Science, Technology, and Medicine in the Colonial Context

Welcome! This seminar will explore the crucial role of empire in shaping European scientific knowledge since the early nineteenth century. The natural and human sciences witnessed explosive developments at the moments when European powers expanded into Africa and Asia. Although not all scientific knowledge links directly to colonialism, the same inquisitive worldview that fueled post-Enlightenment science also informed the acquisitive mindset inherent to imperial expansion. We will concentrate on the administrative uses of science, technology, and medicine; science as a measure of civilization; racism in science and medicine; medical and scientific experimentation; and post-colonial development and its challenges to Western paradigms.

The seminar emphasizes three central themes: science and the colonial civilizing mission; the relationship between metropolis, periphery, and scientific practice; and the social dimensions of scientific encounters in the colonies. We will explore as extensively as possible the relationships between science, place, and community in European colonialism. While the seminar examines certain specific disciplines (bacteriology and the Pasteur Institutes, for example), we will focus most closely on the meaning of science and medicine for both Europeans and indigenous populations in the colonies.

Your requirements for the course include regular attendance and informed participation in seminar meetings. By 11:00 each Wednesday morning, you are also responsible for submitting a one-to-two-page response to the week’s readings to me by e-mail. You may skip any two responses in the course of the semester. This response will raise critical and interpretive questions that link key themes in the readings. Each student will also lead one or two discussions in the course of the seminar.

The chief written requirement is a conference-length research paper on a topic of your choosing in the domain of colonial science and medicine. A proposed topic for this paper will be due by October 4, and an initial draft will be due by November 15. The papers will be presented at the end of the semester, at a time to be arranged.

Books (available at the University Bookstore and on reserve in College Library, except where noted):


There is also a course reader, available in Agricultural Journalism on Henry Mall.

**Meeting Schedule:**

**Framing Colonial Science**

**Sept. 4: Introductory Meeting**

**Sept. 11: The Meaning of Colonial Science**


Sept. 18: Colonialism and Knowledge


Sept. 25: Climate, Race, and Anxiety


Modernity and Civilization

Oct. 2: Civilization through Science, Technology, and Medicine

Michael Adas, Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance.


INITIAL PAPER PROPOSAL DUE IN WRITING, FRIDAY OCT. 4

Oct. 9: Mise en valeur


Medicine, Health, and the State

Oct. 16: Rethinking Colonial Medicine

Megan Vaughn, Curing Their Ills: Colonial Power and African Illness.


Oct. 23: Labor, Health, and Civilization

Randall Packard, White Plague, Black Labor: Tuberculosis and the Political Economy of Health and Disease in South Africa.


Oct. 30: Public Health and Colonial Power

David Arnold, Colonizing the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth-Century India.


Nov. 6: Medicalizing Bodies

Nancy Rose Hunt, A Colonial Lexicon of Birth Ritual, Medicalization, and Mobility in the Congo.

Nov. 13: Race and Mind

Jonathan Sadowsky, Imperial Bedlam: Institutions of Madness in Colonial Southwest Nigeria.


FIRST DRAFT OF CONFERENCE PAPER DUE FRIDAY NOV. 15.

Metropole and Periphery

Nov. 20: Pasteurization and the Periphery


Nov. 27: Space and Possibility

Peter Redfield, Space in the Tropics: From Convicts to Rockets in French Guiana.


Reacting and Responding

December 4: India and Civilizational Knowledge

Gyan Prakash, Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India.


**December 11: Local Knowledge and Colonial Knowledge**

Luise White, *Speaking with Vampires: Rumor and History in East and Central Africa*.


REVISED CONFERENCE PAPERS DUE FRIDAY DECEMBER 13.