) the date/time you are requesting for an extension. I plan on being additionally lenient and flexible during this semester; please do not abuse it.

**Academic Integrity**

Although much of the learning in this class will be collaborative, **all submitted written work must be your own**. Throughout the course you will be sharing with and learning from other students within our class. Students can share readings and research materials, but may not engage in any joint writing (with the exception of the collaborative assignments).

Please review the [Williams College Honor Code](https://web.williams.edu/wp-etc/acad-resources/survival_guide/Integrity/HonorCode.php) and consult the website for resources on how to properly cite sources within your work. I will also provide additional guidance throughout the semester. If you have any questions about how the Honor Code applies to your work, please come talk with me. I’m always happy to have those conversations, especially as you research and write.

I take plagiarism and cheating extremely seriously, and I reserve the right to check a digital form of any of your written work with software designed to check for plagiarism. I also reserve the right to check with other student work at participating universities to make sure final case studies are your own.

**Contacting the Professor**

The best way to reach me is by email: biw1@williams.edu. I will do my best to respond as quickly as possible. Please note responses may be delayed during evenings and weekends. I also strongly encourage you to come to student hours (Tuesdays/Fridays 11 am – 1pm) in Schapiro 205. We can also schedule appointments over zoom, using this link through [Google Appointments](https://calendar.google.com/calendar/u/0/selfsched?sstoken=UUVkdW4ybksxeUVYfGRlZmF1bHR8MzVlYmJiYWI2MjcxYjdjMWE3MmE2OWJjNzA4OWQwMDI). I am happy to talk about anything related to the course, answer questions, listen to concerns, or if you feel you need help.

Course Readings

All readings will be available within our GLOW page. We will determine collectively whether to order books and print out course packets.

To stay up-to-date on World politics, I highly recommend signing up for [The Daily Chatter](https://www.dailychatter.com/students/), a daily e-newsletter that covers a few major news stories around the world. (Their claim is “fair and non-partisan” but sometimes their editorializing “digest” remarks, even if US “mainstream” are also quite problematic, which is worth noting.) You may also enjoy [The Monkey Cage](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/06/10/about-monkey-cage/), full of accessible explainers where political scientists write short, relevant news analyses related to their research. Reading [The New York Times](https://library.williams.edu/computing/nyt/) (and/or listening to [The Daily](https://www.nytimes.com/column/the-daily)) should also be part of your knowledge practice if it’s not already. I’m also currently obsessed with The Continent, an online weekly newspaper of some of the best reporting of independent journalists throughout Africa. You can subscribe [here](https://mg.co.za/thecontinent/) and I’ve created a folder in GLOW of past issues.

Course Schedule

**Class 1: Introduction: What does it mean to ‘decolonize’? What does it not?**

**Feb 4** Watch: [The Scramble for Africa](https://www.aljazeera.com/videos/2010/9/5/the-scramble-for-africa-a-history-of-independence) (al Jazeera, 2010, 45 minutes)

**ONLINE**

#DecolonizeYourSyllabus: Indigenous Wisdom by an Indigenous Scholar Autumn A. BlackDeer, MSW Twitter August 19 2021: https://twitter.com/AsherBlackdeer/status/1428382123329732614

Decolonize as ‘Hot Sauce’?

Sirma Bilge Twitter January 15 2022:

https://twitter.com/Sirma\_Bilge/status/1482554411213897730

**Reflection Essay 1 (Origins and Expectations) due 9pm Monday Feb 7**

*Your time and intellectual energy are valuable resources; why are you here? What are your expectations for this course? For yourself? What are you hoping to (un)learn? How will you know if this course was “valuable” to you? What do you think it means to “Decolonize International Relations”?*

**Class 2: What do we know about IR? Part I**

Feb 8 **World Politics: Origin Stories (ONLINE)**

Robbie Shilliam. "Race and racism in international relations: retrieving a scholarly inheritance." *International Politics Reviews* (2020): 1-44. (Skim)

Kudakwashe Vanyoro. “Decolonising African migration

research and practice as engagement in and with time.” *Mixed Migration Review* 2021: 123 – 126.

*In class: Be prepared to tell an “origin story” about your relationship with International Relations, World Politics, and critical perspectives. How did you get initially interested? Was there a moment of rupture or confusion? What is an experience you have had that attracted you to this course?*

**Class 3:** **What do we know about IR? Part II**

Feb 11 Review the Syllabi posted on GLOW. Where do they overlap and where are points of departure? What are common themes / concepts / cases? What emerges as “core” IR readings, ideas, theories, concepts? What is missing?

Pull out: Origin stories of IR, explicit (and implicit) questions, assumptions, key claims, any quotes that you found particularly striking.

**Class 4:** **International Relations Theory: Interrogating the “ISMs”**

Feb 15 Stephen M Walt. "International relations: one world, many theories." *Foreign policy* (1998): 29-46.

Jack Snyder. "One world, rival theories." *Foreign policy* 145 (2004): 52.

*Additional “Core” readings to be determined by class on Feb 11*

**Feb 18 No Class**

**Class 5: Race and IR: Part I**

**Feb 22** Robert Vitalis. *White world order, black power politics*. Cornell University Press, 2016. Introduction – Chapter 4 (p. 1 – 92)

**Class 6: Race and IR: Part II**

**Feb 25** Keisha Blain. "Civil Rights International: The Fight against Racism Has Always Been Global," Foreign Affairs 99, no. 5 (September/October 2020): 176-181

Kelebogile Zvobgo & Meredith Loken (June 19, 2020). “Why race matters in international relations.” Foreign Policy (blog).

Amal Abu-Bakare. “Exploring mechanisms of whiteness: how counterterrorism practitioners disrupt anti-racist expertise”, International Affairs, Volume 98, Issue 1, January 2022, Pages 225–243,

**Class 7:** **Eurocentrism in IR**

**March 1** Jasmine K Gani and Jenna Marshall. “The impact of colonialism on policy and knowledge production in International Relations,” *International Affairs*, Volume 98, Issue 1, January 2022, 5–22.

Zeynep Gulsah Capan. "Decolonising international relations?." *Third World Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (2017): 1-15.

Adom Getachew. "The State's Imperial Shadows." *Ethics & International Affairs* 35, no. 4 (2021): 503-513.

Suketu Mehta. "This land is their land." *Foreign Policy* September-October (2017).

**Class 8:** **Indigenous Approaches**

**March 4** Simpson, Leanne Betasamosake. "Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation." *Decolonization: indigeneity, education & society* 3, no. 3 (2014).

Sharma, Ananya. "Decolonizing International Relations: Confronting Erasures through Indigenous Knowledge Systems." *International Studies* 58, no. 1 (2021): 25-40.

Taylor, Rory. “[6 Native leaders on what it would look like if the US kept its promises](https://www.vox.com/first-person/2019/9/23/20872713/native-american-indian-treaties)” Vox, September 23, 2019.

**Class 9: Engendering IR**

**March 8** Marysia Zalewski and Jane Parpart, eds. *The" man" question in international relations*. Routledge, 2019. Introduction (p. 1-13)

Jacqui True, J Swati Parashar, and J. Ann Tickner. *Revisiting gendered States: feminist imaginings of the State in international relations*. Oxford University Press, 2018. Preface, Chapters 1-3, Afterwards.

Teresia K. Teaiwa. "Bikinis and other s/pacific n/oceans." *The Contemporary Pacific* (1994): 87-109.

**Class 10: Queer IR**

**March 11** Cynthia Weber. "Why is there no queer international theory?." *European Journal of International Relations* 21, no. 1 (2015): 27-51.

Cynthia Weber. *Queer international relations: Sovereignty, sexuality and the will to knowledge*. Oxford University Press, 2016. Chapters 1 – 4 (p 1 – 103).

Chamindra Weerawardhana. "Profoundly decolonizing? Reflections on a transfeminist perspective of international relations." *Meridians* 16, no. 1 (2018): 184-213.

**Class 11: Disability and IR**

**March 15** Deborah Stienstra “DisAbling Globalisation: Rethinking Global Political Economy with a Disability Lens,” Global Society, 16:2, 109-121, (2002) DOI: 10.1080/09537320220132884

Helen Meekosha and Karen Soldatic. "Human Rights and the Global South: the case of disability." *Third World Quarterly* 32, no. 8 (2011): 1383-1397.

Helen Meekosha. “Decolonising Disability: Thinking and Acting Globally.” Disability & Society 26 (6): 667–82. (2011) https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2011.602860.

**Class 12: Decolonization and its Discontents; Coursing the Road Ahead**

**March 18** Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang. "Decolonization is not a metaphor." *Decolonization: Indigeneity, education & society* 1, no. 1 (2012).

Tapji Garba and Sara‐Maria Sorentino. "Slavery is a metaphor: A critical commentary on Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang’s “decolonization is not a metaphor”." *Antipode* 52, no. 3 (2020): 764-782.

**\*\*\*\*Spring Break\*\*\*\***

**Reflection Essay 2 (Interventions and Inspirations) due by 9pm Sunday April 4**

*Our time and intellectual energy are valuable resources; what has grabbed you? Upset you? Challenged you? Confused you? What do you feel you’ve learned so far? What do you feel is missing? What do you think it means to “Decolonize International Relations” now?*

Do some envisioning over break about what a decolonized introduction to International Relations could be, both in terms of content (i.e. what are central concepts, theories, cases to cover) as well as practical aspects inside the classroom. How could the class be temporally and/or spatially organized (i.e. how could class time be spent?) How are you “used” to learning in your courses? What could (and should) be different?

**April 5 Decolonizing the Classroom – I**

Readings TBD

What does a decolonized Intro to IR course look like? Come to class prepared to discuss classroom structure, how you have been “taught” to “learn”, and thinking through International Relations courses (in both content and process). By the end of our class we will divide into pairs to develop different sections of the course, with an organization scheme determined collectively.

**April 8 Organization Day – Meet with your partner to plan your module**

We will not meet as a class; I will hold open Zoom office hours for any questions and discussion.

**April 12 – Resource Sharing Days**

**April 19** Groups will have 20 minutes to share resources about their theme, as well as organize their “presentation” time through a decolonized praxis. Group can assign resources (readings, podcasts, films) for preparation at least 48 hours prior to their presentation day. Groups must provide a more extended annotated resource list that includes at least one non-traditional reading (e.g. podcast, documentary, artwork, etc.)

**April 22: Learning Exchange with WGSS 345: “The Pedagogy of Liberation”**

**Class 19: Assessing Assessments**

**April 26** Readings TBD

How do we want students to be different at the end of an intro to IR course? How do we want to assess their learning? What are kinds of assessment that do not perpetuate the power dynamics we seek to problematize?

**Class 20: Reflect and Prepare**

**April 29** Class will not meet today; finalize your syllabus and prepare your presentation.

**May 3 - 10 Individual Final Presentations**

**Class 24: Course Wrap-Up May 13**

**May 20 Reflection Essay 3 (Final Annotation and Assessment) due by 3pm**

*Time and intellectual energy are valuable resources: why did you assign the readings you did? which ones are from other group syllabi and what did you add, change? why the assessments? which parts of the syllabus felt the most intuitive and/or challenging? How does this differ from a "conventional" Intro to IR course?*

*Did this course meet your expectations? Did you meet your own? Did you (un)learn what you were anticipating? Do you think this course was “valuable” to you? What do you think it means to “Decolonize International Relations”now? What do you think your final grade should be? Why?*