

SYP 5447: Settler Colonialism in Comparative Historical Perspective
Tuesdays 2:00–4:40 PM, GC 275B, Fall 2026

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Course description

Popular accounts of settler colonialism's academic origins dates the concept to the 1990s. While we will certainly engage this literature in the present course, we will simultaneously unearth the concept's earlier foundations in self-determination struggles, tracing its formulation from 1960s Palestine to 1970s southern Africa to more recent Indigenous formulations in North America. After we establish a conceptual foundation, our goal will be to learn to think comparatively. Paradoxically, however, we will think comparatively by reading through a number of single-country case studies of settler colonialism in various contexts: the United States, Australia, Israel/Palestine, Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Algeria, to name a few. The goal in this course, ultimately, is twofold: first, students will work on honing analytic concepts, developing a version of "settler colonialism" that they can subsequently set to work; and second, they will develop a comparative analysis of actually existing settler colonialisms—not as some disembodied theoretical account, but as a theory inseparable from concrete socio-historical

developments. This second task is rooted in holding together comparison and contrast at once: even if all of the cases covered in this course are instances of settler colonialism, there are a variety of possible settler colonial trajectories, and students' task will be to typologize them. Are there an infinite number of trajectories, a singular concept, or something in between? This is what will be explored in students' final papers.

Assignments and Grading

- Discussion participation: 30%
Students are expected to participate actively in seminar discussion. To do so effectively, students should attend regularly and complete all required readings; repeated absences, or failure to prepare effectively, will inevitably lower the participation grade.
- Reading responses: 30%
With the exception of our first class meeting, you are required to submit a reading memo by 10 am the morning of each class (Tuesdays). These should be one single-spaced page—no longer, no shorter. Your analysis should outline the central argument of the reading, evaluate the theoretical tools deployed, and end with a brief critique, or at the very least, point to some of the limits of the reading. I'll give you feedback on these so that you can improve your critical writing skills over the course of the semester. There are 13 meetings after the first week, so if you each get one free skip, that's 12 memos, meaning they're worth 2.5 points each.
- Final research paper: 40%
Students must complete a final paper of between 15 and 30 double-spaced pages. In-class time will be dedicated to discussing this assignment and preparing for it. Broadly, the paper should include the following elements based on course readings: first, a careful definition of settler colonialism; second, an argument related to settler colonialism; third, substantiation of that argument in relation to cases covered in the course. The paper will be due on December 13.

Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct includes the following intentional acts or omissions:

- Cheating: The unauthorized use of materials, information, study aids, or assistance from another person on any academic assignment or exercise; assisting another student in the unauthorized use of any materials, information, study aids; having a substitute complete any academic assignment or completing an academic assignment for someone else, either paid or unpaid.
- Plagiarism: The use and appropriation of another's work without any indication of the source and the representation of such work as the student's own. Any student who fails to give credit for ideas, expressions, or materials taken from another source, including internet sources, is guilty of plagiarism. Any student helping another to plagiarize may be found guilty of academic misconduct.
- Use of AI: No AI is to be used in producing material for this class. The point is to learn to digest difficult texts, and to grapple with constructing analytic synopses. AI will prevent you from realizing this goal. This includes using AI-empowered "polishing" tools like Grammarly. I'd much rather you submit something you *actually* wrote than deal with something generated by a server somewhere. Don't waste my time, and I won't waste

yours. I will treat all AI use in this class as identical to plagiarism. If you're in doubt, please don't hesitate to ask me!

- Multiple submission: Submitting the same academic work for credit in multiple classes.
- Penalties: Academic misconduct will be penalized in accordance with the Student Conduct and Honor Code. Any student suspected of academic misconduct may be reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity (SCAI).

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND TOPICS

Week 1 (August 25): Introduction

Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006), pp. 387–409.

Mahmood Mamdani, "Settler Colonialism: Then and Now," *Critical Inquiry* 41, no. 3 (2015): 596–614.

Lorenzo Veracini, "Settler Colonialism as a Distinct Mode of Domination," in *The Routledge Handbook of the History of Settler Colonialism*, edited by Edward Cavanagh and Lorenzo Veracini (Routledge, 2017), pp. 1–8.

PART I: CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS

Week 2 (September 1): Palestinian Origins

Areej Sabbagh-Khoury, "Tracing Settler Colonialism: A Genealogy of a Paradigm in the Sociology of Knowledge Production in Israel," *Politics & Society* 50, no. 1 (2022), pp. 44–83.

Fayez Sayegh, *Zionist Colonialism in Palestine* (PLO Research Center, 1965, pp. 1–54).

George Jabbour, *Settler Colonialism in Southern Africa and the Middle East* (Beirut: PLO Research Center, 1970), 7–88.

Maxime Rodinson, *Israel: A Colonial-Settler State?* (Monad, 1973), 27–78.

Week 3 (September 8): From Imperialism to Internal Colonialism

Pablo Gonzalez Casanova, "Internal Colonialism and National Development," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 1 (1965), pp. 27–37.

South African Communist Party, "The Road to South African Freedom," *African Communist* 2, no. 2 (1963 [1962]), pp. 24–70.

Kenneth Good, "Settler Colonialism: Economic Development and Class Formation," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 14, no. 4 (1976), pp. 596–620.

Arghiri Emmanuel, "White-Settler Colonialism and the Myth of Investment Imperialism," *New Left Review* 1/73 (1972), pp. 35–57.

Week 4 (September 15): Indigenous Critiques in North America

Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* (Duke University Press, 2014), pp. 1–35.

Jodi A. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (University of Minnesota Press, 2011), pp. xv–xxxix, 117–46, 185–220.

Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (University of Minnesota Press, 2011), pp. 79–103.

Week 5 (September 22): A Distinct Trajectory?

Donald Denoon, *Settler Capitalism: The Dynamics of Dependent Development in the Southern Hemisphere* (Clarendon Press, 1983).

Week 6 (September 29): Settler Colonialism as Strategy

Lachlan McNamee, *Settling for Less: Why States Colonize and Why They Stop* (Princeton University Press, 2023).

PART II: HISTORICAL CASE STUDIES

Week 7 (October 6): United States

Walter L. Hixson, *American Settler Colonialism: A History* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

Week 8 (October 13): Australia

Philip McMichael, *Settlers and the Agrarian Question: Foundations of Capitalism in Colonial Australia* (Cambridge University Press, 1984)

Week 9 (October 20): Algeria

David Prochaska, *Making Algeria French: Colonialism in Bône, 1870–1920* (Cambridge University Press, 1990).

Week 10 (October 27): Southern Africa

David Kenrick, *Decolonisation, Identity and Nation in Rhodesia, 1964–1979: A Race Against Time* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

Edward Cavanagh, *Settler Colonialism and Land Rights in South Africa: Possession and Dispossession on the Orange River* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

Week 11 (November 3): Israel

Areej Sabbagh-Khoury, *Colonizing Palestine: The Zionist Left and the Making of the Palestinian Nakba* (Stanford University Press, 2023).

Week 12 (November 10): China

Ting Hui Lau, *Decolonial Endurance Lisu Worldmaking Against Chinese Settler Colonialism* (Stanford University Press, 2026), Introduction and Epilogue.

Darren Byler, *Terror Capitalism Uyghur Dispossession and Masculinity in a Chinese City* (Duke University Press, 2022), pp. 1–132, 221–30.

Week 13 (November 17): Liberia

Claude A. Clegg III, *The Price of Liberty: African Americans and the Making of Liberia* (University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

Week 14 (November 24): Guyana

Shona N. Jackson, *Creole Indigeneity: Between Myth and Nation in the Caribbean* (University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

Week 15 (December 1):

WORK ON YOUR FINAL PAPERS