

# **Political Anthropology: Empire, Militarization and The War on Terror**

Monday & Thursday 11:45am-1:25pm

Northeastern University  
SPRING 2020

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Course Number: 3417  
Course Location: Snell Library 003  
Office hours: Monday 2-3pm  
and by appointment

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This seminar in Political Anthropology examines some of the major social, political and cultural transformations precipitated by the so-called “global war on terror.” While the headlines in the news read of terrorism, drone attacks, and the possibilities of a new war in the Middle East, this course takes a critical look at the discourses, cultures, economics, and politics of our present era of permanent war, asking: *how did we get here?* Taking a critical anthropological lens on the war on terror, the course focuses on pressing contemporary questions about the militarization of culture, the political economy of permanent war, the colonial roots of counterinsurgency, and geopolitics of islamophobia. It has been nearly two decades since the inception of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and today the world is arguably more insecure, violent, destabilized, and conflict prone than ever before. “Terrorism” has become an expedient global category everywhere for security and political repression as well as the construction of vast military and security apparatuses. In this course, we will both follow current events and discuss them in class. But ultimately, students will develop tools to understand present day conflicts in relation to longer genealogies of conquest, colonialism, war, and racism that in many ways still form the cultural and political underpinnings of American imperialism and shape our present world.

## **REQUIRED BOOKS:**

- Nazia Kazi. 2019. *Islamophobia, Race and Global Politics*. Rowman and Littlefield: Lanham, Maryland and London.
- Darryl Li. 2020. *The Universal Enemy: Jihad, Empire and The Challenge of Solidarity*. Stanford University Press: Stanford, California.
- *Militarization: A Reader*. 2019. Edited by Roberto Gonzáles, Hugh Gusterson and Gustaaf Houtman. Duke University Press: Durham.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

- Students will gain an advanced understanding of political anthropology as *an approach* to analyzing contemporary events, conflicts and political processes.
- Develop tools to understand present day conflicts in relation to longer genealogies of conquest, colonialism, Indian wars, and racism.
- Build an analysis of empire, war, and racism as interconnected processes.

- Gain a critical understanding the concept of militarization as a process of political and cultural transformation.
- Cultivate a writing practice through substantive weekly reading responses.
- Learn to construct a nuanced academic review essay.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS & GRADING**

There are four requirements for this course: (1) Class Participation, (2) Weekly Reading Responses, (3) two in-class Presentations, and (4) a Final Review Essay.

### **1. Participation 20% (200 points)**

This is a discussion based seminar in which everyone is expected to participate in the conversation. For this reason, participation in class discussions is a major part of the grade for the course. Students are expected to come prepared, having read the material and prepared two questions or comments on the readings for the class. Each week we begin class by collecting a few of these questions and comments. This way we will cultivate a practice of critical reading, analysis, and collective conversation over the course of the semester structured around a set of questions arising from students' own interests and concerns. Attendance is also part of this grade – No more than 2 unexcused absences are permitted.

### **2. Reading Responses 30% (300 points)**

For each class students are expected to write a reading response of 300-500 words. These responses are DUE on blackboard by 5pm on the evening prior to class. Responses should engage substantively with readings. This substantive engagement with the readings is a vital part of the seminar. Through this consistent writing, students build a practice of engaging with texts through writing. This is an important intellectual practice for any scholar. And doing so, helps students build an archive and record of their own ideas, critiques, and notes on texts which they can draw upon in the future. In class, we will collectively draw upon these Reading Responses in our discussions of the texts. And ultimately, these Reading Responses will be an important resource for students in composing their Final Review Essay. [*Each Reading Response is worth 15 points; students must complete twenty responses by the end of the semester to receive full credit*].

### **3. Presentation 25% (250 points)**

Students will sign up give a presentation on the course readings twice during the semester. Presentations should be 12-15 minutes in length. This presentation should present the main arguments of the readings. It should situate the readings within the concepts and conversations that are central to the course. An excellent presentation will draw upon previous course readings to analyze, deepen the arguments of, or critique the readings at hand. Finally, student will then offer 3-4 questions about the topics and themes raised by the readings which will serve as starting points for the class conversation that day.

### **4. Final Review Essay 25% (250 points)**

The final for this class will be a book review essay (3500-words), which reviews THREE books. Two of these book we will read together in class: Nazia Kazi's *Islamaphobia, Race and Global Politics*, and Darryl Li's *The Universal Enemy: Jihad, Empire and The Challenge of Solidarity*. A third book should be chosen by the student from the list of "Books for Review" below. -- **DUE APRIL 19th**

#### **Books for Review**

- Hugh Gusterson. 2016. *Drone: Remote Control Warfare*. MIT Press: Cambridge, MA.

- Laleh Khalili. 2013. *Time in the Shadows: Confinement in Counterinsurgencies*. Stanford University Press. Stanford, California
- Catherine Lutz and Andrea Mazzarino (eds). 2019. *War and Health: The Medical Consequences of the Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan*. New York University Press: New York.
- Joseph Masco. 2014. *Theatre of Operations: National Security Affect from the Cold War to the War on Terror*. Duke University Press: Durham.
- David Vine. 2015. *Base Nation: How US Military Bases Abroad Harm America and the World*. Metropolitan Books: New York.
- Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz. 2014. *An Indigenous People's History of the United States*. Beacon Press: Boston.
- Nikhil Pal Singh. 2017. *Race and America's Long War*. University of California Press: Oakland, California.
- Network of Concerned Anthropologists. 2009. *The Counter-Counterinsurgency Field Manual* Paradigm Press: Chicago.
- Setha Low and Mark Maguire (eds). 2019. *Spaces of Security: Ethnographies of Securityscapes, Surveillance and Control*. New York University Press: New York.
- Stuart Schrader. 2019. *Badges Without Borders: How Global Counterinsurgency Transformed American Policing*. University of California Press: Oakland, California.
- Noah Coburn. 2016. *Losing Afghanistan: An Obituary for the Intervention*. Stanford University Press. Stanford, California.
- Omar Dawachi. 2017. *Ungovernable Life: Mandatory Medicine and Statecraft in Iraq*. Stanford University Press. Stanford, California.
- Catherine Lutz. 2001. *Homefront: A Military City and the American Twentieth Century*. Beacon Press: Boston.
- Setha Low. 2004. *Behind the Gates: Life, Security, and the Pursuit of Happiness in Fortress America*. Routledge: New York.

## COURSE CONDUCT & EXPECTATIONS

**1. My availability:** I will be in my office (210 M Renaissance Park) during office hours (Mondays, 2-3pm) and you are welcome to stop by during that time. However, I do recommend sending me an email to reserve a slot in case many people stop by that day. If you are unable to attend my office hours, please email me and we will find a time to meet that is convenient for you. I encourage all students to meet with me during the semester, although I strongly encourage you to do so if you are having any difficulties with the course.

**2. Attendance:** As a seminar course, attendance and participation matter. If you are going to be absent, you must email me before the class session. If you must leave a class session early, then please mention it to me before class begins. If you are aware that you will miss class because of religious holidays, please inform me in advance to avoid an unexcused absence.

**3. Cell Phone and Computer Protocol:** Turn off all cell phones before coming in the classroom. No computers or tablets in the classroom unless otherwise indicated.

**4. Class Discussions and Conduct:** Be respectful of one another. We will be having difficult conversations about topics that are sometimes challenging to discuss. We will therefore be adopting a practice of *generous reading* and *kindness* with one another as we grapple with these topics. Be kind when responding to your fellow classmates. Other students might have views that you do not agree with. Disagreement and passionate debate is encouraged, however you must remain civil and respectful

during class discussions. Diverse opinions and experiences are welcome and encouraged. There is however a very hard line: under no circumstances will any hate speech, racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, transphobia, islamophobia or other forms of denigration of social groups be tolerated. If any class discussion or comments by fellow students have made you feel uncomfortable, please do talk to me after class or during office hours. Ultimately, this is a discussion based seminar and relies on the good will of and solidarity between class participants. By following these general guidelines for course conduct, my hope is that we will foster deeper conversations and a sense of collectivity as we navigate important and complex social problems.

**5. Plagiarism:** I take plagiarism very seriously and will report any suspected cases. As noted on the library website, the NU Academic Integrity Policy defines plagiarism as "intentionally representing the words, ideas, or data of another as one's own in any academic exercise without providing proper citation." Examples of plagiarism include:

- Quoting someone's words from the Internet, a printed article, or an interview, without acknowledging the author.
- Copying part of the content of a work into one's own paper without citing the source.
- Copying or buying a paper and handing it in as one's own.
- Falsely creating a citation that doesn't exist.
- Failing to credit and cite someone else's thoughts or ideas when paraphrasing.
- Paraphrasing in a way that relies too heavily on another's language or syntax.

Avoid plagiarism by learning how to cite. When in doubt, ask for help. Become familiar with documentation guidelines, such as APA, MLA, etc. When quoting or paraphrasing ideas, theories, data or words that were created or authored by someone other than you, make sure that you both cite them in the text, and document them in the "works cited" or bibliography at the end of your paper.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

### **Week 1. Memory, War, Meaning**

#### **January 6<sup>th</sup> Course Introductions**

#### **January 9<sup>th</sup> Spaces & Times of War**

- “Militaryization, Place and Territory” Readings in *Militarization: A Reader*:
  - Roberto Gonzalez. “Introduction” (pp. 167-189).
  - Catherine Lutz. “Making War at Home” (pp.169-175)
  - Mark Gillam. “Spillover: The US Military’s Sociospatial Impact” (pp.175-181)
  - Barbara Rose Johnston. “Nuclear Landscapes: The Marshall Islands and its Radioactive Legacy” (181-186)
  - Jason de Leon. “The Border Wall Is a Metaphor”. (pp.192-196)
- Svetlana Alexievich. 2019. *Last Witnesses: An Oral History of the Children of WWII* (selections)

### **Week 2. Where is the War?**

#### **January 13<sup>th</sup> War and the Body**

- “Militaryization and the Body” – Readings in *Militarization: A Reader*:

- Hugh Gusterson. “Nuclear War, Gulf War, and the Disappearing Body” (pp.276-283)
- Elaine Scarry. “The Structure of War: Injured bodies and unanchored issues” (pp.283-291)
- Kenneth Ford and Clark Glymour. “The Enhanced Warfighter” (pp.291-296)
- Andrea Mazzarino, Marcia C. Inhorn and Catherine Lutz. “The Health Consequences of War” in *Health and War* (pp. 1-30)

### **January 16<sup>th</sup> Drone Warfare and Remote Intimacy**

- Hugh Gusterson. “Remote Intimacy” in *Drone: Remote Control Warfare* (pp. 59-83)
- Svea Closser and Noah Coburn. “Drone Strikes and Vaccination Campaigns: How the War on Terror Helps sustain Polio in Afghanistan and Pakistan” in *War and Health* (pp. 57-72)
- *Listen*: ANOHNI “Drone Bomb Me” [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aUEoic7ro\\_o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aUEoic7ro_o)

### **Week 3. The Costs of War**

#### **January 20<sup>th</sup> [NO CLASSES MLK DAY]**

#### **January 23<sup>rd</sup> The Political Economy of Militarism**

- “Militarization and Political Economy” *Readings from Militarization: A Reader*:
  - John Bellamy Foster et al. “The U.S. Imperial Triangle and Military Spending” (pp. 29-35)
  - Dwight D. Eisenhower. “Farewell Address to the Nation” (pp. 36-38)
  - William Astore, “The Militarization of Sports and the Redefinition of Patriotism” (p. 38-42)
  - Daniel Hoffman. “Violence Just in Time: War and Work in Contemporary West Africa” (pp. 42-51)
  - Carolyn Nordstrom. “Women, Economy, War” (pp. 51-56.)
- *Costs of War Project* [Selected Readings from website TBA]  
<https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/>

### **Week 4. Islamophobia, Race and American Empire, Part 1**

#### **January 27<sup>th</sup> Bases of American Empire**

- David Vine. *Base Nation: How US Military Bases Abroad Harm America and the World* (Introduction and Chapter 1: pp.1-44)

#### **January 30<sup>th</sup> Islamophobia and Geopolitics I**

- Nazia Kazi. *Islamophobia, Race and Global Politics*. – Chapters 1, 2 & 3

### **Week 5. Islamophobia, Race and American Empire, Part 2**

#### **February 3<sup>rd</sup> Islamophobia and Geopolitics II**

- Nazia Kazi. *Islamophobia, Race and Global Politics* – Chapters 4, 5 & 6

#### **February 6<sup>th</sup> Islamophobia and Geopolitics III**

- Nazia Kazi. *Islamophobia, Race and Global Politics* – Chapter 7 & 8

## **Week 6. Roots of the War on Terror: From Indian Wars to Counterinsurgency**

### **February 10<sup>th</sup> Colonial Origins of Counterinsurgency**

- Laleh Khalili. “The Forebears: Imperial and Colonial Counterinsurgencies” in *Time in the Shadows* (pp. 11-43)

### **February 13<sup>th</sup> Indian Wars**

- Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz. “Cultures of Conquest” and “The Future of the United States” in *An Indigenous People’s History of the United States*. (pp. 32-44 & 218-236)

## **Week 7. Roots of the War on Terror: Race and America’s Long War**

### **February 17<sup>th</sup> [NO CLASSES, PRESIDENTS DAY]**

### **February 20<sup>th</sup> The Long War**

- Nikhil Pal Singh. “The Long War” in *Race and America’s Long War* (pp.1-35)

## **Week 8. Counterinsurgency, Culture, Empire**

### **February 24<sup>th</sup> Conscripting Culture into War**

- *The Counter-Counterinsurgency Field Manual*
  - Roberto Gonzalez, Hugh Gusterson, David Price. “War, Culture, Counterinsurgency” (pp.1-22)
  - Catherine Besteman. “Counter AFRICOM” (pp. 115-134)

### **February 27<sup>th</sup> The Universal Enemy I**

- Darryl Li. *The Universal Enemy: Jihad, Empire and The Challenge of Solidarity*. (Chapters 1 & 2)

**\*\*SPRING BREAK – NO CLASSES 2<sup>nd</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> \*\***

## **Week 9. The Universal Enemy**

### **March 9<sup>th</sup> The Universal Enemy II**

- Darryl Li. *The Universal Enemy* (Chapters 3 & 4)

### **March 12<sup>th</sup> The Universal Enemy III**

- Darryl Li. *The Universal Enemy* (Interlude & Chapter 5&6)

## **Week 10. Spaces of Security**

### **March 16<sup>th</sup> Geographies of Immobility**

- Catherine Besteman. 2018. “Militarized Global Apartheid” *Current Anthropology* 60(19): S26-S37
- Gluck, Zoltan. 2017. “Security Urbanism and the War on Terror in Kenya” *Anthropological Theory* 17(3): 297-321

### **March 19<sup>th</sup> War and the City**

- Steven Graham. “The New Military Urbanism” in *Cities Under Siege* (pp. 60-89)
- *In-Class film: “for Sama”*

### **Week 11. The New Military Normal**

#### **March 23<sup>rd</sup> At Home With Counterinsurgency**

- Catherine Lutz. “The Military Normal: Feeling at Home with Counterinsurgency in the United States” in *Militarization: A Reader* (pp. 156-163)
- Joseph Masco. “Ubiquitous Surveillance” in *Roboprocesses* (pp. 125-144)

#### **March 26<sup>th</sup> Globalizing the Security State**

- Joseph Masco. “The New Normal” in *Theatre of Operations: National Security Affect from the Cold War to the War on Terror*. (pp. 1-44)

### **Week 12. Resistance**

#### **March 30<sup>th</sup> Futures of War**

- Hugh Gusterson. “Peering Over the Horizon” in *Drone: Remote Control Warfare* (pp.151-160)
- Nick Turse. “The US Will Invade West Africa in 2023 After an Attack in New York” *The Intercept* (<https://theintercept.com/2017/10/22/the-u-s-will-invade-west-africa-in-2023-after-an-attack-in-new-york-according-to-pentagon-war-game/>)

#### **April 2<sup>nd</sup> Alternatives to War**

- “Alternatives to Militarization” in *Militarization: A Reader*:
  - David Vine. “Introduction” (pp. 333-336)
  - Margaret Mead. “War in only and invention—not a biological necessity” (p.336-339)
  - Leslie E. Sponsel. “Reflections on the Possibility of a Nonkilling Society”(p.339-344)
  - Catherine Lutz. “US Bases, Empire, and Global Response” (pp.344-347)
  - Julian Augon. “Down Here” (pp.347-349)
  - Rebecca Solnit. “Hope in the Dark: Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities” (pp.pp.350-355)

### **Week 13. Conclusions**

#### **April 6<sup>th</sup> Wrap-up Discussion**

#### **April 9<sup>th</sup> [NO CLASS – Work on Final]**

**\*\*\*Final Review Essays due April 19<sup>th</sup>\*\*\***