

## Africa's Many Liberations Seminar Series

### Programme

#### 1. Du Bois and the 'problem of the color line' (Neil Roos, ISG, RoosND@ufs.ac.za – 28 April)

WEB Du Bois (1868-1963) was the first African American to earn a PhD from Harvard University in the United States, and he was the first black sociologist in America. Du Bois declared in 1903, the 'problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line'. Could this also be true for the opening decades of the twenty first century? Du Bois introduced the idea of double consciousness, where black folk forever had to look at themselves through 'two-ness', as human beings in their own right and also as creatures of the white world, 'always looking at themselves through the eyes of the white world'. This condition led to internalized oppression and was one of the challenges taken up later, in our country, by Biko. We will investigate the idea of double consciousness, what it means, its value to understanding everyday life today and the kinds of social struggle that it directs us towards.

Du Bois also commented on the tragedy of whiteness. Insisting on the value of their race, he wrote, white people 'marginalized' themselves. They missed the opportunity to make class alliances with other poor people, specifically black people. And by remaining so stubbornly white they lost parts of their soul, because they remained closed to the spectrum and experience of humanity developed by black people. We will also address this proposition.

#### 2. Fanon and the continuing relevance of personal and collective decolonisation (Tinashe Nyamunda, NyamundaT@ufs.ac.za, ISG – 12 May April)

The lecture will be built around Fanon's pathbreaking works on decolonisation. His *Black Skin White Masks*, *A Dying Colonialism* as well as *The Wretched of the Earth* were crucial in shaping African decolonisation thinking. One can quickly think of Ngugi Wa thiongo's epic *Decolonising the Mind* which was influenced by Fanon's works. The discussion will revolve around the life, time and works of Fanon. Who he was, what influenced his ideas and what impact his work had during his life time and in today's South Africa.

The lecture will also interrogate what decolonisation means in South Africa. Fanon was critical of the decolonisation project that centred around Africanisation, for example, and yet his works were very influential to the project of decolonisation in African countries where the discourse of indigenisation is popular. So how does the contemporary notion of decolonisation differ from the time and ideas of *A Dying Colonialism* for instance? How does Fanon's work speak to other literature on racial consciousness, for instance WEB Dubois' work on the problem of the colour line as well as the souls of black folk? More importantly, how does this inform the MustFall movements and the agenda of decolonising the university? How does this influence critical thought on Black Consciousness in SA through the work of Steve Biko? Is Black Consciousness not white consciousness? Which peoples should imagine the decolonisation of the mind and personal liberation? Is that race specific? How does this relate to us in SA today? What are the other strands of thought that have developed from these classical studies and how have they influenced both thought and action in the making of modern South Africa?

The lecture will also interrogate how, away from popular decolonisation movements, specific individuals conceive of their own decolonisation. Is it the same as for the collective? It will interrogate the degree of freedom of expression, personal initiative and choice beyond mass action. Would people participate in these movements after such reflection? Do they recognise who the protagonists or 'real' protagonists of such movements are? Do they set their own agenda or do

others set it for them? Who possesses the power for change both in current contexts and the in people's personal imaginations? How does all this inform our personal and collective liberation and decolonisation. Put differently, what is decolonisation and liberation to us when reflecting upon what we take out of the continuing relevance of especially Fanon, but also Wa Thiongo, Dubois and Biko's works.

### **3. Counting the 'faces' of liberation and resistance: unmasking and unveiling the pluralisms of decolonisation (Sahar D. Sattarzadeh, IRSJ, SattarzadehSD@ufs.ac.za – 21 July)**

'Decolonisation' has recently become an ever-trending phenomenon, particularly within the interconnected spheres of academe, media and social activism. The origins and evolution of decolonisation and its many meanings and applications, however, are rarely if ever addressed (or understood), especially within contemporary politics and debate. The aims of this presentation, therefore, are to highlight the history of decolonisation as a process, to introduce and account for various global interpretations of the term, and to evaluate both the theoretical and practical significance of diverse understandings of 'decolonisation'.

### **4. Neo-colonialism in disguise: neo-liberalism and its critics in Latin America (Rachel Hatcher, IRSJ, HatcherRL@ufs.ac.za– 4 August)**

Years before the United States, the International Monetary Fund, and World Bank began insisting on structural adjustment programs as a condition of loans to 'undeveloped' countries, a critique of this new form of colonialism had been formulated. Emerging out of Latin America in the 1950s, dependency theorists argued that it was the workings of the world capitalist system that prompted Latin American poverty and 'underdevelopment'. After first exploring the key features of what is now known as neo-liberalism, we will move on to explore key aspects of neo-colonialism and dependency theory in more depth. The focus will then shift to a brief discussion of opposition to the current features of the neo-liberal status quo, including student protests to tuition hikes and anti-mining campaigns.

### **5. Youth (Ivo Mhike, ISG – 18 August)**

More information to follow.

### **6. Is feminism still relevant in present day South Africa? (Busisiwe Ntsele, NtseleBO@ufs.ac.za, Sociology – 1 September)**

Sixty years have passed since approximately 20,000 women marched to the union buildings in the executive capital of Pretoria, yet feminist discourses have not been fully embraced in South Africa nor in the greater African continent. African sceptics and critics of feminism have always associated feminism with the "Western" world, emphasising that black women have more pressing needs and priorities, such as the struggle for basic survival. However, Africa still has an account of courageous women, including Prof Pumla Gqola and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, who raise pertinent questions on gender roles, patriarchy, and most importantly, the relevance of feminism in Africa. This session, therefore, offers an investigation into whether feminism is still relevant in present-day South Africa. Drawing from Adichie's concept of every day feminism and Prof Gqola's jacketed woman this session will reopen a dialogue on the role of society in ending gender-based oppression and thinking, reshaping and reconstructing a just and fair South Africa that is unapologetically accommodating to all South African irrespective of gender.

**7. Student organization and self-education, 1960-2016 (Leigh Ann Naidoo, Wits – 15 September)**

More information to follow.

**8. Student struggles and everyday politics in millennial South Africa (Richard Pithouse, Rhodes – 29 September)**

More information to follow.