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Course Description:

This graduate seminar will engage in a contrapuntal reading of violence against brown and black bodies in the production of modernity over the last two centuries. How has the west rendered itself one through physical, structural, cultural and epistemic violence against non-western others? How have these violences impacted these colonial and postcolonial societies? How has such violence been internalized within both western and non-western societies and what are some of the ways in which they have manifested themselves in intra-societal, intra-familial and intra-individual forms? We will begin with some works on colonialism as a general backgrounder, move thereafter into a series of works looking at both historical and recent forms of military invasion, violence and subjugation of non-western societies, and in the concluding section of the course, examine recent technologies, weapons systems and architectures of killing that show both continuity with former forms of killing and possibly represent new, and hyper-alienated forms of destruction. In other words, some of the main thematic issues we will cover over the course of the semester are (but not limited to):

- the use of colonial and postcolonial theaters to experiment with new methods of killing such as aerial bombing, germ warfare, smart bombs, nuclear weapons and drones
- the colonial origins of internment and concentration camps, panoptical surveillance, and other practices frequently circumscribed within western histories
- the carryover from counterinsurgency practices emerging in encounters with third world guerrillas into western city planning, police training and criminalization of minorities
- the role of western military and intelligence training agencies in third world state power
- the rising use of algorithms and big data in contemporary depersonalized killing fields

The purpose of the course will be to understand the coeval and conjoined emergence of modernity – especially in the realms of violence towards racial minorities, incarceration, surveillance, and biopolitics – in both first and third worlds.

Our course will be structured around the following books (the ones marked with an asterisk will be made available to students without any charge – the ones without an asterisk are
books that you will have to purchase: I recommend you purchase them as soon as possible). The reading list is tentative in that I hope to add, subtract and amend the readings as the course evolves and our interests both gel and change with discussion:

Andrew Cockburn, *Kill Chain: the rise of the high-tech assassins* (Henry Holt, 2015)*
Roberto Gonzalez, *Militarizing Culture – essays on the warfare state* (Leftcoast, 2010)*
Orit Halpern, *Beautiful Data – a history of vision and reason since 1945* (Duke, 2015)*


I will be uploading about half a dozen readings on colonialism and Postcolonialism onto the Laulima website for this course. These will be our readings for the next two meetings (January 22nd and 29th). The rest of the reading schedule will be finalized in the next few days and a full syllabus will be provided to you then.

Reading Schedule:

Jan 15th: Backgrounder on Colonialism and Colonial Violence in the making of a Global modernity:


Mar 25th: spring recess – no class


Apr 29th: Class presentations of Research Papers by Seminar Participants. Final class.