

English 817, History of Science 921
Interrogating the Plantationocene
Wednesday, 1:00-3:00 pm, 7109 Helen C. White Hall
University of Wisconsin-Madison

INSTRUCTORS:

Monique Allewaert, 7195F Helen C. White Hall, allewaert@wisc.edu
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Gregg Mitman, 315 University Club, gmitman@med.wisc.edu

CLASS MEETINGS: We will meet Wednesday afternoons from 1:00-3:30 pm in 7109 Helen C. White Hall, **except** for the weeks where we have outside speakers: February 21-22, March 28-29, April 18-19. During these weeks you are expected to attend the Thursday evening roundtable and the Friday morning workshop.

OFFICE HOURS:

Monique Allewaert, Wed., 5:30 pm-6:30 pm; Thurs., 1 pm-3 pm. 7195F Helen C. White Hall
Gregg Mitman, Wed., 11am-12 pm, or by appointment. 315 University Club

3-CREDIT COURSE: The credit standard for this course is met by an expectation of a total of 135 hours of student engagement with the course learning activities (at least 45 hours per credit), which include regularly scheduled instructor/student meeting times (see Class Meetings above), reading, writing, and other student work as described in the syllabus.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

By enrolling in this course, each student assumes the responsibilities of an active participant in UW-Madison's community of scholars in which everyone's academic work and behavior are held to the highest academic integrity standards. Academic misconduct compromises the integrity of the university. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, collaborations on individual assignments unless authorized by your instructors, and helping others commit these acts are examples of academic misconduct, which can result in disciplinary action. This includes but is not limited to failure on the assignment/course, disciplinary probation, or suspension. Substantial or repeated cases of misconduct will be forwarded to the Office of Student Conduct & Community Standards for additional review. For more information, refer to <http://studentconduct.wiscweb.wisc.edu/academic-integrity/>

ACCOMMODATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:

The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility.

Students are expected to inform Professor Allewaert or Professor Mitman of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. Faculty [I], will work either directly with the student [you] or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA.

<http://mcburney.wisc.edu/facstaffother/faculty/syllabus.php>

A SAFE AND WELCOMING CLASSROOM:

Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals. Safe and welcoming classrooms “encourage that continual and fearless sifting and winnowing by which alone the truth can be found” by fostering an environment of free speech consistent with US law and safe from threats or violence.

OBJECTIVES:

In this seminar we will explore and deepen the concept of the Plantationocene, interrogating the past and present of plantations, their materialities, the economic, ecological, and political transformations they wrought, and their significance to the making of human bodies, capital, and land over the course of four centuries. We will also consider other ways of naming our epoch (cene) that have recently been proposed, including Capitalocene (conceiving the Anthropocene as a result of ecological regimes inherent to capitalism, with its attendant demands for cheap labor, energy, food, and resources) and Chthulucene (a term that suggest the multispecies becomings that make up the storied histories of human and nonhuman lives). In doing so, we aim to come to terms with the plantation as a transformational moment in human and natural history on a global scale that is at the same time attentive to structures of power embedded in imperial and capitalist formations, the erasure of certain forms of life and relationships in such formations, and the enduring layers of history and legacies of plantation capitalism that persist, manifested in acts of racialized violence, growing land alienation, and accelerated species loss. At the same time, we aim to make visible past and present refugia of resistance, where different ways of being, sustained by different economies and forms of knowledge, have flourished.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Knowledge

- Know different ways of naming the conjoined economic and ecological crises of the present as well as the periodizations, histories, disciplinary knowledges, collectivities, and stories at stake in these ways of naming the present.
- Know the history of the emergence of the plantation form from the sixteenth century to the present as well as the agricultural, economic, racial, and labor practices characteristic of the plantation form.

- Know how plantations organized land, shaped ecologies (including human ecologies) as well as the consequences of this organization of land and shaping of ecologies.
- Understand debates concerning the relation of capitalism to the plantation complex.
- Understand the trans-colonial and trans-imperial histories shaping plantation agriculture from the sixteenth century to the present.
- Understand which technologies and systems of value have contributed to the plantation form as well as which technologies and systems of value that have contested the plantation form.
- Possess familiarity with the ways that plantations have shaped human beings and human sensoria.
- Consider how the name *Plantationocene* orients thinking about the past, present, and future as well as the relation between them.

Skills

- Contribute to generative and generous intellectual exchanges with scholars from a range of disciplinary backgrounds.
- Present ideas orally in public forums so as to guide and elicit public discussion.
- Produce clear and persuasive analytical writing that uses evidence appropriately and demonstrates synthesizing and analytical capacities.
- Contribute to discussion that brings together academic and public knowledges.
- Produce relevant professional materials, such as a proposal, a paper or project précis, a seminar paper, a review essay, or a web platform.

REQUIREMENTS:

1. Participation (25 %)
2. Proposal for final paper (may be in the form of a CFP submission if you would like to practice this genre of academic writing)
3. Partnering with another seminar member to help launch discussion. Please share a brief set of questions with class by Monday of the assigned week. (25 %)
4. Final project (50%): Final projects may be traditional seminar papers, review essays of relevant literature, or public-facing ventures like web platforms. Text-based projects must include a minimum of 15 pages of writing.

READINGS:

PDFs of all the readings are available on the Canvas pages for the course under the Files tab, except where there are hyperlinks on the syllabus to materials. You will also need to purchase a copy of Marlon James, *The Book of Night Women* (Riverhead Books, 2009) in your preferred format and from your preferred outlet.

SCHEDULE:

Jan 23 (Week 1) Interrogating the Plantationocene

Sophie Moore, M. Allewaert, Pablo Gómez, Gregg Mitman, "Interrogating the Plantationocene," *Edge Effects* January 22, 2019

Jan 30 (Week 2) Creating a Common Language

Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts. From Early Writings*, translated by Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), pp. 279-400, esp. 325-31.

Karl Marx, "Commodity Fetishism," from *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, translated by Ben Fowkes (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), pp. 164-169.

Sydney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985), pp. xv-xxx, 19-73.

Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1944), 30-85, 98-108, 209-212. Available online at (<https://archive.org/details/capitalismandsla033027mbp/page/n7>)

Sylvia Wynter, "Novel and History, Plot and Plantation," *Savacou* 5 (1971): 95-102.

Optional:

Karl Polanyi. *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2001 [1944]. 35-135. [UW Library online].

Arjun Appadurai, "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 3-63.

Feb 6 (Week 3) Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene: What's at Stake?

Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stormer, "The Anthropocene," *Global Change Newsletter* 41 (2000):17-18.

Simon Lewis and Mark Maslin, "Defining the Anthropocene," *Nature* 519 (2015): 71-80.

Laura Pulido, "Racism and the Anthropocene," in *Future Remains: A Cabinet of Curiosities for the Anthropocene*, edited by Gregg Mitman, Marco Amiero, and Robert S. Emmett (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 116-128.

Donna Haraway, "Making Kin: Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene," in *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), pp. 99-103.

Jason Moore, "Anthropocene or Capitalocene?: On the Nature and Origins of Our Ecological Crisis," in *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital* (London: Verso, 2015), pp. 169-202.

Gabrielle Hecht, "Interscalar Vehicles for an African Anthropocene"
<https://anthrosource.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.14506/ca33.1.05>

Feb 13 (Week 4) Capitalism & Slavery

Joseph Miller, *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade, 1730–1830* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), pp. 105-139.

Paul Cheney, *Cul De Sac. Patrimony, Capitalism, And Slavery in French Saint-Domingue* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), pp. 1-14, 42-71.

Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), pp. 244-279.

Edward Baptiste, *The Half Has Never Been Told* (New York: Basic Books, 2014), pp. xv-xxiv, 75-144.

Jennifer L. Morgan, "Accounting for "The Most Excruciating Torment": Gender, Slavery, and Trans-Atlantic Passages." *History of the Present*, 6 (2016):184-207.

John Clegg, "Capitalism and Slavery," *Critical Historical Studies* (Fall 2015): 281-304.

Feb 20 (Week 5)

No Seminar; Gabrielle Hecht Lecture

Feb 21: Roundtable on Anthropocene with Gabrielle Hecht, Paul Robbins, and Dan Richter

Feb. 22: Anthropocene Seminar with Gabrielle Hecht, Paul Robbins, and Dan Richter

Feb 27 (Week 6) Land

W. E. Burghard DuBois, "Of the Black Belt," in *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches*, 8th ed. (Chicago: A. C. McLurg & Co., 1909), pp. 110-134.

Monica White, "Land, Food, and Freedom," in *Freedom Farmers: Agricultural Resistance and the Black Freedom Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018), pp. 3-27.

Lauret Savoy, "Properties of Desire," in *Trace: Memory, History, Race, and the American Landscape* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2015), pp. 89-114.

Tania Murray Li, "Enclosure," in *Land's End: Capitalist Relations on an Indigenous Frontier* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), pp. 84-114.

George W. Brown, *The Economic History of Liberia* (Washington, D.C.: Associated Publishers, 1941), pp. 69-75, 213-231.

Watch *The Land Beneath Our Feet*, directed by Gregg Mitman and Sarita Siegel (2016). Available at <https://vimeo.com/213569738>; password: alchemy

March 6 (Week 7) Relations of Labor

Sarah Besky, *The Darjeeling Distinction: Labor and Justice on Fair-Trade Tea Plantations in India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 1-37, 59-87.

Shona Jackson, *Creole Indigeneity: Between Myth and Nation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), pp. 75-110.

Ann Laura Stoler, *Capitalism and Confrontation in Sumatra's Plantation Belt, 1870-1979* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 1-46.

Ruth Wilson Gilmore, "Crimes, Cropland, and Capitalism," in *Golden Gulag* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), pp. 128-180.

March 13 (Week 8) Creole Knowledges of the Plantation

Judith Carney, *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 69-141.

David Eltis, Philip Morgan and David Richardson, "Agency and Diaspora in Atlantic History: Reassessing the African Contribution to Rice Cultivation in the Americas," *American Historical Review* 112 (2007): 1329-1358.

Walter Hawthorne, "From 'Black Rice' to 'Brown': Rethinking the History of Rice Culture in the Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Atlantic," *American Historical Review* 115 (2010): 151-163.

Stephan Palmie, "Thinking with Ngangas: Reflections on Embodiment and the Limits of 'Objectively Necessary Appearances.'" *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 48 (2006): 852-86.

Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "Culture on the Edges: Creolization in the Plantation Context", in *The African Diaspora & Creolization* (May 2006), pp. 9-21.

March 20 (Week 9)

No Seminar Spring Break

March 27 (Week 10)

No Seminar: Humanities without Boundaries Lecture, Michelle Murphy

March 28, 2019 A Roundtable on the Capitalocene: Shona Jackson, Jason Moore, & Michelle Murphy

March 29, 2019 Capitalocene Seminar with Shona Jackson, Jason Moore, and Michelle Murphy

April 3 (Week 11) Technologies/Ecologies/Value

Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), pp. 176-208.

Daniel B. Rood. *The Reinvention of Atlantic Slavery: Technology, Labor, Race, and Capitalism in the Greater Caribbean*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. pp. 1-93

Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), pp. 3-93.

Tariq Ali, *A Local History of Global Capital: Jute and Peasant Life in the Bengal Delta*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), pp. 21-36, 67-107.

Anna Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), pp. 1-9, 155-213.

April 10 (Week 12) Sensoria

Julie Dash, *Daughters of the Dust* (screening tbd).

Marlon James, *The Book of Night Women* (Riverhead Books, 2009).

April 17 (Week 13)

No Seminar for scheduled events with Harway and Tsing

April 18: An Evening of Conversation with Donna Haraway and Anna Tsing

April 19: Plantationocene Seminar with Donna Haraway and Anna Tsing

April 24 (Week 14) Plantation Temporalities & Futures

Katherine McKittrick "Plantation Futures," *Small Axe* 17 (2013)17 (3): 1-15.

Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe* (2008) 12 (2): 1-14.

May 1 (Week 15)

Presentation of student work