

Seminar 8

Week 9- Lecture 8

Postcolonialism

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What is colonialism?

Colony: A settlement in a new country... a body of people who settle in a new locality

Colonialism: The practice by which a powerful country controls another country or other countries

- Oxford Dictionary

How does knowledge function to legitimate colonial rule?



Rudyard Kipling- 1899
Take up the White
Man's burden—
Send forth the best ye
breed—
Go bind your sons to
exile
To serve your
captives' need;
To wait in heavy
harness
On fluttered folk and
wild—
Your new-caught, sullen
peoples,
Half devil and half
child.

What is a postcolonial "theory"?

Postcolonial scholars are that the point of their work is not to formulate abstract theories that appear scientifically objective, but in reality, are entirely subjective.

Spivak:

“She continually attempts to resist the essentialist positioning of Third World subjects; in her work on Feminism, Marxism and Subaltern Studies, for example, Spivak is careful to articulate the perspective from which she writes in relation to the subjects she writes about. The Subaltern Studies historians in India addressed this primary question of subjectivity, arguing that colonial socio-political hierarchies are reproduced in the postcolonial era, and that subaltern subjects – those non-elite peoples denied access to power – had no genuine non-distorting representation or self-expressed voice. The recovery of subaltern voices is thus

one of the primary aims of these historians. In ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ (1988) Spivak critiques the essentialist underpinnings of Subaltern Studies, where the marginalized subaltern subject is always defined via his or her difference from the elites. Spivak asserts that the subaltern subject is heterogeneous and, by examining the mechanisms of the supposed ‘recovery’ of their voice, instead an ongoing displacement and effacement is revealed.” (<https://literariness.org/2017/04/07/key-theories-of-gayatri-spivak/>)

Du Bois:

“After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world, — a world which yields him no self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One feels his two-ness, — an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife, — this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He does not wish to Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa; he does not wish to bleach his Negro blood in a flood of white Americanism, for he believes — foolishly, perhaps, but fervently — that Negro blood has yet a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without losing the opportunity of self-development.” (1897, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1897/08/strivings-of-the-negro-people/305446/>)

How can we differentiate postcolonialism from Marxism?

What does it mean to “decolonise” IR theory?