

San Francisco State University

**History 850: History beyond the Nation**

**Instructor: Christopher Chekuri**

**Fall 2006: Tuesday 19.00-21.45; 268 Science Bldg.**

**Office Hours: Science 222; Thursdays 3.30-5.30pm or by appointment; office phone: (415) 338-7541; e-mail: cchekuri@sfsu.edu**

**Course Abstract:**

Historians have always been aware of the collusion between history and nation. If so, as the calls for the end of nation-state sovereignty grow louder, what exactly is the future of history? How do we imagine our pasts beyond our national belonging? If the linkages between nation, culture, and history are no longer as firm as we once imagined, what exactly is the future of our cultural pasts? This seminar will ask these and other questions and examines how contemporary scholars are engaging such questions. In this seminar we will examine how the call for a future beyond the nation is influencing scholarship. Our seminar will be facilitated by a critical examination of many recent scholarly writings that explore a future of history outside, beyond, and around the nation.

**Course Requirements:**

The course will be devoted to group discussion of weekly reading assignments. Participants will be expected to think, develop, and write a critical essay each week.

**CRITICAL THOUGHT PIECE**

In order to write a critical essay you must think carefully about the book and about your essay. Essays should be 750 words maximum, so you must take pains to organize and present your thoughts with clarity. Do not submit an essay that exceeds the maximum word limit (More details provided below).

Your writing assignment is due by class hour every week. **Late submissions will not be accepted.**

**Grade breakdown:**

Class participation: 40%

Weekly critical thought piece and Final review: 60%

**BOOKS:**

- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. (Verso, 1991).
- Balibar, Etienne. *We, The People of Europe? Reflections on Transnational Citizenship*. (Princeton, 2004).
- Brown, Wendy. *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire*. (Princeton, 2006).
- Chatterjee, Partha. *Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*. (Princeton, 1993).
- Duara, Prasenjit. *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China*. (Chicago, 1997)
- Goswami, Manu. *Producing India: From Colonial Economy to National Space*. (Chicago, 2004).
- Mehmood, Saba. *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. (Princeton, 2005).
- Mitchell, Timothy. *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity*. (U. California, 2002).
- Pandey, Gyanendra. *Routine Violence: Nations, Fragments, Histories*. (Stanford, 2005).
- Rafael, Rafael. *Promise of the Foreign: Nationalism and the Technics of Translation in the Spanish Philippines*. (Duke, 2005).

**Course Outline: The following is a rough outline and it is subject to change.**

Week 1: August 29, 2006

Introductions  
Seminar readings, conduct and expectations  
Critical thought piece

Week 2: September 5

Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. Critical thought piece

Week 3: September 12

Articles on Theories of Nationalism (online/blackboard)  
Gellner, Hobsbawm, Smith Critical thought piece

Week 4: September 19

Partha Chatterjee, *Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*.  
Critical thought piece due

Week 5: September 26

Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China*.  
Critical thought piece due

Week 6: October 3

Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity*. Critical thought piece due

Week 7: October 10

Manu Goswami, *Producing India: From Colonial Economy to National Space*. Critical thought piece

Week 8: October 17

Gyanendra Pandey, *Routine Violence: Nations, Fragments, Histories*. Critical thought piece due

Week 9: October 24

Vicente Rafael, *Promise of the Foreign: Nationalism and the Technics of Translation in the Spanish Philippines*.

Week 10: October 31

Articles on Global vs. Nation

Week 11: November 7

Saba Mehmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*.

Week 12: November 14

Etienne Balibar, *We, The People of Europe? Reflections on Transnational Citizenship*.

Week 13: November 28

Himadeep Muppidi, *The Politics of the Global* (on reserve)

Week 14: December 5

Wendy Brown, *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire*.

Week 15: December 12

Submit Final Review Essay/project

## **Assignments**

### Critical Essays:

Your major responsibilities include a weekly critical essay and discussion participation. THIS IS A GRADUATE SEMINAR! Your critical essay should not look like a reportage or summary of the book. Keep in mind that everyone else in class has read the book. Please avoid looking up other people's reviews of the books online.

In writing your critical essay, you should demonstrate how you engage the ideas in the book. These are just a starting point for you to think about the readings.

1. What is the central argument/thesis of the book?
2. What *concepts* and what *theories* guide the author's work? Identify and engage critically with what you see as primary concepts and theories. Do you find these concepts analytically incisive and useful in making sense of the world and ideas that shape it? Or are they flawed? How would you improve it?
3. How does this book fit into the larger ideas dealt in our seminar? How would you apply the concepts and ideas to existing ideas about history, politics, and culture?
4. Each student has to post a discussion question(s) on blackboard by 5pm every Monday.

#### Class moderation:

I will assign weekly student moderators (two) to lead us through the seminars. Your role as a moderator is to collect all the discussion questions and frame your own final set of discussion questions. We will need 5 discussion question per class. As a moderator you're expected to shape the discussion and set the agenda.

#### Class Participation

A good seminar is ultimately a good conversation. This seminar is an opportunity for you to discuss and shape your ideas. The quality of your class participation is more important than the quantity, but frequent participation of high quality is expected. We will be guided by the questions of critical reading and analysis mentioned above and outlined below, and the following points tend to characterize effective participation.

1. Are the points made substantive and relevant to the discussion? Are they linked to the comments of others?
2. Do comments show that the participant has been listening carefully?
3. Do comments clarify and highlight the important aspects of earlier comments and lead to a clearer statement of the concepts being covered?
4. Is the participant willing to interact with other class members?
5. Do comments show evidence of analysis?
6. Do comments add to our understanding?
7. Does the participant distinguish between facts, opinions, beliefs, and between positive and normative analysis?

8. Is there a willingness to test new ideas?

Constructive class participation is essential to make our seminar a great success.