

Diaspora and Transnationalism

History 706
Fall 2013
T 4:30-6:30 PM
Humanities 5245

Professor Shelly Chan
T 2:30-4:30 PM & by appt.
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In the last three decades, the surge of interest in “diaspora” and “transnationalism” is such that few in the humanities and social sciences can ignore it. From deterritorialized nations to flexible citizens, displacement to hybridity, exile to travel, postcoloniality to transnation, the large body of concepts related to “diaspora” and “transnationalism” suggests that the two are not just descriptive terms, but may be productive tools to examine global flows and connections.

Nevertheless, the seeming capaciousness of “diaspora” and “transnationalism” has also invited many concerns and critiques. They include unspecific use, excessive focus on culture and identity, neglect of structural conditions, or even being completely “unempirical.” While these criticisms are sometimes justified, it still leaves the question of how else to represent social formations that do not fit in a local or nation-based framework, but rather to allow opportunities to re-examine both. One way of doing so is to keep returning to the most basic questions: Where did the terms come from and how have they evolved? Who use them and why? What are they good for and in what contexts?

Diaspora and transnationalism are multidisciplinary fields, covering literature, anthropology, sociology, geography, history, poststructuralist theory, and cultural studies. To bring together a broad range of theoretical texts and case studies, seminar readings are organized into three sections:

- I. Space
Covers attempts to reconceptualize space beyond empire and nation by re-tracing movements of people and things across borders; includes critiques of such an approach.
- II. Culture
Examines efforts to challenge fixed notions of race, ethnicity, identity, and culture, and re-examine them as products of multidirectional and contingent flows.
- III. Politics
Questions the earlier formulations; explores them in the contexts of gender, sexuality, labor, and global capitalism; puts the empire and nation back in.

Readings

All books are available at College Library Course Reserves and the University Bookstore. Additional readings (marked with an asterisk) are available electronically.

- Bhabha, Homi. *The Location of Culture*. London and New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Brazier, Jana Evans & Anita Mannur, eds. *Theorizing Diaspora: A Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003.
- Brah, Avtar. *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*. London and New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Clifford, James. *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997.
- Cohen, Robin. *Global Diasporas*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997.
- Lesser, Jeffrey. *A Discontented Diaspora: Japanese Brazilians and the Meanings of Ethnic Militancy, 1960–1980*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.
- Rana, Junaid. *Terrifying Muslims: Race and Labor in the South Asian Diaspora*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.
- Said, Edward. *Representations of the Intellectual*. New York: Vintage, 1996.
- Shih, Shu-mei. *Visuality and Identity: Sinophone Articulations across the Pacific*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.
- Tsing, Anna. *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*. Princeton: Princeton University Press: 2005.

Requirements

- Attendance and Participation (20%). Attend and contribute to every meeting. Please email me in advance if you must miss class.
- Weekly Learn@UW Postings (20%) by 9 am on the day of class. Each post should consist of a quote, a commentary, and a discussion question per assigned reading/author. Alternatively, you may choose to post one such set that draws connections between all the pieces. Everyone should read all the posts by others before class.
- Discussion Leading with another student, rotating in the following tasks: 1. summary and response; 2. coordination of discussion questions (10%).
- Historiographical Essay of approx. 20 pages based on seminar readings, due December 13 (50%).

Schedule

September 3: Introduction

Discuss course goals and themes. Get to know each other's research interests.

I. Space

September 10: Postcolonial and Transnational

Paul Gilroy, "The Black Atlantic as Counterculture of Modernity." In Braziel and Mannur.

*Vijay Mishra, "The Diasporic Imaginary: Theorizing the Indian Diaspora." *Textual Practice* 10.3 (1996): 189-237.

*Khachig Tölölyan, "The Nation-state and its Others: In Lieu of a Preface." *Diaspora* Vol. 1, No. 1 (1991), 3-7 and "Rethinking Diaspora(s): Stateless Power in the Transnational Moment." *Diaspora* Vol. 5, No. 1 (1996), 3-35.

September 17: Global

Cohen, *Global Diasporas*

*William Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return." *Diaspora* Vol. 1, No. 1 (1991) 83-99.

September 24: Cosmopolitan

*Benedict Anderson, "Nationalism, Identity, and the Logic of Seriality"; Aihwa Ong, "Flexible Citizenship among Chinese Cosmopolitans"; Louisa Schein, "Importing Miao Brethren to Hmong America"; Etienne Balibar, "The Borders of Europe"; Bruce Robbins, "Comparative Cosmopolitanisms." In Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins eds, *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling beyond the Nation*, 117-133, 134-162, 163-191, 216-229, 246-264. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998.

October 1: Critiques

Rey Chow, "Against the Lures of Diaspora." In Braziel and Mannur.

*Arif Dirlik, "The Postcolonial Aura" In Dirlik, *The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism*, 52-83. Boulder: Westview Press, 1997.

*Ien Ang, "Can one Say No to Chineseness?" In Ang, *On Not Speaking Chinese: Living between Asia and the West*, 37-51. London: Routledge, 2001.

*Brian Keith Axel, "The Diasporic Imaginary." *Public Culture* Vol. 14, No. 2 (2002), 411-428.

II. Culture

October 8: Difference and Hybridity

Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*

Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy." In Braziel and Mannur.

October 15: Travel and Culture

Clifford, *Routes*

Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." In Braziel and Mannur.

October 22: Exile

Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*

*Benedict Anderson, "Long-Distance Nationalism" in Anderson, *The Specter of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World*. London and New York: Verso, 1998, 58-76.

October 29: Visual Culture

Shih, *Visuality and Identity*

*Christina Klein, "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon: A Diasporic Reading." *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (Summer, 2004), 18-42.

III. Politics

November 5: Gender and Queer

Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora*

Gayatri Gopinath, "Nostalgia, Desire, Diaspora." In Braziel and Mannur.

November 12: Global capitalism

Tsing, *Friction*

November 19: Nation and Ethnicity

Lesser, *A Discontented Diaspora*

Lisa Lowe, "Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity." In Braziel and Mannur.

November 26: No Class. Write your paper.

December 3: No Class. Write your paper.

December 10: War and Terror

Rana, *Terrifying Muslims*

Final paper is due in my mailbox 4015 on Friday December 13.