

M.Phil. in Criticism and Culture
Michaelmas Term 2011
Colonialism and the Question of 'Freedom'

Convenor: Dr Priya Gopal

'If we were able to mount that wondrous horse of freedom, where would we seek to ride it?' asks critical geographer, David Harvey. This course will reflect on some possible answers to through the prism of responses to the British empire and its vaunted project of bestowing freedom, equality and rule of law across its global territorial possessions. Interrogating the entrenched narrative of 'influence' and 'spread' whereby Britain shaped the world but in which its own history and 'values' figure as curiously static and uncontaminated by its domination the globe over four centuries, this course will look at how questions of 'freedom' were approached by those who were in the position of demanding and/or fighting for it. To what extent is the idea of freedom (or 'liberty') in Britain, both in historical actuality and in the cultural imagination, forged or, at least, reconstituted by the unequal imperial encounter? What ideas of liberation and liberty were invoked during that encounter and by whom? How do we restore to the narrative of the emergence of 'British values,' the agency-in-struggle of the enslaved and the colonized, as well as freed slaves and anti-colonial activists, both within and beyond the British Isles? Part of the challenge here is how to make visible the profoundly global, i.e. both colonial and anti-colonial—provenance of ideas and institutions that are seen to be always already 'British' (or, in some cases, more broadly 'European' and 'Western').

(Please note that this is a provisional and partial reading list; additional readings may be added at the start of term. For classes, you will be reading approximately 60-100 pages a week, usually not entire monographs but extracts. You will find it useful to familiarize yourself with the introductions to all the longer texts listed below. We will also bring into our discussions, appropriate literary and cultural texts).

- Susan Buck-Morss 'Hegel and Haiti' in *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (2000), available on JSTOR
- Burke, Edmund. *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, Volume V: India: Madras and Bengal, 1774-1785 (OUP 1981). See "Speech on Fox's East India Bill", "Speech on the Nabob of Arcot's Debts," and "Sketch of the Negro Code."
- Frederick Douglass (1857/1985) "The Significance of Emancipation in the West Indies." in *The Frederick Douglass Papers*. Series One: Speeches, Debates, and Interviews. Volume 3: 1855-63. Edited by John W. Blassingame. New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 204.
- Frantz Fanon (1963/2004) 'On Violence' from *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox. (Grove Press)

- MK Gandhi (1909/2009) *Hind Swaraj* (Cambridge UP)
- GWF Hegel (1830/1998) 'The Course of World History' in *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* (Cambridge UP)
- Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker (2000) *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic*. (Beacon Press)
- Uday Mehta (1999) *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* by Uday Singh Mehta (Chicago UP)
- Edward Said (2004) *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*
- (Columbia UP)
- Rabindranath Tagore (1917/2010) *Nationalism* (Penguin Books)
- Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1997) *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Beacon Press)