

HIST 395: The Politics of Decolonization

Fall 2025

Instructor: Professor Bhattacharya
Office Hours: TTh, 12 noon-1 pm

In this class we will explore how decolonization embraced a spectrum of political activity, from Westminster style parliamentary practices to armed resistance. We will also interrogate whether “Pax Britannica” (British Peace), the term used by the British to describe their empire was actually peaceful. We will identify and analyze a body of primary sources from Asia and Africa and learn to critically review a body of secondary sources on the subject of decolonization.

Class Requirements

Required Textbook: There is no textbook or course reader that you have to purchase for this course. All the readings have been made available to you through Brightspace. You must bring a printout of the week’s reading to each class. You will not have access to Brightspace during class. If you have any issues with accessing course readings by the first class, please email me ASAP.

Required Journal: You must have a Class Journal where you record your answers, thoughts, and reflections. They must be submitted for review at the end of every 4 weeks.

Email and Address Policy: Please allow at least 24 hours for me to answer an email. I am usually quicker than that!

You will address me either as PROFESSOR or DOCTOR Bhattacharya. **No MRS. please!**

Compulsory Texts: THREE autobiographies that everyone in the class have to read

1. Andree Blouin, *My Country Africa*, Available on archive.org
2. Kalpana Dutta, *Chittagong Armory Raiders: Reminiscences*
Available on Brightspace
3. Zohra Driff, *Inside the battle of Algiers*, Available on Brightspace

Due Dates

- 2-Page Project Proposal Due in Class **Thursday, September 25.**
- Paper Outline Due in Class **Thursday, October 9.**
- 15-Page Rough Draft Due in Class **Thursday, November 20.**
- 20/25-Page Final Paper Due on Brightspace by **4:49 pm on Monday, December 8.**

Grade Distribution

- 30% Attendance, Class Journal, and Class Engagement
- 10% 2-Page Project Proposal+ Workshopping Primary Sources
- 10% Paper Outline
- 20% Rough Draft
- 30% Final Draft

Class Policies

Attendance and Class Engagement: I will count attendance and engagement with class materials toward your grade. Those who are in every class get an automatic 90 for that component. If you will be absent, you should contact me via email so we can communicate about what you missed. If you participate (in class or via email, for those reluctant for any reason to speak in class), you will earn points toward participation. Please be mindful of engaging respectfully and professionally with your peers.

Proposal: I will provide a worksheet as guide to your research proposal.

Workshopping Primary Sources: Choose primary sources that aligns with your project and prepare to present it in class.

Research Paper: You will use this class to write a research paper (20-25 pages) on a topic of your choosing and using original sources.

There are THREE autobiographies by women that all of you have to read. On the basis of those you have to pick ONE anticolonial movement to write about in **Africa, or Asia**. Once you identify a movement that is of interest to you, your paper can emerge based on the sources you find and subsequent patterns that emerge as you read them.

Late Policy: I will take off five points for each day your assignment is late. After 4 days, you receive an automatic 0

AI Statement: This course requires you to complete various assignments that assess your understanding and application of the course content. You are expected to do your own work and cite any sources you use properly. You are not allowed to use any artificial intelligence (AI) tools, such as chatbots, text generators, paraphrasers, summarizers, or solvers, to complete any part of your assignments.

Technology in Class: Cell phones are not to be used in class at any time. This means that your phone should be turned off before class, and it should remain off for the duration of the class. This means, I do not expect to see you texting or otherwise using your phone during our class meetings. I am really serious about this. If you are expecting an urgent call or should an emergency situation arise before class, you should speak to me about this before class. Laptops and all other electronic devices are not permitted in this class. If a recognized disability or other condition necessitates the use of a laptop or other electronic device, you should present me with DRC-issued documentation to these ends. You are welcome to use digital/electronic versions of your required texts, but you may not have access to them during class meetings. If you use (and mark readings on) an e-reader, you should speak with me about this during the first week of class. You should not expect to have access to Brightspace during our class meetings. Please plan accordingly.

GRADING SCALE

Letter Grade	Points
A+	97-100
A	93-96
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	0-59

This course is NOT graded on a curve.

Learning Outcomes: This class is designed to teach you how to formulate, research, and write a research paper. By using original sources, you will learn how to critically analyze issues and communicate ideas in conversation and in writing.

University Policies that this class will follow

Plagiarism Will Not Be Tolerated at Purdue University: Plagiarism is a crime, and students can be expelled for turning in a paper that they did not write. Copying a person's work verbatim is not the only form of plagiarism. In some cases, plagiarism involves paraphrasing the idea of another without a footnote or the repetition of another author's phrase. Students are advised to consult Purdue University's Guide to Academic Integrity for guidelines at: <http://www.purdue.edu/ODOS/osrr/integrity.htm>. Plagiarized work will receive a 0, and the professor reserves the right to forward the case to the administration for further review by a dean.

Purdue University Policy for Academic Dishonesty: Purdue prohibits "dishonesty in connection with any University activity. Cheating, plagiarism, or knowingly furnishing false information to the University are examples of dishonesty." [Part 5, Section III-B-2-a, Student Regulations] Furthermore, the University Senate has stipulated that "the commitment of acts of cheating, lying, and deceit in any of their diverse forms (such as the use of substitutes for taking examinations, the use of illegal cribs, plagiarism, and copying during examinations) is dishonest and must not be tolerated. Moreover, knowingly to aid and abet, directly or indirectly, other parties in committing dishonest acts is in itself dishonest." [University Senate Document 72-18, December 15, 1972] <https://www.purdue.edu/odos/academic-integrity/>

Accessibility and Accommodation: Purdue University strives to make learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on disability, you are welcome to let me know so that we can discuss options. You are also encouraged to contact the Disability Resource Center at: drc@purdue.edu or by phone: 765-494-1247.

Disclaimer: In case of a major campus emergency, the requirements on this syllabus are subject to changes required by a revised semester calendar. Any changes will be posted, once the course resumes, on the course website. It may also be obtained by contacting the instructor via email.

TENTATIVE WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Please note that this schedule and the topics covered are subject to change depending upon a variety of factors. Changes will be announced in class. If you are not able to attend class, it is your responsibility to find out what was covered.

Week 1: Film Screening

Battle of Algiers, by Gillo Pontecorvo, Run Time: 2hr 1min

Available on Youtube here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nX9_EbPZvKA

Answer the following Discussion Questions for your Class journal

1. Why did the FNL adopt armed resistance?
2. Is torture an ethical way to extract information from combatants?
3. Note the role Algerian women in the struggle for independence. They played an active role in political protests and armed attacks. What do make of these women in light of the idea that women are oppressed in Islamic countries?

Week 2: Introductions; Brief survey of the period

Tuesday: Introduce yourself in 3-5 sentences and prepare answers in your Class Journal to the following questions:

- What do you know about decolonization? If you had only five words to answer, what would they be?
- What are gaps in your knowledge about decolonization in Africa and Asia?
- Do you think the political processes of decolonization were 1. mostly nonviolent; 2. Mostly violent; 3.a mix of both?
- What do you think the gender balance was in these movements?

Thursday: Readings:

- A brief history of the period: Jane Burbank, Frederick Cooper, "War and Revolution in a World of Empires," from *Empires in World History*.
- Primary Source, Amilcar Cabral, "Second Address Before the United Nation," pp. 15-37 (yes, the photos included!) Available on Brightspace.

Week 3: Fundamental Theories of Decolonization

Tuesday: Readings

Julian Go, "Waves of Postcolonial Thought," in *Postcolonial Thought and Social Theory*, pp 18-42.

Primary Source, Franz Fanon, "Concerning Violence," in *The Wretched of the Earth*

Thursday: SEPTEMBER 11: By Thursday of this week, you should have identified the **continent and country** in which your chosen decolonization movement takes place. You want to acquaint yourself with the country, whose decolonization you will be focusing on and note some basic facts in your Research Journal about it, for instance, timeline of the movement, key incidents, leading figures. Be prepared to read them out and discuss in Class on Thursday.

Week 4: Uncle Ho!

Tuesday: Readings

Walden Bello, "Introduction," to Walden Bello presents Ho Chi Minh, *Down with Colonialism*, pp. 10-39.

Primary Source:

Ho Chi Minh, "Some Considerations on the Colonial Question," pp. 51-54
 "Annamese Women and French Domination," pp. 54-55.
 "Murderous Civilization," pp. 58-59.

Thursday: Discussion Questions for your journal

1. On the basis of the second reading, what do you predict would be the nature of resistance against the French, violent or nonviolent, this is a chance for you to also reflect on Fanon, although his formulations come later.
2. What effect does the oxymoron "murderous civilization" have on you?

Week 5: India and it was not all about Gandhi

Tuesday: Readings

Kim Wagner, "Calculated to Strike Terror" *The Amritsar Massacre and the Spectacle of Colonial Violence*.

Primary Source:

Udham Singh's Last Words

<https://www.revolutionarydemocracy.org/rdv2n2/singh.htm>

Thursday 2-Page Project Proposal+ Workshopping Primary Sources

Proposal Due in Class Thursday, September 25.

Week 6: NO CLASS: Think about and research your paper.

Week 7: The concept of the Global South

Tuesday: Readings

Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations*, pp. 3-50

Thursday: Class Preparation

From the list of archives try to find memoirs about the movement that interests you as a topic. Take note of what keywords or subject setting you used and be prepared to discuss when you hit gold and when you didn't. You can also look for a history book or article and scan the bibliography for memoirs or autobiographies as primary sources.

Week 7: Gender and Decolonialization

Tuesday: Readings

Maria Lugones, Toward a Decolonial Feminism

Antoinette Burton, Gender in the Making of Colonial and Imperial Stories

Thursday: Primary Source

Pick one of the three autobiographies for discussion

Paper Outline due in class on Thursday, October 9.

Week 8: TUESDAY OCTOBER 14: FALL BREAKThursday: Film Screening

Sound Track to a Coup d'état, Directed by Johan Grimonprez, Runtime 2:30 min

Week 9: Research Break**Week 10: Vietnam**Tuesday: Readings

Henrik Kwon, Co so Cach Mang and the Social Network of War

Primary Source: <https://famous-trials.com/mylaicourts>

1. The My Lai Massacre and Courts-Martial: An Account
2. Testimony and Documents related to the court martial of William Calley

Thursday: Class Preparation

Find an image or object (not a written document) linked to the decolonization movement that you will research and bring it (w/ citation) to class.

Week 11-12 Research Break**Week 13:**

Tuesday: Discussion of Research Paper

Thursday: Rough Draft Due Nov 20

Week 14: THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week 15: Last week of Classes: Celebrations and Overview

Completed Final Paper due on Brightspace by 4:49 pm on December 8.