

Diaspora & Transnational Studies

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

DTS2000H1 Graduate Topics Transnational Histories of Precarity

Instructor

Prof. Padraic X. Scanlan
Jackman Humanities Building, Room 230D
padraic.scanlan@utoronto.ca

Office hours

Mondays, 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. – platform TBD.

Course description

The expansion of industrial capitalism, from the eighteenth century to the present moment of grinding, multi-dimensional global crisis, has had a paradoxical effect. Industrialization has vastly – although unevenly – increased wealth and standards of living for many. And yet, the mass migration, rapid movement of goods and capital, and global supply chains that support global trade have also displaced and dispossessed many millions. The COVID-19 pandemic has exerted tremendous pressure on the neoliberal global order, revealing and increasing inequalities in health care, education and labour rights both within and among cities, regions and states. Long before the pandemic, precarity was a feature of the lives of working people, from office clerks to farm labourers, in jurisdictions around the world. The seminar explores this paradox of prosperity in historical perspective, with readings from a wide range of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences.

Each week of the seminar is oriented around a theme or historical moment. I am especially interested in the ways that global trade and mass industrialization have shaped working lives across time and space, and in the ways that state bureaucracies have enforced or eroded, institutionalized or outlawed, kinds of precarious work.

Precarity has at least two transnational dimensions, although I am sure we will uncover and explore others. First, the globalization of manufacturing, the expanding power of extranational banking systems and securities markets, and the stretching of supply chains has exported new ways of organizing and disciplining labour around the world. Second, the consequences of these transformations in global political economy – the acceleration of climate change, political upheaval, shifting patterns of migration – have made many people's livelihoods – and lives – vulnerable to sudden destruction. My hope is that this seminar will help us develop the tools to think through both the instability and vulnerability of people in the past, and the ways that historical inequalities are amplified, transformed – or eroded – across time and space.

Evaluation

Assignment	Key date	Percentage of total mark
Class participation	On-going	10%
Reading responses	On-going	40%
Final research paper	23 June 2020	50%

Course delivery for Fall 2020

Responses from governments around the world to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic have forced faculty to improvise new modes of delivering courses. Students, in kind, have found their lives disrupted, and have been forced temporarily to reimagine their own learning environments.

Please note: This edition of DTS2000 is offered online, synchronously. The seminar meets weekly, in a password-protected Zoom meeting, from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. The seminar meeting will not be recorded, to preserve your privacy and academic freedom – and mine. If you cannot attend weekly meetings at the scheduled time, I cannot accommodate you further, and I do not recommend that you enroll. I hope to treat the class like a graduate seminar held in person – an open, free-flowing, well-informed and respectful conversation among a community of scholars working on the same intellectual problem.

Assignments and evaluation

Participation – 10%, throughout term

I expect every student enrolled in the seminar to contribute to the weekly discussion. Participation includes both presence and preparation. That means that I expect everyone to attend the seminar weekly, to read the assigned readings and to contribute in a constructive, respectful and well-prepared way to the discussion. I am not taking marks off for the occasional missed meeting due to unforeseen illness, etc. – you are adults, and graduate students, and I am not interested in hectoring you about attendance. If you are not regularly or chronically absent, and if you make a good-faith effort to attend, that is enough for me, especially during a global pandemic! Moreover, I am not counting individual interventions into the discussions – I am looking for quality over quantity. I also expect you to be courteous, respectful and intellectually generous with each other in conversation.

Reading responses – 40%, six responses, throughout term

During the term, by the end of the day on the Tuesday after the seminar meeting, you will post a response of 350-500 words on Quercus related to the previous week's readings. In other words, if you choose to write a response on the reading for, say, Week 3, you must submit your response before the end of the day on Tuesday of Week 4. I will not read or mark late submissions. You are welcome to write every week, but I will count the 6 best marks on your reading-responses toward your final mark. These responses can

engage with a question raised in the readings or explore an individual reading more closely. These responses will be available to the entire seminar to read and think about. I hope you will read and comment on one another's posts, and that the discussion board will prove to be a useful platform for mooting questions raised in the lectures and discussions.

Final research paper – 50%, due 9 December 2020

For the final research paper, you will choose a topic or theme related to the history of precarity, very broadly defined and use it to develop an argument. You will develop your paper topic in consultation with me. I am happy to discuss possible themes and arguments, read outlines and suggest sources.

Your essay should be from 15 to 20 double-spaced pages long, exclusive of any bibliography. I prefer that you format your essays in 12-point Times New Roman, with 1-inch margins. Please use Chicago Manual for footnotes; with CM, there is no need for an additional bibliography.

I will apply a sliding scale of penalties to late papers. For the first seven days, I will subtract 1% per day. After that initial week, I will assess a penalty of 5% per day. If you require a longer extension, you must contact me immediately. If you do not get in touch regarding an extension before the essay is due, I will not consider waiving penalties.

Submission of assignments

Please submit all assignments **through Quercus**. Response papers will be posted publicly to a Quercus discussion board available to all enrolled students.

Email

If you have a simple question about a reading or an assignment, one that I can answer in a few lines, it is likely that I will be able to give you a reply over email. If I cannot answer your question briefly, I'll reply and invite you to book a digital meeting where we can discuss your questions at greater length. I will try to respond to emails within 48 hours.

Please note:

- All email must be sent from your university account. I will not reply to messages from personal accounts.
- All email regarding the course must include 'IRE1620' in the subject line.

Academic Integrity

The University of Toronto treats cases of academic misconduct very seriously. Academic integrity is a fundamental value of learning and scholarship at the UofT. Participating honestly, respectfully, responsibly, and fairly in this academic community ensures that your U of T degree is valued and respected as a true signifier of your individual academic achievement.

The University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters outlines the behaviours that constitute academic misconduct, the processes for addressing academic

offences, and the penalties that may be imposed. You are expected to be familiar with the contents of this document. Please be advised that Instructors and Teaching Assistants are required to report any instance of suspected academic dishonesty to the Employment Relations Program Office. If you have any questions about what is or is not permitted in this course, please do not hesitate to contact the instructor. Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

In papers and assignments:

- Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement.
- Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor.
- Making up sources or facts.
- Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment (this includes working in groups on assignments that are supposed to be individual work).

Misrepresentation:

- Falsifying/ altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) doctor's notes.
- Falsifying institutional documents or grades.
- Signing attendance reports on behalf of other students.

Please read the University of Toronto's policies on student plagiarism and conduct yourselves accordingly. Any instance of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported to the appropriate University authorities. All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following the procedures outlined in the [Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters](#).

Religious Accommodations

As a student at the University of Toronto, you are part of a diverse community that welcomes and includes students and faculty from a wide range of cultural and religious traditions. For my part, I will make every reasonable effort to avoid scheduling tests, examinations, or other compulsory activities on religious holy days not captured by statutory holidays. Further to University Policy, if you anticipate being absent from class or missing a major course activity (such as a test or in-class assignment) due to a religious observance, please let me know as early in the course as possible, and with sufficient notice (at least two to three weeks), so that we can work together to make alternate arrangements.

Students with Disabilities or Accommodation Requirements

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you have an acute or ongoing disability issue or accommodation need, you should register with Accessibility Services (AS) at the beginning of the academic year by visiting <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as/new-registration>. Without registration, you will not be able to verify your situation with your instructors, and instructors will not be advised about your accommodation needs. AS will assess your situation, develop an accommodation plan with you, and support you in requesting accommodation for your

course work. Remember that the process of accommodation is private: AS will not share details of your needs or condition with any instructor, and your instructors will not reveal that you are registered with AS.

Time Zone Considerations

Throughout the semester, any references to timing, especially as it relates to when assignments are due, are provided in the Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) time zone; this is the time zone that Toronto is in. For example, if it is indicated that an assignment is due on October 6, 7:00pm, the assignment is due on October 6, 7:00pm EDT, according to “Toronto time”.

Week 1: Thinking with precarity

Sharryn Kasmir, "Precarity," *Cambridge Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, March 13, 2018, <https://www.anthroencyclopedia.com/entry/precarity>.

Daniel T. Rodgers, "The Uses and Abuses of 'Neoliberalism,'" *Dissent Magazine*, 2018, <https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/uses-and-abuses-neoliberalism-debate>.

Alexandre Afonso, "How Academia Resembles a Drug Gang," *LSE - Impact of Social Sciences*, December 11, 2013, <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2013/12/11/how-academia-resembles-a-drug-gang/>.

Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (New York: Anchor, 2000), Chapter 4, 87-110.

Week 2: The 'precariat' and the proletariat

Karl Marx, *Capital: Volume I*, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin, 2004), Chapter 6, 270-282.

E. P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," *Past & Present*, no. 50 (1971): 76–136.

Guy Standing, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), Chapters 1 and 4, 1-30 and 105-134.

Marcel van der Linden, "San Precario: A New Inspiration for Labor Historians," *Labor* 11, no. 1 (March 1, 2014): 9–21.

Week 3: Silence and structure

Paul Farmer, "An Anthropology of Structural Violence," *Current Anthropology* 45, no. 3 (June 1, 2004): 305–25.

Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), Chapter 3, 70-107.

Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), Chapter 1, 1-24.

Week 4: Emancipation and industrialisation

W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880*, Oxford W.E.B. Du Bois (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), Chapters 1,2 and 8, 1-24 and 195-266.

Herbert G. Gutman, "Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America, 1815-1919," *The American Historical Review* 78, no. 3 (1973): 531–88.

Nell Irvin Painter, *Standing at Armageddon: A Grassroots History of the Progressive Era* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2008), Chapter 2, 36-71.

Karl Marx, *Capital: Volume I* (1867), trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin, 2004), Chapter 10, 340-416.

Week 5: Poverty, land and power

Michael B. Katz, *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse: A Social History Of Welfare In America*, Revised edition (New York: Basic Books, 1996), Part I, 3-116.

Lizzie Presser, "Their Family Bought Land One Generation After Slavery. The Reels Brothers Spent Eight Years in Jail for Refusing to Leave It," *ProPublica*, July 15, 2019, <https://features.propublica.org/black-land-loss/heirs-property-rights-why-black-families-lose-land-south/>.

Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s*, 25th Anniversary edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), Introduction and Part Four, 3-8 and 139-180.

Heather Davis and Zoe Todd, "On the Importance of a Date, or, Decolonizing the Anthropocene," *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies* 16, no. 4 (December 20, 2017): 761–80.

Week 6: Immigration and labour

Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*, Revised edition (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014). Intro and Part I, Chapter 1, 1-55.

Heidi Bohaker and Franca Iacovetta, "Making Aboriginal People 'Immigrants Too': A Comparison of Citizenship Programs for Newcomers and Indigenous Peoples in Postwar Canada, 1940s–1960s," *The Canadian Historical Review* 90, no. 3 (September 16, 2009): 427–61.

Ruth Gomberg-Muñoz, “Willing to Work: Agency and Vulnerability in an Undocumented Immigrant Network,” *American Anthropologist* 112, no. 2 (2010): 295–307.

Patrick Radden Keefe, “The Snakehead,” *The New Yorker*, April 24, 2006, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2006/04/24/the-snakehead>.

Week 7: Deindustrialisation and despair

Victor Tan Chen, *Cut Loose: Jobless and Hopeless in an Unfair Economy* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), Chapter 2, 37-80.

Anne Case and Angus Deaton, *Deaths of Despair and the Future of Capitalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), Part II, Chapter 5 and Part III, Chapter 11, 62-70 and 148-166.

Matthew Desmond, *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* (New York: Crown, 2016), Prologue and Chapters 1 to 3, 1-52.

Alec MacGillis, “How Dollar Stores Became Magnets for Crime and Killing,” *ProPublica*, June 29, 2020, <https://www.propublica.org/article/how-dollar-stores-became-magnets-for-crime-and-killing>.

Week 8: Gentrification in crisis

Catherine Jheon, “We Bought a Crack House,” *Toronto Life*, May 29, 2017, <https://torontolife.com/real-estate/parkdale-reno-hell/>.

Julian Brave NoiseCat, “A Tale of Two Housing Crises, Rural and Urban,” *High Country News*, February 5, 2018, <https://www.hcn.org/issues/50.2/tribal-affairs-a-tale-of-two-housing-crises-rural-and-urban-indigenous>.

Cedric Johnson, “Introduction: The Neoliberal Deluge,” in *The Neoliberal Deluge: Hurricane Katrina, Late Capitalism, and the Remaking of New Orleans*, ed. Cedric Johnson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), xvii–i.

Orrin H. Pilkey and Keith C. Pilkey, *Sea Level Rise: A Slow Tsunami on America’s Shores* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019), Chapter 1 and 10, 1-14 and 121-135

Week 9: Ethnography and power

Christina Sharpe, “Black Life, Annotated,” *The New Inquiry*, August 8, 2014, <https://thenewinquiry.com/black-life-annotated/>.

Alice Goffman, *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City* (New York: Picador, 2015), Chapters 1 and 5, 9-22 and 109-142.

Rosalind Fredericks, *Garbage Citizenship: Vital Infrastructures of Labor in Dakar, Senegal* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), Chapter 2, 60-96.

Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America* (New York: Picador, 2011), Part III, 121-192.

Week 10: Regulation and precarious labour

Margot Canaday, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), Chapter 3, 91-136.

LaShawn Harris, "Sex Work and the Underground Economy," in *City of Workers, City of Struggle: How Labor Movements Changed New York*, ed. Joshua B. Freeman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 96–105.

Tania Das Gupta, "Racism/Anti-Racism, Precarious Employment, and Unions," in *Precarious Employment: Understanding Labour Market Insecurity in Canada*, ed. Leah F. Vosko (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), 318–34.

Alice De Wolff, "Privatizing Public Employment Assistance and Precarious Employment in Toronto," in *Precarious Employment: Understanding Labour Market Insecurity in Canada*, ed. Leah F. Vosko (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), 182–200.

Week 11: Historical memory and reaction

Peter Laslett, *The World We Have Lost*, 4th edition (New York: Routledge, 2015), Chapters 1 and 6, 1-21 and 122-152.

James C. Scott, *Against the Grain: A Deep History of the Earliest States* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017), Introduction and Chapter 2, 1-36 and 68-92.

Thomas Carlyle, "The Present Time," in *Latter-Day Pamphlets [1850]*, Thomas Carlyle's Collected Works (London: Chapman and Hall, 1870), 3–58.

Sean Hill, "Precarity in the Era of #BlackLivesMatter," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 45, no. 3/4 (2017): 94–109.

Week 12: Nothing Changes, except it Gets Worse

Jane Mayer, “How Trump Is Helping Tycoons Exploit the Pandemic,” *The New Yorker*, July 13, 2020, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/07/20/how-trump-is-helping-tycoons-exploit-the-pandemic>.

Rachel Sherman, *Uneasy Street: The Anxieties of Affluence*, 2nd edition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), Chapter 2, 58-91.

Douglas S. Massey, “The Age of Extremes: Concentrated Affluence and Poverty in the Twenty-First Century,” *Demography* 33, no. 4 (November 1, 1996): 395–412.