

Diaspora & Transnational Studies

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

DTS1000

Comparative Research Methods in Diaspora and Transnational Studies

Thursdays, 10:10-12:00
Jackman Humanities Centre, Room 235

Instructor

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Office hours

Tuesdays 13:00-15:00, and by appointment

Course description

The aim of this graduate seminar is to explore, from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, how, when, and why people, ideas, technologies, policies, and biota cross borders – and to ask what a ‘border’ is in the first place, and how it can bar (or open) a path. The seminar readings are broadly (and often loosely) focused on the political economy of global capitalism, and on the ways that the exploitation of natural resources have set people in motion, and into diaspora. The course is also an introduction, at the graduate level, to the research methods and epistemologies of different scholarly disciplines. As we discuss each week’s readings, we’ll ask – and try to answer – several key questions. These include: What is the argument? What is the evidence? In what ways did the author gather this evidence? And what are the assumptions that allow this evidence to support the argument?

This is an intensive reading course. Its success will turn on the entire class keeping up with the readings for each week. Each student will be required to write a short précis prior to most class meetings. Each précis will be collected at the end of each class, and collectively at the end of the term. Please pay attention to notes and queries as they come up in class that you find particularly stimulating and try to connect these to other readings on the course and elsewhere.

Course readings

The readings will be available online, via Quercus.

Course requirements

Assignment	Key date	Percentage of total mark
Reading responses	On-going	80%
Discussion leader	On-going	20%

Reading responses – 80%, eight responses, throughout term

During the term, by the end of the day on the Wednesday before the seminar meeting, you will post a response of roughly 500 words on Quercus related to the week's readings. Since these responses will guide how I lead the seminar discussion, they are time-sensitive, and I will not read or mark late submissions. You are welcome to write every week, but I will count the 8 best marks on your reading-responses toward your final mark. These responses can engage with a question raised in the week's readings, clarify an argument, etc.

Discussion leader – 20%, once, throughout term

Each week, a student or students will begin the discussion in the seminar. They will summarise the reading for the week and, more important, identify what they think the most important themes raised in the book might be, and comment on any disciplinary or epistemological issues raised by the author's method. I expect that your initial presentation and framing of the argument will be roughly 10 minutes.

Course readings

Week 1 – 15 September

Introduction to the course; assignments; scheduling presentations.

Optional reading: Marx, Karl. "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte." In *Marx: Later Political Writings*, edited and translated by Terrell Carver, 31–127. Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Week 2 – 22 September

Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt. *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015.

Discussion leader:

Week 3 – 29 September

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Revised edition. London and New York: Verso, 2016.

Discussion leader:

Week 4 – 6 October

Scott, James. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999.

Discussion leader:

Week 5 – 13 October

Patterson, Orlando. *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982.

Discussion leader:

Week 6 – 20 October

Manjapra, Kris. *Black Ghost of Empire: The Long Death of Slavery and the Failure of Emancipation*. New York: Scribner, 2022.

Discussion leader:

Week 7 – 27 October

Gilmore, Ruth Wilson. *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007.

Discussion leader:

Week 8 – 3 November

Rodgers, Daniel T. *Age of Fracture*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2012.

Discussion leader:

Week 9 – 17 November

Hofmeyr, Isabel. *The Portable Bunyan: A Transnational History of "The Pilgrim's Progress."* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003.

Discussion leader:

Week 10 – 24 November

Bashford, Alison, and Joyce E. Chaplin. *The New Worlds of Thomas Robert Malthus: Rereading the Principle of Population.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017.

Discussion leader:

Week 11 – 1 December

Daston, Lorraine. *Rules: A Short History of What We Live By.* Lawrence Stone Lectures. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2022.

Discussion leader:

Week 12 – 8 December

Work-in-progress week; reading TBD.