By the end of the eighteenth century, political economy had emerged as a moral philosophy of “commercial society”; by the end of the nineteenth century, economists presumed market behaviour to be human nature itself. There is a strong critical tradition of political economy that seeks to de-naturalise and historicise the emergence, expansion and reproduction of what we now call capitalism. For this tradition, much is at stake in (re-)interpreting the “classics” of political economy.

Yet these classics emerged at a high point of European empire, and the “science” of economics consolidated its influence during an era of renewed imperialism. So what of the relationship between capitalism and colonialism? To what extent and in what ways were the key elements of classical political economy – for example, labour, land, exchange – apprehended through colonial mediations? Is the human nature that drives market behaviour colonial? Unfortunately, there is an intermittent and under-examined relationship between postcolonial critique and critical political economy, which makes this addressing of the questions all the more difficult.

This course will challenge you to make sense of the relationship between colonialism and capitalism on your own terms. To this end, we will build unconventional conversations between classical political economists (and their 19th century sociological and economist successors) and thinkers and traditions invested in confronting colonialism and its legacies. We will focus primarily on regions affected by (Anglo) settler colonialism – primarily the Americas and the Pacific. There are solid pedagogical reasons for focusing our inquiry in this way; nonetheless, it should be noted that this strategy unavoidably attenuates the complexities and divergences of colonial rule on a global scale.

The course requirements are as follows:

**Letter (40%)**
You will write a letter (3-5 pages) wherein you take on the intellectual persona of either Māori Marsden, Adam Ferguson or Silvia Federici. You will write in the first person to your interlocutor, whom you will critically engage over the issues that you deem to be of shared interest. Your letter will begin, “Dear ...”. You will chose one of the following letters:

- Māori Marsden to John Locke
- Adam Ferguson to Charles Darwin
- Silvia Federici to John Millar

The assignment is due by class-time, Monday, 8th October.

**Critical Essay (50%)**
Choose from one of the weekly topic questions between weeks 5-10. Construct your argument by engaging comprehensively with the key readings of that week along with the
support of 3 sources from the “additional” list at the end of this outline. Your essay should be 6-7 pages long (excluding bibliography), and fully referenced.

The assignment is due by class-time, Monday 12th November

**Presentations (10%)**
You will create a presentation with at least one other member of class. I shall assign groups at some point early in the semester. Your task is to produce a 15 minutes group presentation, using some kind of visual aid (e.g. PPT), explaining neoliberalism by reference to the relationship between colonialism and capitalism. You might, for example, chose to focus on e.g. the origins or rise of neoliberalism, or the ethos of neoliberalism, or key categories or rhetorics implicated in neoliberalism, or neoliberal processes and/or effects etc.

For this purpose, you will mobilize at least one theme, concept or line of argument arising from the prior weeks’ discussions. If you chose more than one, you will need to demonstrate how they analytically relate to each other.

I do not expect you to undertake detailed and intricate research for the presentation. Each group only need chose two resources from the additional readings (below) that you think might help you (in addition to the readings and conversations you will have already undertaken). Primarily, I want you to be led by the connections or openings that you might have started to make as we proceeded through the course. In other words, I am most interested in your collective brainstorming – critically and imaginatively – of the ways in which neoliberalism might be said to have - at least in part - a colonial provenance.

You will begin work on this assignment only after you have submitted the critical essay, and you will present in the seminar of week 13, e.g. Monday 26th November.

**COURSE SCHEDULE:**

(Readings marked with * are ones that you will find at the bottom of the Blackboard page – all other readings are accessible via links or via JHU electronic library)

1: Introduction (NB: first class is on 30th Aug – Thursday - as Monday is Labor Day)

Does political economy address a historical or epistemological problem?

  
  **EITHER**


  **OR**

- Matthew Watson, “Crusoe, Friday and the Raced Market Frame of Orthodox Economics Textbooks”, *New Political Economy* 23 (5), 2018 *

2: Nature and improvement (10th Sep)

(How) must nature be improved for civilization to proceed?
3: Land and Value (17th Sep)

With what consequences might value be extracted from the land?


4: Family and Reproduction (24th Sep)

What economic functions must the family perform to assure progress from savagery to civilization?

- Silvia Federici, "Colonization and Christianization", in Caliban and the Witch (New York: Autonemia, 2004) *

5: Labour and Order (1st Oct)

What is the difference between slavery and servitude, and why might the difference matter?

6: The Market and Freedom (8th Oct)

“The struggle for freedom must be pursued through market relations”. Discuss.

- Eric Williams, Capitalism and Slavery (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1944), chs 11-13 *

7: Inheritance (15th Oct)

In what ways might heredity be a crucial element of political economy?

- Walter Bagehot, Physics and Politics: Thoughts on the Application of the Principles of "Natural Selection" and "Inheritance" to Political Society (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1873), parts 2-4 http://www.gutenberg.org/files/4350/4350-h/4350-h.htm#chap02

8: Race and social conservatism (22nd Oct)

Who is a worthy subject in capitalist society and how is race implicated in this moral calculus?

- Frances Beal, "Double Jeopardy: To be Black and Female", in Black Women's Manifesto (New York: The Third World Women's Alliance, 1970) *

9: Providence and Accumulation (29th Oct)

Is accumulation a sacred pursuit?

10: The Spirit of Exchange (5th Nov)

What makes exchange a necessary aspect of being human?

- 'The Dangers of 'Dumb Talk': Eurocentric Translations of the Potlatch', Lane, Richard J. Commonwealth *Dijon* 21 (2), 1999

11: Whose Commons? (12th Nov)

“If private property is the problem, then the commons is the solution”. Do you agree?

- Garrett Hardin, ”The Tragedy of the Commons”, *Science* 162 (3859), 1968
- Stefano Harney & Fred Moten, ”The University and the Undercommons” in *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (Minor Compositions, 2013) *

12: THANKSGIVING (19th Nov)

13: Neoliberalism: a Critique (26th Nov)

This seminar will be devoted to presentations (see assignment info)

14: Recap (3rd Dec)

In this seminar we will draw all the threads of our conversations together and clarify how we might utilize classical political economy and postcolonial critique to rethink the relationship between colonialism and capitalism. We will talk about how the course might contribute to your research ambitions.

ADDITIONAL READINGS:


Lisa Tilley and Robbie Shilliam (eds.), "Special Issue: Raced Markets", *New Political Economy* 23 (5), 2018
