

- Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines
- www.unine.ch/lettres

Postcolonialism : Potentials and Fallacies (2SC2143)

Filières concernées	Nombre d'heures	Validation	Crédits ECTS
Pilier principal M ScS - migration et citoyenneté	Cours: 2 ph	Voir ci-dessous	3
Pilier principal M ScS - migration et citoyenneté (EuMIGS)	Cours: 2 ph	Voir ci-dessous	3
Pilier secondaire M ScS - migration et citoyenneté	Cours: 2 ph	Voir ci-dessous	3

ph=période hebdomadaire, pg=période globale, j=jour, dj=demi-jour, h=heure, min=minute

Période d'enseignement:

- Semestre Printemps

Equipe enseignante

Gianni D'Amato
Assistante: N.N.

Contenu

This seminar is to open a new teaching line addressing postcolonial studies and their core political thoughts, confronting its intellectual argument of Orientalism (Edward Saïd, Frantz Fanon) with Occidentalism (Avishai Margalit and Ian Buruma). Occidentalism has accused authors of postcolonial thought of having a reductive view of Western thought and society. A second intention is to study the historical legacies of decolonial political theories, in which some, in their legitimate stance against Western colonial powers, tried and try to find support in totalitarian (Western) political ideas of the 20th century.

To be clear: Postcolonial research undoubtedly has its merits. With thankful impertinence, it has disturbed the sticky peace of complacent Western societies and informed saturated publics of how barbarically their morally upstanding ancestors raged in foreign lands. Since the beginning of this research field, the normative canon of the West has been under suspicion in postcolonial theory, sometimes for good reason: Western values are the make-up of universal capitalist exploitation. Those who preach them want to deceive, as the USA recently did with its intervention in Iraq, which cost hundreds of thousands of lives. In this line of thought, the promises of liberal freedom are interpreted as a kind of opium by the advocates of postcolonial theory. But when Iranian women risked their lives in the uprising against the clerical totalitarian regime in Tehran after the death of Mahsa Amini, most of the postcolonial left felt into a droning silence, as their desire for liberal freedom could not be ideologically accommodated.

Following these lines of argument, I would like to address a new seminar on the potentials and fallacies of postcolonial thought as received in an European historical context, its innovative potentials but addressing also its difficulty to see nuances and to think beyond platitudes – e.g. that we have to “overcome capitalism,” at some point, through education, awareness and representation.

Forme de l'évaluation

Évaluation interne / internal evaluation:

To receive the 5 ECTS provided for this seminar, students must accomplish the following tasks: 1) attend the seminar regularly and actively; 2) read the seminar literature and participate in group discussions and a plenary; 3) give a written summary of the discussion five days after the presentation in the plenary; 4) prepare a research design based on which you write a term paper (in French, English, Italian or German) of 12-15 pages to be submitted until August 31, 2026.

Documentation

The detailed program, list of references, texts and sources will be available on Moodle.

Pré-requis

This course is open to all social science students (MA courses) interested in the relationship between postcolonialism and its critics, open for a controversial debate.

Forme de l'enseignement

Introductory session by instructor; reading, group discussion of the seminar literature and its presentation; written term paper.

Objectifs d'apprentissage

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Au terme de la formation l'étudiant-e doit être capable de :

- Evaluate critically and reflectively one's own position on the readings
- Develop arguments that lead, or are the result of, an empirical or theoretical analysis
- Discuss your position within the team and make a consolidated presentation

Compétences transférables

- Explore your intellectual creativity
- Write a comprehensive essay able to confront different positions and come to a personal conclusion