Guantánamo to GITMO:
Camps, the United States, and Comparative Colonialisms in the Twentieth Century

FYSEM-UA 573

The survivors of the extermination camps, the inmates of concentration and internment camps, and even the comparatively happy stateless people could see [...] that the abstract nakedness of being nothing but human was their greatest danger. [...] If a human being loses his political status, he should, according to the implications of the inborn and inalienable rights of man, come under exactly the situation for which the declarations of such general rights provided. Actually the opposite is the case. It seems that a man who is nothing but a man has lost the very qualities which make it possible for other people to treat him as a fellow-man.

- Hannah Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism

Professor Monica Kim
*You must allow a 24 hour window for an email response.
*All meetings (even during office hours) must be scheduled in advance.

Course Description:

The camp has become a symbol of the conflicts of the twentieth century. Through a close study of people’s experiences of building, living, and surviving camps throughout the twentieth century, this course examines the major shifts in the global imperial landscape from the Philippine-American Wars at the turn of the century through the “War on Terror.” Rather than approaching the “camp” as an exception to the everyday, we will ask: How and where did people develop the concentration camp? When did societies perceive the need for a camp? How have the practices of making a camp changed (or not changed) through decolonization? How do the dynamics and workings of a particular camp shed light on the contemporaneous political landscape? And what type of role does the “camp” play in different societies’ historical memories?

Our focus will be on the historical connections between the case-study camps, as we begin with the reconcentrado policy of Spanish colonialism in Cuba in 1880s and end with reflections on the implications of Guantánamo Bay in Cuba for U.S. imperialism. This course approaches the “camp” not as a strictly defined entity, but rather as a practice mobilized by different groups for particular purposes. Possible case studies we will consider range from German colonialism and the Herero in Namibia, the British and the Mau Mau in Kenya, to Japanese American internment camps in the United States.

Readings will include both secondary sources (books and articles written by scholars) and an array of primary sources (memoirs, oral history interviews, military documents, legal cases and film).

Course Requirements:

Attendance: 10%
Participation: 10%
Response Papers: 30%
Mini-Presentation and Final Presentation: 20%
Final Paper: 30%
Assignments:
Response Papers:
Each week, there will be a different short writing assignment designed to help you both reflect upon and write critically about the reading. I will provide a prompt for these assignments (ie. a question that you will need to address). These assignments will range from a one-page thinkpiece on analyzing two different scholar’s arguments, to a review on a documentary regarding how it conceptualizes historical memory, and to even thought-pieces such as journal entries. Also, you have one “pass” on a response paper, where you do not have to hand it in, but you must email me in advance.

Response Papers must be uploaded to the “Assignments” section of our NYU Classes site by Sunday, 9PM.

Final Research Paper and Presentations:
Using the skills learned during the course, you will write a historical analysis on a “camp” of your choosing. You will hand in the final paper on the day of our final meeting for the course.

This course approaches the “camp” not as a strictly defined entity, but rather as a practice mobilized by different groups for particular purposes. During Weeks 3 and 4, you will schedule a meeting with me to discuss your ideas for the presentation. On Week 8, each of you will give a 3 minute presentation on a “camp” that has not been necessarily within the mainstream media or historical memory, or if it is very well-known, offer a different aspect of the camp. You will also hand in a one-page write up on your preliminary research and the historical questions you would like to raise. This “camp” will be the starting point for your final paper. On Week 15, you will give a 10 minute presentation on your research, findings, scholarship, and argument to the class. Students are encouraged to ask questions and give suggestions on other student’s work in progress.

Course policies:

1. Attendance and Participation:

Timely attendance at each class meeting is essential required. This course is a seminar, not a lecture, and your attendance and engaged participation are essential for the success of this course. Particularly because we will conduct workshops often, your attendance is necessary for the benefit of your classmates as well as yourself. Thus, excluding our workshop days, 1 unexcused absence is allowed. However, if you have more than one unexcused absence, I will subtract accordingly from your attendance and participation grade.

Participation is the core of this seminar, whether we have a whole class discussion or work in small groups. You are expected to have prepared fully for each meeting’s discussion, ready to engage with your peers’ comments and to contribute your own thoughts and ideas. If you feel that you are having difficulty participating in class, please come see me so we can discuss different ways of contributing to the class discussion.

2. Email etiquette:

Please be thoughtful in your professional communication. It is important to develop appropriate emailing styles for different contexts. Your professors and your peers expect emails to be written in standard English, free of texting shorthand, with an appropriate salutation.
Feel free to contact me outside of normal hours, but understand that I may not respond immediately. Note, too, that I cannot discuss grades, or answer substantive questions about course material, over email.

3. **Moses Center for Students with Disabilities:**

If you are student with a disability who is requesting accommodations, please contact New York University’s Moses Center for Students with Disabilities. You must be registered with CSD to receive accommodations. Information about the Moses Center can be found at www.nyu.edu/csd. The Moses Center is located at 726 Broadway on the second floor.

4. **Religious holidays:**

NYU’s policy is to accommodate students’ observances of religious holidays. In order to receive accommodation, you must notify the instructor during the first two weeks of the semester of any planned absences related to religious observance. Further details on NYU’s policies may be found at:

http://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/university-calendar-policy-on-religious-holidays.html

5. **Academic honesty:**

Intellectual integrity is the university’s most fundamental commitment. Plagiarism of any kind will be penalized to the fullest possible extent, without warning or exception.

The most common causes of plagiarism are not deliberate dishonesty, but stress and uncertainty. You are encouraged to begin assignments well in advance of the deadline, and to check with the instructor if you have any questions. Whenever you draw upon somebody else’s words or ideas to make a point, give them credit in a note. If you have questions about documentation requirements, don’t guess – just ask.

For further details on university policy, strictly adhered to in this class, see: http://cas.nyu.edu/page/ug.academicintegrity

*This syllabus is subject to change as the instructor sees fit.*

**Course Schedule:**

**WEEK 1: Sept 12: Introduction**

**Introduction to the course**

What is “history”? What is a “camp”?


**WEEK 2: Sept 19: The Maps of Imperial Conflict**
Students should begin scheduling meetings with me this week to discuss ideas for the presentation and possible final paper.

- Reading: Selected article from *The New York Times* on Guantánamo Bay
  - Introduction and Prologue, p. 1-38

**WEEK 3: Sept 26: To Name a Conflict and To Make an Enemy**

Students must have met with me by the end of this week to discuss ideas for the presentation and final paper.

**Insurgency or Revolution?**

U.S. expansion and the Spanish empire


**Torture and Other Practices**


**WEEK 4: Oct 3: Meeting in Bobst Library and Tamiment Archive**


**WEEK 5: Oct 6: FALL RECESS – No Class Meeting**

**WEEK 6: Oct 17: Military Culture and Imperialism**

**Europe in Africa**


Optional:

  - Introduction (pages 1-10); Chapter 5
- Reading: Isabel V. Hull. *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of*


WEEK 7: Oct 31: The Camp and Historical Memory

The State of Emergency and the Racial Order

- Screening: Documentary, Rabbit in the Moon
  - Introduction, Chapter 1: A Racial Fear Emerges, p. 8-44  
  - Chapter 3: FDR’s Decision to Intern, p.73-124  
  - Chapter 4: Implementing an Undemocratic Policy, p.125- 176
- Reading: Korematsu v. United States (1944)

WEEK 8: Nov 7: Terror on the European Continent

Mini-Presentations on Selected Camps

- Screening: Battle of Algiers (1966)
- Screening: Night and Fog (1955)
- Charles Krantz, "Teaching Night and Fog: History and Historiography" in Film & History (February 1985)

WEEK 9: Nov 14: Ambitions of Empire

Ambitions of Empire

  - Preface; Introduction; Make This Land German for Me Again!; The Final Solution: The Jewish Question
  - Chapters 1&3

WEEK 10: Nov 21: Decolonization and the Re-invention of the Human

Re-inventing “Man”

- Reading: Mahmood Mamdani. Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War and the Roots of Terror (New York: Pantheon Books, 2004), Introduction: “Modernity and Violence”
- Frantz Fanon’s The Wretched of the Earth, selections.

End of Empire?

- Screening: BBC Newsreel Clips (1953)

Optional:

- Introduction, Mau Mau and Its Interpreters, p. 1-60

WEEK 12: Dec 5: Camps in Unexpected Places?

- Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis and Opposition in Globalizing California (UC Berkeley: 2007), Selections

WEEK 13: Dec 12: WORKSHOP AND PRESENTATIONS

Peer Review and Editing Workshop
Symposium: Presentations and Discussion

WEEK 14: Dec 13: Beyond the Barbed Wire, Camps Today

The Invisible Camp

Screening: Documentary: The Road to Guantanamo
Reading: Mahmood Mamdani. Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War and the Roots of Terror (New York: Pantheon Books, 2004). Chapter 3: Afghanistan: The High Point in the Cold War; Review the Introduction

What is a Camp, and What kind of camp is Guantánamo?

Reading Due: 

1) Visit "The Guantánamo Testimonials Project," a site operated out of UC Davis and is a very good collection of "testimonials" from people ranging from ex-detainees to interrogators
to military psychologists. Please print out the testimonials you have chosen to read and examine.

2) Read the following brief historical context on GITMO: "How did Guantánamo become a prison?" http://hnn.us/articles/11000.html

If you need a timeline, here are a few helpful ones:
http://projects.washingtonpost.com/guantanamo/timeline

Internet Research Due:
As mentioned in class, much of the information (and interpretation) available on GITMO is available on the internet first. Print out one document of a site you found especially interesting on the issue of Guantánamo (or if you end up watching the docudrama The Road to Guantánamo, do take down a few notes.) I’ve posted some possible starting points below - but feel free to bring in any range of documents or media.

Here are some possible starting points:
1) The Center for Constitutional Rights
http://ccrjustice.org/illegal-detentions-and-guantanamo

2) "Informed Comment" by Professor Juan Cole
http://www.juancole.com

3) Some of you may be interested in comparing different national media coverage of GITMO - you can take a quick look at BBC, Al-Jazeera, CNN, NYTimes, Le Monde, or any other media news outlet.

For example: BBC: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/4422825.stm
Al-Jazeera: http://english.aljazeera.net/5
WikiLeaks (contains diaries and war logs on the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq): http://wikileaks.org/