

The Anthropology of Transnationalism

ANTC34H3

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Transnationalism encompasses in its ambit not just the movement of people, but of ideas of belonging and not belonging, feelings of inclusion and exclusion, forms of multinational governance, and the impulses of markets. These connections are simultaneously embedded in historical precedents, politics and ideologies that shape, motivate and limit identity and these movements. The course readings will highlight the historical and political complexities of transnationalism in relation to other ideas such as (settler) colonialism, diaspora, im/migration and multiculturalism. This course considers dimensions of transnationalism as a mode of human sociality and site for cultural production, specifically when imagining what “Home is, where it is potentially located, and what gets occluded. Topics covered include nationalism, racism, transnational labour migration, the flows of refugees and traders, and the artistic dimensions of creating Home.

Course Companion / Ethnography (Available online from UofT library)

Quayson, Ato and Girish Daswani. 2013. *A Companion to Diaspora and Transnationalism*. Wiley-Blackwell.

Simpson, Audra. 2014. *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Border of Settler States*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Objectives:

- 1) To understand the importance of concepts like colonialism, transnationalism and diaspora and their relevance in today's world.
- 2) Provide definitions of transnationalism and diaspora and be able to examine their strengths and limits.
- 3) Understand the current debates and questions about where "Home" is and what it in/excludes.
- 4) Summarize the diverse manifestations of migrant life in the ethnographic examples provided and explore their differences and connections.
- 5) Explain the potential limits of theory through the various case studies provided.
- 6) Analyse ethnography in order to better understand transnational flows and migrant or indigenous experience.
- 7) Demonstrate good writing and oral skills.
- 8) Work collaboratively to present ideas and opinions and be able to defend them.
- 9) To enjoy the course.

UTSC campus, including the Department of Anthropology, where we learn, teach, and work, is located in [Tkarón:to](#) (Toronto), on the Land of several Indigenous Peoples including the Mississaugas of the New Credit, the Anishinaabe, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat Peoples. It was the subject, in 1701, of the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, a treaty between the French, the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois Confederacy), and many other Indigenous Nations, who pledged to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes. Tkarón:to is also covered by [Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the New Credit](#). It is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples. Land acknowledgements such as these are important, but they do not have real significance unless accompanied by the return of land and life to Indigenous peoples of what is known as Canada.

1. *Participation*: We will conduct the course as a weekly seminar. Everybody's continuous participation is encouraged. All students are expected to have closely read the assigned texts before the respective sessions and to be prepared to engage in class discussion. Please remember that effective participation also requires good listening skills. In our seminars, I will share post/colonial documents as well as contemporary popular culture media (music videos, clips from movies, songs, art pieces). By discussing these historical-cultural media in small groups, we will have conversations around the precedents of transnationalism, racist/nationalist tropes, its various assumptions and responses.
2. *Artistic Expression and its Trans-National Dimensions* (20 marks): 6-8 pages, double-spaced, excluding cover page and bibliography, and with at least 3 references from readings. Each student will have to prepare and submit a report of their visit to the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) – specifically the Mary and Harry Jackman Gallery and/or the J. S. McLean Centre for Indigenous & Canadian Art OR the Royal Ontario Museum's (ROM) [Daphne Cockwell Gallery dedicated to First Peoples art & culture](#). This is an individual effort that should interrogate the Museum as a transnational/[decolonizing](#) space and provide a critical discussion of settler-colonialism through an analysis of the artistic displays and the organization of this space. You are encouraged to ask questions such as: What voices are featured in this exhibition? Who are the “experts” quoted or featured? What objects are on display and themes discussed? What is the overall narrative thread of the exhibition? What is *not* discussed or occluded?
3. *Reading Responses* (25 marks): Each student has to submit a commentary on the weekly readings on Blackboard. Each posting is worth 5 marks and the best of 5 weeks will be used in the final calculation. Your response may take the form of questions, reflections, or responses to other students' postings. The postings should be no longer than one page. You are strongly encouraged to read your colleagues' postings before class.
4. Final Essay: “University as Home” (25 marks): 7-8 pages, double-spaced, excluding cover page and bibliography, with at least 5 academic references. Specifically looking at UofT/UTSC as a historical, affective and contested site, how does the [University \(not\) care for its students](#). Apart from observations/reflections on the University as a place of hope, diversity, discovery and friendship, how is it also filled with anxiety, private investments, bureaucracy and internal divisions? You should engage with theoretical discussions from the weekly readings and the seminar about the University as a site of home making (diversity, cultural activities). Please view the [University Worlds](#) website for specific UofT content and update yourself with the 2021 [Censure of UofT](#) about UofT as a contested space around academic freedom.
5. *Performance / Exhibition* (30 marks): This is a project that involves a piece of art or spoken word presentation about “home” and what home means to the student. Students will create their own art-piece or write their own lyrics and present these along with commentaries for group discussion. These works will be made into a [virtual exhibit](#). As a complement to the artwork piece, each student is asked to write a 5-6 page interpretive essay. The essay must both situate their creation within a broader historical context and articulate how it tackles issues and conversations that pertain to the contemporary relevance of the broader theme of this seminar. The bibliography must include at least 5 scholarly titles. Please include a good quality file or link to your artwork piece when submitting your essay.

(Week 1) Transnationalism: Concepts, Categories and Critique

This is an introductory lecture that gives an overview of the course. It will look closely at the inter-relatedness of terms such ‘transnationalism’, ‘diaspora’, ‘migration’, ‘colonialism’, ‘post/colonialism’ and their accompanying assumptions, especially around the question of what or where is “Home”. “Home” becomes a (historical and existential) problem-space for us to think and feel through what we know or think we know about shifting notions of identity, belonging and diasporic community.

1) Quayson, Ato and Girish Daswani. 2013. “Introduction – Diaspora and Transnationalism: Scapes, Scales and Scopes”. In *A Companion to Diaspora and Transnationalism*. Pp. 1-26.

2) Hall, Stuart 1993. “Cultural Identity and Diaspora”. In *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*. Edited by Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman. New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf. Pp. 392-403.

Watch “[The Benefits of not Belonging](#),” TedxUTSC Talk, 2108. Girish Daswani.

(Week 2) Colonialisms: Race and Diasporas

How have Colonialism and Empire shaped different kinds of unfree movement (through enslavement, indentured labour) and the migration of people? Are we truly in a postcolonial era and, if not, how does the continued presence of colonialism (and capitalism) persist through the im/mobility and killing of (racialized) people? How are liberal narratives of time (progress) and space (geopolitical) entangled in modern conceptions of human (racialized) freedom? How are they represented or expressed in our institutional structures or creative spaces? Can we imagine a space/time of colonial interconnection or one outside of colonialism and its others?

1) Walcott, Rinaldo, 2021. *The Long Emancipation: Moving Toward Black Freedom*. Durham: Duke University Press. Read Chapters 6 & 7.

2) Stoler, Ann L. 2016. *Duress: Imperial Durabilities in Our Times*. Durham: Duke University Press. Read Chapter 1.

3) Lowe, Lisa. 2016. *The Intimacies of Four Continents*. Durham: Duke University Press. Read Introduction.

Watch “[I am not your Negro](#)”, documentary film by Raoul Peck. 2016. Adapted from James Baldwin’s unfinished manuscript “Remember This House”

(Week 3) Post/Colonialisms: White/Settler Nationalism and Multiculturalism

The word *nation* is central to the term transnationalism. The nation-state (a post WWII invention) reinforces ideas of borders and cultural or ethnic boundaries. In what ways have nation-states (including its postcolonial predicaments) changed the ways in which people experience movement and how do they reproduce ideas of belonging, as well as “represented” (not just “imagined”) communities, and other forms of exclusion? How do policies such as “multiculturalism” or “recognition” provide new forms of exclusion among diasporic groups or repress Indigenous voices and their continued presence in settler colonial states such as Australia, US and Canada?

- 1) Hage, Ghassan. 2000. *White Nation: Fantasies of White supremacy in a Multicultural Society*. New York: Routledge. Read Introduction and Chapter 2.
- 2) Coulthard, Glenn. 2014. *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. University of Minnesota Press. Read Chapter 4.
- 3) Vernon, Karina. 2016. “To End the Hyphen-Nation: Decolonizing Multiculturalism” *English Studies in Canada* 42 (3-4): 81-98.

Watch documentaries “[Charlottesville: Race and Terror](#)” by VICE News Tonight (HBO) and/or [Canada’s Dark Secret](#). Aljazeera Special Series.

(Week 4) Transatlantic Artistic Convergences: On Beyoncé’s “Black is King”

Calling this album her “love letter to Africa“, Beyoncé saw herself as bringing together a Black audience on the African continent and in the diaspora. Drawing on songs from the 2019 “Lion King: The Gift” album, her visual album “Black is King” (2020) is advertised as celebrating the “Black experience” and was filmed in countries like South Africa and Ghana. Praised for bringing attention to various artistic talents in Africa, for her use of Afropop and African symbols and cultures, and for being a product of visual and musical genius that transcends any one place and time, there have also been questions and critiques from Africans – regarding Beyoncé’s representation of “Africa” and the role that capitalism plays in its production. What role does the global circulation of images, Hip Hop and popular film play in the transnational representation of the African continent? How does Pan-Africanism become expressed or commodified in an artistic homecoming project such as Beyoncé’s Black is King?

- 1) “[African Perspectives on Beyoncé’s ‘Black is King’](#)” 2020. *Africa Proactive / Everyday Orientalism* Panel Discussion.
- 2) Irakoze, J. 2020. “[Why We Must Be Careful When Watching Beyoncé’s ‘Black Is King’](#)” *Essence*.
- 3) Dabiri, Emma. 2018. [Journeys of Afrofuturism](#). BBC Radio 4.

Watch Human Stories videos: “[Toronto Hip Hop and the Music Marketplace](#)” by Francesca D’Amico-Cuthbert and/or “[Hiplife Music Videos and Social Media](#)” by Nii Kotei Nikoi.

(Week 5) Archaeology of the “Holy Land,” Biblical Tourism and Museum of the Bible

Focusing on the Biblical “Holy Land”, how are the transnational and interconnected fields of archaeology, tourism and museums involved in curated stories of “heritage” that also occlude public secrets of settler occupation, curatorial decision-making, untold stories of illegal antiquities trade, and breaches of public trust? In their desire to connect with the Biblical past, how do settler and evangelical politics align across geopolitical boundaries to make specific historical claims or to re/imagine history? How has the Bible become a historical document used to advance occupation and Christian fundamentalism’s legitimacy in the public sphere?

1) Paz, Alejandro. unpublished. “Settling History in Silwan: State Emblems and Public Secrets in Occupied East Jerusalem”.

2) Poser, Rachel. 2019. “[Common Ground: The Politics of Archaeology in Jerusalem](#)”, *Letter from Silwan*.

3) Abu El-Haj, Nadia. 2002. *Facts on the Ground. Archaeological Practice and Territorial Self-Fashioning in Israeli Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Read Chapter Four.

Watch “[Untold Stories at the Museum of the Bible. Artifacts, Provenance, and Bias in the Contact Zone](#).” *Everyday Orientalism EOTalk#7*. 2020, by Morag Kersel and/or “Archaeological Display and Omission: The 1936 Exhibition of Judith Krause-Marquet’s Finds from A-Tell (Biblical Ha-Ai) at the Crossroad of British, Palestinian, and Israeli Perspectives” by Liat Naeh.

(Week 6) Reading Week Break

(Week 7) Mohawk Interruptus

Simpson, Audra. 2014. *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Border of Settler States*. Duke University Press.

(Week 8) African-Asian and Africa-India relations

The anthropological focus on specific regions or countries (explorations of nationalisms) has (inadvertently) prevented us from making connections between different countries and continents. There has been a multiplicity of narratives about decolonization and political connections between Africa and Asia/India over time (including the idea of a Third World); from the 1955 Bandung Conference to more recent China-Africa relations, and to the presence of Indians in Africa. How have imperial epistemologies (geopolitical borders/racial ideologies) been internalized by "Africans" and "Asians" in terms of building relations across these identities? How have the ideas of "Africa" and "China" become circulated in transnational politics? How do movies like the recent Netflix film *Namaste Wahala* (2021) raise further questions about the history of Africa-India and the existing opportunities that Indians and Africans may have when it comes to cross-cultural exchange, social or romantic encounters, and inter-racial relationships within the contemporary world where social class, religion, caste, and race matter?

1) "[Black, Brown and in Love: Interracial Relationships between Africa and India](#)" 2021. *Africa Proactive / Everyday Orientalism* Panel.

2) Daswani, Girish. 2021. [This is not Namaste Wahala: On Silences, \(His\)Stories and Ghana's Oldest South Asian Family](#). *Everyday Orientalism*.

3) Lan, Shanshan. 2015. "Transnational business strategies among Chinese/Nigerian couples in Guangzhou and Lagos." *Asian Anthropology* 14(2): 133-149.

Watch an episode from documentary series "[Africans in Yiwu](#) – Stories about the Presence of Africans in China" (In Mandarin with English subtitles).

(Week 9) Racial Geographies and Border Crossings

What is the role of the figure of the "Indian" in border crossings between Mexico and the United States? How is the figure of the "migrant" constructed in similar border crossings? How are national and racial borders crossed, transgressed and reaffirmed? The necropolitical implications of the partitioning and regulation of life and death along these borders add to the already significant militarization of US-Mexico. In Canada, SAWP migrants, who include Mexican farm labourers in Ontario, are exempt from labour laws that govern minimum wage, overtime and rest periods. How does such labor migration straddle the assumed divide between free and unfree labor?

1) Saldaña-Portillo, María Josefina. 2016. *Indian Given: Racial geographies across Mexico and the United States*. Durham: Duke University Press. Read Introduction.

2) León, Jason de. 2015. *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Read Introduction and Chapter 1.

3) Graham, Mac. 2021. *Constructing the Modern Hacienda: Land, Work, Memory and Migration in the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program*. PhD Thesis: University of Toronto. Read Chapter Two.

Watch Human Stories video: “[More than Butterflies: A Look at the Monarch Butterfly Biosphere in Mexico](#)” by Columba González-Duarte.

(Week 10) Trade and Business Networks

How are trade networks distinct or different from other kinds of transnational relationships? What role do kinship and friendship networks play in the creation and sustenance of such transnational networks? When do migrant traders feel ‘stuck’ or how do desires of an elsewhere propel migrants forward? How are imaginings of the ‘self’ and ‘other’ affected by specific trajectories of capitalism, ethnicity, gender and social class?

1) Hage, Ghassan. 2021. *The Diasporic Condition: Ethnographic Exploration of the Lebanese in the World*. University of Chicago Press. Read Chapter 2.

2) Stoller, Paul. 2002. *Money Has No Smell: The Africanization of New York City*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Read Chapter 2.

3) Zuluaga, Jonathan E. 2015. Errance and Elsewhere Among Africans Waiting to Restart their Journeys in Dakar, Senegal. *Cultural Anthropology* 30 (4): 589-610.

Watch Documentary “[Guangzhou Dream Factory](#)” (available from UofT digital library)

(Week 11) Refugees, War and Conflict

Violence, war and conflict produce the displacement of people within and across national borders. The imaginings of returning home and the romantic notions of return converge upon people who see themselves as victims of unjustified violence. Media images and articles as well as governmental policies actively resist giving refugees a voice. Instead what it means to be a refugee is a politically charged and contested. In their efforts to belong somewhere and recreate community, many victims of violence also actively resist stereotypes and become agents of change.

1) Obeid, Michelle. 2013. “Home-Making in the Diaspora: Bringing Palestine to London”. In *A Companion to Diaspora and Transnationalism*.

2) Malkki, Lisa. 1996. Speechless Emissaries: Refugees, Humanitarianism, and Dehistoricization. *Cultural Anthropology* 7 (3): 377 – 404.

3) Fassin, Didier. 2012. “Ambivalent Hospitality: Governing the Unwanted”. In *Humanitarian Reason: A Moral History of the Present*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Pp. 133-157.

Watch Human Stories video: “[Terror Capitalism in Northwest China](#)” by Darren Byler.

(Week 12) The University as (Fractured) Home

The University of Toronto is a centre for research and teaching. It is also an employer, a real estate owner, a generator of revenues and a hub in global networks of value and aspiration. What are the transnational practices that make the University and what is the relation between the “diversity” that is marketed and the one that is experienced by students? What are some of the home-making practices that students participate in and what are some of its limits? If power is a pervasive feature of institutional life, how do the intersections of race, class, gender, sexual orientation and religious affiliation impact the university experience? You should engage with the material from the [University Worlds](#) website including the survey on why students drop-out of UTSC (anti-Black racism), about UofT as an investor (role of donors) and update yourself with the limits of academic freedom (the influence of donors) through the example of the 2021 [Censure of UofT](#).

1) Ahmed, Sara. 2012. *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*. Durham: Duke University Press. Read Chapter 2.

2) Daswani, Girish. 2021. “On the Whiteness of Academia”. *Everyday Orientalism*.

3) Daswani, Girish, Dwight, Sampson, Xu, Alice and Sylwia Pucek. 2020. “[We \(don’t\) Care: University as Fractured Home](#).” *Everyday Orientalism*.

Performance / Exhibit on HOME

For the final art project, each student will create a piece of artwork that relates to the theme “Home”. The piece in question can be of any type (visual art, spoken word, song, music, dance, etc.), as long as its format allows it to be presented or performed to the group or to be recorded so it can be shared virtually. Students are encouraged to seek inspiration in the weekly readings and discussions, as well as in the other assignments for this course. Asking questions such as ‘What is home?’ and “Where is it located?” these pieces should engage with themes such as settler/colonialism, nationalism, memory and identity. They can also explore these themes in light of their own experiences and relationship with the course’s topic – reflecting on the often-unacknowledged aspects of ‘Home’. Students will be given an opportunity to explain the concept behind their art, song, poem, spoken word piece, and its relation to Home and the themes of the course.