

Towards Critical Migrations Studies: How to decolonize research on migration?

Course Number: 53115

Module Description and Syllabus

This seminar explores and discusses emerging theories and approaches that have recently engaged with migration and migration studies in a critical way. Our focus will be on decolonization, transnationalism, and intersectionality in studying migration and migratory issues. The research question underlying this seminar is indeed both an ethical and critical one: How can we theorize about and conduct research on migration without (re-)producing certain norms and power relations that both negatively impact our outcomes and result in further oppression and exploitation of objects/subjects of the research. To answer that, we will together read and reflect upon key texts, concepts and methods that best represent the new emergent perspective pertaining to migration research. In accordance with the interdisciplinary and non-Eurocentric approach of the course, the texts are chosen from different disciplines and different sites of knowledge production.

Technicalities

The course is designed by students for students. Its design allows it to be taken by students of different fields of study in social sciences, from migration studies and mobility studies to gender studies, Middle Eastern studies and transnationalism studies. The prerequisites are, thereby, English language, some knowledge in basics of humanities and social sciences in terms of theories and methodologies, and basic knowledge of migration and its various forms.

Please note:

- This course is designed as a block seminar. We will have four meetings in total: 29.10.2021, 26.11.2021, 14.01.2022, 04.02.2022, respectively from 08:00 to 18:00 (with sufficient breaks of course). We treat each meeting as four regular 2-hour sessions. (See the syllabus for more details on each session).
- The seminar will be held via zoom. However, we have requested a room for the last session and if the pandemic-related circumstances allow us to do so, the last session (4 Feb. 2022) will be held in person.
- The class meets only once a month, so even one single absence without a proper reason will be too much, as each meeting equals four regular sessions. Should something unexpected happen, talk to us about it
- We subscribe in our teaching to a philosophy of critical pedagogy, which means we teach ‘with’ students, not to and for. Our seminar is hoped to be a place of exchange at eye level between students, teachers, researchers and guest lecturers.
- This will only be possible through dialogue, discussion and critical engagement with the texts. Thus, we strongly need you to read them closely. We’d appreciate your active participation in the discussions based on theories discussed in the class and personal experiences, which you find thought provoking.

- The grading will be based on the students' attendance, active participation and a final group presentation of the project which they must have developed throughout the semester. Moreover, through collaboration of tutors and students, the participants will collectively work on developing a booklet outlining theoretical guidelines for conducting critical migration research while staying aware and alert of the power relations that frame migration research and its future direction.
- This is a research-based seminar, meaning that theories and examples which we discuss within the course of the seminar should find their way into your own research projects. Thus, as an exercise in critical migration research, you are expected to develop the outline of a project of your own applying the knowledge we collectively develop in class. If you already have conceptualized and are working on such a project, you can develop that project further. As mentioned above, this will be one of the assignments required for completing the course.
- Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any suggestion regarding the syllabus. Also, we would appreciate it if you let us know about issues related to the format or requirements of the course. We would like to work together to ensure full participation and engaged pedagogy in the course.

Syllabus

29.10.2021

First Meeting: What's Wrong with Migration Studies in the Global North?

Session 1: Introductory session (our and your expectations and ideas)

Session 2: Introducing our emancipatory-participatory research-based approach for the seminar. We will discuss together our understanding and critique of the current academia and predominant paradigms in conducting migration research.

To read:

Freire, Paulo (2000). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. 30th anniversary ed. New York, Great Britain: Continuum. (Chapter 2)

Hooks, Bell (1994). *Teaching to Transgress. Education as the practice of freedom*. New York, London: Routledge. (Chapter 1: Engaged Pedagogy)

Session 3: Why do we need critical migration studies? We will discuss examples of framings and conceptualization in migration studies, providing a general historical overview of theories of migration.

To read:

Nail, Thomas (2015). *The Figure of the Migrant*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. (Introduction and Chapter 1)

O'Reilly, Karen (2016). Migration Theories: a critical overview. In Anna Triandafyllidou (ed.), *Routledge Handbook of Immigration and Refugee Studies* (pp. 23-33). Abingdon, Oxon, New York, NY: Routledge.

Session 4: Establishing groups and planning upcoming sessions with students.

Further reading

Butler, Alana; Teasley, Cathryn; Sánchez-Blanco, Concepción (2019). A Decolonial, Intersectional Approach to Disrupting Whiteness, Neoliberalism, and Patriarchy in Western Early Childhood Education and Care. In: Peter Pericles Trifonas (ed.) *Handbook of Theory and Research in Cultural Studies and Education* (pp. 1-18). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Triandafyllidou, Anna (2016). Migration and Asylum in the Twenty-first Century. In Anna Triandafyllidou (ed.), *Routledge Handbook of Immigration and Refugee Studies* (pp. 1-23). Abingdon, Oxon, New York, NY: Routledge.

26.11.2021

Second Meeting: Decolonization and Knowledge Production

Session 1: Colonialism, Orientalism and the Canon

To read:

Said, Edward W. (1978). *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books. (Introduction and Part 1 of Chapter 1).

Session 2: Decolonization

To read:

Santos, Boaventura de Sousa (2018). *The end of the cognitive empire. The coming of age of epistemologies of the South*. Durham: Duke University Press. (Chapter 6: Cognitive Decolonization: An Introduction)

Session 3: Guest Lecture on ethics of research in migration studies (Further information will be provided on this in due course).

Session 4: Discussing your ideas for your projects

Further reading:

Grosfoguel, Ramón (2020). Epistemic Extractivism, A Dialogue with Alberto Acosta, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, and Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui. In: Boaventura de Sousa Santos and Maria Paula Meneses (eds.) *Knowledges Born in the Struggle: Constructing the Epistemologies of the Global South* (pp.203-2019). London: Routledge.

Mignolo, Walter; Walsh, Catherine E. (2018). *On Decoloniality. Concepts, Analytics, Praxis*. Durham: Duke University Press. (Chapter 9: Eurocentrism and Coloniality: The Question of Totality of Knowledge)

14.01.2022

Third Meeting: Toward developing critical migration studies

Session 1: Methodological Nationalism and Transnationalism

To read:

Wimmer, Andreas; Schiller, Nina Glick (2003). Methodological Nationalism, the Social Sciences, and the Study of Migration: An Essay in Historical Epistemology. *International Migration Review*, 37 (3), 576–610.

Amelina, Anna (2017). *Transnationalizing inequalities in Europe. Sociocultural boundaries, assemblages and regimes of intersection*. New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group. (Chapter 2: Predicaments of Migration Studies on Social Inequalities: The Current State of the Research on the National, Global and Transnational Scales.)

Session 2: Intersectionality

To read:

Hill Collins, Patricia; Bilge, Sirma (2016): *Intersectionality*. Cambridge: Polity Press (Chapter 1: What is Intersectionality)

Session 3: the Middle East as a Fieldwork

To read:

Amanat, Abbas (2011). Introduction: Is There a Middle East? Problematizing a Virtual Space. In: Michael E. Bonine, Abbas Amanat and Michael Ezekiel Gasper (eds.) *Is There a Middle East?*(1-8): Stanford University Press.

Session 4: Discussing the development of your projects

Further reading:

Nieswand, Boris (2013). *Theorising Transnational Migration. The status paradox of migration*. London: Routledge. (Chapter 4: Process of Transnationalization)

Anthias, Floya (2012). Transnational Mobilities, Migration research and Intersectionality, Towards a Translocational frame. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, 2 (2), 102–110.

Bayat, Asef and Herrera Linda (eds.). (2021). *Global Middle East, Into the Twenty-First Century*. University of California Press. (The Introduction)

04.02.2022

Fourth and Final Meeting: Presentations and Discussion of the Booklet