

HUMN 100-05
 Fall 2020
 “Inventing the Global South”

Midterm 1: Essay – Unit 1 “Empires: Primitive Accumulation and Racial Capitalism”

Sequence

Essay Draft1 (1250-1500 words)	Sun. 9/12 by 9 PM (your time)
Essay consultation with professor	Tues. 9/15 and Weds. 9/16
Essay Final Draft (1250-1500 words)	Weds. 9/23 by 9 PM (your time)
Essay Reflection (250-500 words)	Weds. 9/30 by 9 PM (your time)

Resources

Help seeking is an decisive behavior for the most successful persons, however you choose to define success. Beyond the resources provided in this class (Draft 1 consultation, research collective peer review) consider seeking out help from [The Writing Center](#), [The Bucknell Library](#), [The Teaching and Learning Center](#).

Pre-writing

There is no reason to sit in fear of the blank page or screen. You have already started writing this essay in your Research Journal posts, notes about class discussion, and active and close reading of the texts. Use these as springboards into the composition of your first draft.

Some options for planning your essay:

- Take notes on the assignment and what kinds of questions it raises, what thoughts it sparks.
- Go back to the source text and take notes in light of the assignment and your thinking about it.
- Brainstorm on a piece of paper writing down whatever comes to mind in relation to the assignment and your thinking about the source.
- Create an outline that organizes your notes on the text or the results of your brainstorming.
- Compose full sentences or paragraphs in response to the assignment and the text. Work back and forth between your writing and the text to find evidence for your thoughts or to discover passages that take your thinking in new directions.
- Talk to a peer or friend about the assignment, your thinking, and the source text. Explain the text and your analysis to an uninformed or an informed reader. Solicit their feedback about your ideas.
- Record yourself thinking out loud about the assignment and the source text. Takes notes as you replay the recording.

Your thought process is unique, and you will need to find the planning and composing strategies that work best for you. Don’t just rely on what you’ve always done. Become self-conscious about the choices you make as a writer, your strengths and weaknesses, what strategies you think will work best for the assignment and to achieve your writing goals.

Essay 1 Draft 1

Length: approx. 1250-1500 words

Format: Word document; MLA citation style, bibliography, and formatting

Delivery: Upload to class Google Drive (ensure proper permissions)

Imagine that you are writing a paper to present at an undergraduate conference. Most members of your audience are *not* familiar with your source texts. They have chosen to read your essay based on its catchy

title. Others have made the same decision but because they are familiar with one or more of your sources. Use your voice, your thinking to guide both your uninformed and informed readers through the conversation you sustain on the page with your sources. Your introduction should clearly pose your central claim or question, the motivations or urgency of your argument, and provide a roadmap detailing its structure. Please, do not use external sources.

NB: Prompts should do just that, prompt you to articulate original thinking. They are not merely questions to be answered, for there are no answers, only more or less persuasive arguments. Prompts do model the kind of complexity and depth we hope to achieve in our reading and writing. If you start with one of these prompts and find your thinking heading in a different direction, follow it. Your voice, your thinking, and your ability to sustain your readers attention matter most.

Prompt 1— Primitive Accumulation

The opening chapter of Eduardo Galeano's *The Open Veins of Latin America* places Spanish and Portuguese colonization of the Americas / Abya Yala at the genesis of capitalism. In doing so he pushes against the simple demonization of the Spanish and Portuguese colonizers to indict all of Europe in the genocides and ethnocides that marked the encounter with indigenous peoples. While Galeano agrees with Marx's assessment that "The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skins, signaled the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production"(28), he also points out that "[n]either Spain nor Portugal received the benefits of the sweeping advance of capitalist mercantilism though it was their colonies that substantially supplied the gold and silver feeding this expansion" (29).

Just as Galeano challenges stereotypes about Spanish and Portuguese colonization, Pablo Neruda challenges the idyllic image of a pre-Columbian past when he indicts the abuses of the Incan Empire in his poem "The Heights of Macchu Picchu." Compare the arguments of these two Latin American thinkers about the history of the continent and what they imply for our understanding of colonialism generally.

Prompt 2— Representation of the Other

Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* has become canonical in the literature about European colonialism. But the text is not without its detractors. For example, Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe maligned the novella for its racist and xenophobic depiction of Congolese peoples. Edward Said is more ambivalent in his adjudication of the text's merits and shortcomings. Said claims that Conrad's novella presents two arguments or visions for the postcolonial world after the breakup of European empires in the post-War period.

One argument allows the old imperial enterprise full scope to play itself out conventionally, to render the world as official European or Western imperialism saw it, and to consolidate itself after World War Two. . . . The second argument . . . sees itself as Conrad saw his own narratives, local to a time and place, neither unconditionally true nor unqualifiedly certain. . . . Since Conrad *dates* imperialism, shows its contingency, records its illusions and tremendous violence and waste . . . he permits his later readers to imagine something other than an Africa carved up into dozens of European colonies. (426)

In short, Said claims that *Heart of Darkness* at once reinforces and criticizes European imperialism. Weigh this claim against your own reading of the text and in light of Said's theory of orientalism.

Bibliography

Said, Edward. "Two Visions in Heart of Darkness." *Heart of Darkness*, by Joseph Conrad, edited by Paul B. Armstrong. 4th ed., Norton, 2006. 422-429.

Prompt 3— Racial Capitalism

In a recent essay outlining her understanding of racial capitalism, Charisse Burden-Stelly recalls the claim by historian Cedric Robinson: "The fact that western hemisphere capitalism was racist from the moment of inception is a distinguishing feature of U.S. historical development." Burden-Stelly comments, "As such, ever-changing techniques of surplus-value extraction from its 'Lazarus stratum of workers descended from slaves'— facilitated by gratuitous white terror, violence, coercion, and manipulation— remain foundational to its constitutively racialized regimes of accumulation. As a framework, modern U.S. racial capitalism elucidates this political economy of Blackness." And by extension, anti-Blackness helps "maintain and reproduce the race-based pursuit of profit" (18). In what ways do analogous logics animate the histories of British and French colonialism as presented in Edward Said's *Orientalism*? Were the term available to him, do you think Said would employ "racial capitalism" as an analog of orientalism? Reflect on the relationship between *orientalized* subjects in the Near East and *racialized* subjects in the United States.

Bibliography

Charisse Burden-Stelly. "Theoretical Notes on Racial Capitalism." *Monthly Review*, vol. 72. No. 3, 2020, pp. 8-20.

Essay 2 Draft 2

Length: 1250-1500 words

Format: Word document; MLA citation style, bibliography, and formatting

Delivery: Upload to class Google Drive (ensure proper permissions)

Draft 2 is your opportunity to apply what you have learned from the feedback you've received and your own thinking about your essay. *Revision* goes far beyond correcting sentence-level errors. (We usually call this "editing" or "proofreading.") To truly revise, you must read critically for the big picture, that is, you must read your own work for argument, organization, logic, evidence. Actively, closely, and critically read the text: underline key sentences and words, make notes in the margins, remark those elements that are working and those that are not.

Some questions to ask yourself as you read:

- Is the central claim / problem / question clearly stated? Is it well motivated? Do I explain why the reader should care about my argument?
- Do I guide the reader by anticipating my argument in the first paragraph, that is, do I provide a clear roadmap?
- Do I guide the reader by situating my argument in conversation with the source text?
- Is my representation of the source text fair and accurate?
- Does the evidence in fact support the claims being made? Is the logic sound?
- Do the subclaims in fact support the central claim / problem / question? Is one of the subclaims more compelling than the others and thus worthy of deeper exploration? Or is one of the subclaims more compelling than the central claim and thus worthy of being recast as the new central claim?

- Are the moves from one claim to the next clearly motivated? Are they logically consistent with the argument? Could the organization be changed to improve the coherence and cogency of the argument?
- Does the conclusion offer a mere restatement of the argument, or does it cast it in a new light, opening onto further questions or different ways of considering the topic?

As you revise, you will likely find yourself going back to your source text and notes. Once you have revised the argument, deepened your analysis, brought in new evidence, and addressed inaccuracies or inadequacies, turn to the sentence-level correction and polish the prose. This way, you work from the general to the specific for maximum efficiency and effectiveness.

Midterm 1 Self-Reflection

Length: 350-500 words

Format: Word document

Delivery: Upload to Moodle

Deep learning is a process of internalizing skills, practices, and ways of thinking. This process is hastened by self-reflection. Write a letter addressed to yourself that considers the following questions: What was your process in writing each draft of this essay? How much time did you invest? Did your strategies work? If not, what might you try in the future? What do you think you did well? What did you learn about your source, your writing, yourself? What lessons will you take from this assignment sequence and apply to subsequent assignments?

Assessment

I will consider both your process and the resulting product. The questions I will ask myself when evaluating your work are the same as our course goals (see Syllabus):

- 1) Does this essay illuminate today's world as the product of colonization, decolonization, or post-colonialisms?
- 2) Does the author practice intercultural and historical empathy?
- 3) Does the author think comparatively, synthetically, and systemically?
- 4) Does the essay communicate effectively through lucid prose?
- 5) Has the author exercised intellectual independence whether through risk-taking, help-seeking, or both?