Instructor: Melanie Richter-Montpetit
Lecture Time: Fridays, 11:30am-2:30pm
Lecture Location: TBD
Office Hours and Location: Fridays, 10:20am-11:20am. S635 Ross Bldg
Email: me.ri@web.de

Course Description
This course is designed to offer students an in-depth engagement with a selection of interventions on the driving forces of American politics. Students are expected to have a reasonable understanding of U.S. state-formation and the U.S. political system. The first part of the course will provide theoretical and disciplinary frameworks in which to consider the nature and driving forces of the contemporary U.S. social formation. The second half of the course will also include essay development workshops that are geared toward providing live feedback on students’ own research. The overall aim of the course is to familiarize students with select key historical processes and forces, and to provide a selection of frameworks in which American politics is made theoretically and politically intelligible. A key theme of the second half is an exploration of the dramatic shifts in the ways in which gendered, sexual and racialized difference and the U.S. nation are imagined and practiced in the wake of the Second World War, in particular in the context of neoliberal governance and the U.S. “war on terror.”

Objectives:
This course aims to offer students with a thematic “cap” on their undergraduate Political Science experience, including a critical engagement with the disciplines of Political Science and American studies. Building on their previous learning across and outside the subfields of Political Science, the course is designed to allow students to trace the complex workings of U.S. politics across a range of sites, actors, institutions and processes, and to do so from historically informed perspectives. The seminar seeks to prepare and encourage students to make connections between the macro- and micro-level operations of power beyond narrow disciplinary confines in order to provide students with the opportunity to develop alternative imaginaries of the political, political community and “the good life.” The seminar offers a range of analytical and intellectual perspectives that push in particular analytical binaries like national/international, public/private, power/resistance and war/peace, and foundational conceptual categories like sovereignty and the nation-state. By the end of the course, students will be familiar with analytical and theoretical frameworks and strategies that allow them to think together questions of security and political economy, body and battlefields, sexuality and labour, colonialism and culture. Throughout the course students will be able to further develop their research and presentation skills both individually and in collaboration with their peers, including orally, visually and in writing.

Course Evaluation:
Class participation  25%
Short paper:  25%
Final paper:
- Research Paper: 40%
- Workshop Presentation: 5%
- Workshop Feedback: 5%

100%

Seminar participation
1) Students are expected to have read and taken written notes of all the required weekly readings and to discuss them critically in class (15% of final grade).

2) Students will team up and present a “position paper” critically reflecting on the materials of one of the weekly sessions with the objective to facilitate discussion for the first 45 minutes of class. Students will not lecture but frame and contextualize the texts/cultural materials and pose questions for discussion that ought to both illuminate and transcend the course materials. Students are encouraged to be creative and facilitate innovative class settings (i.e. street theatre; skits; simulation; short video segments) rather than the usual question and answer format. Feel free to discuss possible strategies and approaches with me prior to your presentation (10% of final grade).

Short paper (due October 18)
Students will write a 5-6-page paper critically discussing a theoretical, conceptual and or methodological issue in regards to the study of American politics. The paper needs to draw on and engage at least five of the course readings.

Final paper (due December 10)
Research paper: The final paper will be a 13-14-page research essay. The paper needs to include at least four scholarly works from the course readings.
Workshops: On November 8, 15, and 22, students will present the research conducted for their final paper to the members of their working group. Students are expected to have prepared at least a rough draft of their research paper at the time of their presentation and need to email an outline of their presentation to the Course Director and their group members at least 48 hours prior to the meeting. The presentation (around 5-6 min.) is meant to provide students with the opportunity to discuss the work with their colleagues before the final editing stage of the paper. Every group member is expected to have read their colleagues’ outlines prior to the meeting and then to provide constructive critique and research suggestions.

CLASS SCHEDULE
September 13: Introduction to the course
No assigned readings

PART I: Conceptual categories, Disciplinarity, Methods
September 20: Theorizing American Politics: What, how, where?
Janice Radway, “What’s in a Name?” American Quarterly 51:1 (1999), 1-32

http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/history/faculty/henryyu/His597/stoler.pdf


**September 27: The Raw Material of (Settler) Imperial Formation**


**October 4: Property and Personhood: Making Race, Sex and Settler Empire**


**October 11: Property and Personhood: Whiteness**


**PART II: Contemporary issues in American Politics**
October 18: Neoliberalism and the Politics of Difference.


October 25: Transnational Labour, Capital and Belonging.


November 1: No class

November 8: Pacifying the Global Frontier? U.S. National Security Making in the "War on Terror"

Watch in class: Why we fight


November 15: States of Exception? Law, Strangers, Violence


November 29: Securitizing Im/migration


December 6: Of Promises and New Futures. Beyond the Law?


