

# Decolonizing Political Science: Context, Concepts and Imaginations

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Not all phenomena studied by political scientists are usefully examined by reference to their colonial pasts and afterlives. But it is the case that Political Science owes most of its key frameworks to colonial contexts and concepts. As a formalized field of study, Political Science emerged in the USA, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, in a context defined by questions of empire and citizenship, and race and behavior. The study of politics per se precedes this institutional departure point, but much of this preceding study was woven around imperial and colonial ventures from the Renaissance onwards. In the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the field developed new areas of inquiry related to decolonization and the postcolonial world.

The purpose of this course is therefore to decolonize the academic study of politics, not politics per se. That said, we'll probably grapple with the prospect that the academy cannot be so easily delinked from other institutions and structures of colonial power. In any case, after we've started by recasting Aristotle as a critical thinker of settler colonialism and imperial rule, we'll recontextualize, reconceptualize, and reimagine four popular subfields of political science: political theory, political behavior, comparative politics, and international relations.

We'll look at the colonial contexts and logics that render key concepts legible in these sub-fields. Some of that is in the readings, some of that we'll talk more about in class. We'll also engage with sources and ideas outside of the colonial canon to imagine how we might cultivate knowledge of these themes differently. That's why I've given two weeks to each subfield, and my labelling of them as 1 and A provokes you to imagine that, in intellectual terms, the anti-colonial response is not indebted to the colonial imposition but is its own starting point.

We'll focus on a key theme associated with each subfield: universal rights in political theory, citizenship in political behavior, development in comparative politics, and war and peace in international relations. And we'll pivot our examination around some key authors/movements: Immanuel Kant and Sylvia Wynter for political theory; Woodrow Wilson and Frantz Fanon for political behavior; Lucien Pye and Walter Rodney for comparative politics; Martin Wight and the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific movement for IR.

These foci are not meant to represent any subfield with fidelity, least of all their internal diversities. Rather, the foci will hopefully allow us to explore some of the abiding colonial logics that have framed their sub-fields as well as alternative logics. We'll finish by considering the study of politics from the borderlands rather than from the agora inside the polis.

Both course requirements will be workshopped during the course (see syllabus). Requirements are as follows:

## **Presentation (40%):**

Students will be randomly assigned into groups of 3. Each group is tasked with critically exploring a statement: "If Hopkins is complicit in the formation of a racist political science, then it must be committed to cultivating an anti-racist political science."

In addressing this statement, and aside from the reading for week 7, the readings in Political Behavior 1 and A will be especially instructive. But groups will need to also undertake some extra-curricular and perhaps even extra-mural research. Each group will need to grapple with the following issues:

1. In what ways and to what extent was the Johns Hopkins university complicit in the formation of a racist political science?
2. What might be the intellectual premises and pedagogical practices of an “anti-racist” political science?
3. In what particular ways and to what extent might an anti-racist political science, at Hopkins, have to engage with the politics of the city of Baltimore?

### **Conversation (60%):**

You will individually write 7-8 pages in the form of a conversation between Aristotle and Gloria Anzaldúa. You will take on the persona/position of both Aristotle and Anzaldúa, who you will imagine are able to communicate across time. The purpose of the conversation is to gauge the ways in which and the extent to which Aristotle sought to “decolonize” the study of politics. Weeks 2 and 12 will be especially pertinent to this exercise, but you may freely draw upon material across the course and beyond. Whenever appropriate you will reference/cite as per convention.

We will discuss and negotiate due dates during class.

### **SYLLABUS**

All readings are available via JHU’s electronic library, or online, or otherwise linked to in Blackboard.

1. **Introduction: In the aftermath of Black Lives Matter 2020 / Capitol Insurrection 2021**
  - Statement from the American Political Science Association, June 2020  
<https://www.apsanet.org/Portals/54/Advocacy/APSA%20Statement%20on%20Systemic%20Racism%20signatures.pdf>
  - Statement from the British International Studies Association, 2020  
<https://www.bisa.ac.uk/news/black-lives-matter-bisa-statement-recent-events>
  - International Studies Association Statement, 2020 <https://www.isanet.org/News/ID/5802/ISA-Statement-Condemning-Racism>
  - APSA First Statement on Capitol Insurrection [ErcEoMUXUAAeXSb.png](#)
  - Revised ASPA Statement on Capitol Insurrection  
<https://www.apsanet.org/Portals/54/statements/APSA%20Amended%20Statement%20on%20Capitol-final.pdf?ver=2021-01-11-145232-487>
2. **Colonialism, Empire and the Polis**
  - Malkin, Irad. 2004. “Postcolonial Concepts and Ancient Greek Colonization.” *MLQ: Modern Language Quarterly* 65 (3)
  - Dietz, Mary G. 2012. “Between Polis and Empire: Aristotle’s Politics.” *The American Political Science Review* 106 (2)
  - Frank, Jill. 2004. “Citizens, Slaves, and Foreigners: Aristotle on Human Nature.” *American Political Science Review* 98 (1): 91–104.

- Cambiano, Giuseppe. 1987. "Aristotle and the Anonymous Opponents of Slavery." In *Classical Slavery*, ed. Moses I. Finley, 28–52. London: Cass.

### 3. Political Theory 1

- Norbert Bolz, "Kant, the Old Racist", *Telos(scope)*, Oct 2020 <http://www.telospress.com/kant-the-old-racist/>
- Chaly, V.A., 2020. Immanuel Kant — Racist and Colonialist? *Kantian Journal*, 39(2), pp. 94-98. <http://www.kant-online.ru/en/?p=1264>
- Immanuel Kant. 2011. "Of the Different Races of Human Beings." In *Kant: Anthropology, History, and Education*, eds. Robert B Louden and Günter Zöllner, 82–97. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Immanuel Kant. 2011. "Determination of the Concept of a Human Race." In *Kant: Anthropology, History, and Education*, eds. Robert B Louden and Günter Zöllner, 143–159. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

### 4. Political Theory A

- Elizabeth Phillipose, "Decolonizing Political Theory", *Radical Pedagogy* 2007 [https://radicalpedagogy.icaap.org/content/issue9\\_1/philipose.html](https://radicalpedagogy.icaap.org/content/issue9_1/philipose.html)
- Sylvia Wynter. 1991. "Columbus and the Poetics of the Propter Nos." *Annals of Scholarship* 8 (2): 251–286.
- Sylvia Wynter. 2015. "The Ceremony Found: Towards the Autopoietic Turn/Overturn, Its Autonomy of Human Agency and Extraterritoriality of (Self-)Cognition." In *Black Knowledges / Essays in Critical Epistemology*, ed. Sabine Broeck, 184–252. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press

### 5. Political Behavior 1

- Blatt, Jessica. 2018. *Race and the Making of American Political Science*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, ch.1
- Adams, Herbert B. 1882. *The Germanic Origin of New England Towns*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University.
- Wilson, Woodrow. 1887. "The Study of Administration." *Political Science Quarterly* 2 (2): 197–222.
- Ambrosius, Lloyd E. 2007. "Woodrow Wilson and the Birth of a Nation: American Democracy and International Relations." *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 18 (4): 689–718.

### 6. Political Behavior A

- Charney, Evan, and William English. 2013. "Genopolitics and the Science of Genetics." *American Political Science Review* 107 (2): 382–395.
- Frantz Fanon. 1970. "The 'North African Syndrome.'" In *Toward the African Revolution*, 13–26. London: Penguin.
- Frantz Fanon. 2018b. "Social Therapy in a Ward of Muslim Men: Methodological Difficulties." In *Alienation and Freedom*, eds. Jean Khalifa and Robert J. C. Young, 353–372. London: Bloomsbury Academic Press.
- Frantz Fanon. 2018a. "Letter to the Resident Minister." In *Alienation and Freedom*, eds. Jean Khalifa and Robert J. C. Young, 433–436. London: Bloomsbury Academic Press.

## 7. Assignment workshop

- Towards a Research Theme on Racial Politics, JHU Political Science, Oct 2020  
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1S5jTQG60iqMAE9ZEIUntx8mZRR0qtROGzAjzNqc6Fal/edit?usp=sharing>

## 8. Comparative Politics 1

- Engerman, David C. 2010. "Social Science in the Cold War." *Isis* 101 (2)
- Shils, Edward. 1960. "Political Development in the New States." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 2 (3)
- Pye, Lucian W. 1958. "The Non-Western Political Process." *Journal of Politics* 20 (3): 468–486.
- Pye, Lucian. 1965. "The Concept of Political Development." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 358 (1)

## 9. Comparative Politics A

- Campbell, Horace. "The Impact of Walter Rodney and Progressive Scholars on the Dar Es Salaam School." *Social and Economic Studies* 40, no. 2 (1991): 99–135.
- Rodney, Walter. 1968. "Education and Tanzanian Socialism." In *Tanzania: Revolution by Education*, ed. Idrian N. Resnick, 71–84. Arusha: Longmans of Tanzania Ltd.
- Rodney, Walter. 1989. *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya. Chs 1, 6
- Weber, Heloise. 2007. "A Political Analysis of the Formal Comparative Method: Historicizing the Globalization and Development Debate." *Globalizations* 4 (4): 559–572.

## 10. International Relations 1

- Hall, Ian. 2014. "Martin Wight, Western Values, and the Whig Tradition of International Thought." *The International History Review* 36 (5): 961–981.
- Hodson, H. V. 1950. "Race Relations in the Commonwealth." *International Affairs* 26 (3): 305–315.
- Martin Wight. 1966. "Western Values in International Relations." In *Diplomatic Investigations*, eds. E. H. Butterfield and M. Wight, 89–131. London: Allen & Unwin.
- Martin Wight. 1972. "International Legitimacy." *International Relations* 4 (1): 1–28.

## 11. International Relations A

- Jacobs, Robert. 2013. "Nuclear Conquistadors: Military Colonialism in Nuclear Test Site Selection during the Cold War." *Asian Journal of Peacebuilding* 1 (2)
- Hilda Halkyard-Harawira & Katie Boanas, "Pacific Connections: Women and the PEace Movement in Aotearoa", in R. Du Plessis & P. Bunkle (eds.), *Feminist voices : women's studies texts for Aotearoa/New Zealand* (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1992) [img-227145356-0001.pdf](#)
- Naidu, Vijay. 1986. "The Fiji Anti-Nuclear Movement: Problems and Prospects." presented at the United Nations University Conference, Auckland.
- Teaiwa, Teresia K. 1994. "Bikinis and Other s/Pacific n/Oceans." *The Contemporary Pacific* 6 (1): 87–109.

**12. The Study of Politics from the Borderlands**

- Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987.

**13. Retrospect and final assignment workshop**