PostRacial Transmodernities: Afro-European Relations, Mediterranean Trajectories & Intercultural Reciprocity

Coordinators: Mina Karavanta & Stamatina Dimakopoulou

VIRTUAL PART (2 hours per week for 12 weeks)
1/2/2024-28/3/2024

PHYSICAL PART, Athens, Greece (about six hours a day for five days: 4 hours a day for seminars, and 2 hours for student presentations and discussion)
8/4/2024-12/4/2024

ECTS (from BIP selected project)
6

TOTAL student workload (from BIP selected project)
130

Structure: Ten online seminars (2 hours each) and ten offline seminars (2 hours each)

Email - Contact point / organiser of the course
Mina Karavanta
postracialtransmodernities@gmail.com

Field of studies related to the course
Social sciences and humanities

The programme has three thematic sections:

A. Hospitality & Forgiveness

B. Racial Assemblages/PostRacial Figurations

C. Community Poetics in the Future/Present

Section A: On Hospitality & Forgiveness

1. Gendering and racializing knowledge production (Fataneh Farahani, Stockholm University)
When does a location become a home? What is the difference between 'feeling at home' and proclaiming a place as home? In this seminar, by focusing on the concept of home and belonging, I will explore the following themes: a. Gendering and Racializing Knowledge Production & b. Cartography of Hospitality. The seminar will examine how intersecting power dynamics influence the conceptualization and representation of produced knowledge and knowing subjects. We will also address the gendered and raced dimensions of hospitality and hostility within the context of migration and shed light on the gendered responsibilities related to (in)hospitalable practices and how they contribute to the perception of the displaced subjects as (un)deserving.

2. “Academic Cucks”. Radical Forgiveness, (In)hospitality, and Wanting (Not) to Understand Extremist Violence (Stephen Forcer, University of Glasgow)

In this part of the course, we will think about questions of hospitality and forgiveness, especially in the form of a paradoxical ‘hospitality-rejection’ of ideologically motivated violence. Taking the first part of my title (“academic cucks”) from personal experience and the second part from Eric Baudelaire and Pierre Zaoui, these sessions will seek (not) to understand extremist violence through works of culture, particularly the 2016 film Les Salafistes directed by Lemine Ould Mohamed Salem and François Margolin. Students will be encouraged to bring forward further examples of works of culture that are (partially, conditionally, obliquely?) ‘hospitalable’ to otherwise intolerable ideas and acts (historic or contemporary), or which relate to (radical) forgiveness in the face of extreme violence or loss. Questions of causality and apologism will be germane to discussion of such works. Taking discussion in a different direction, I will also discuss individual projects that offer hospitality to at-risk artists and scholars at universities, and the associated challenges and opportunities.

3. Time to turn against affects? Rethinking contingency in “sentimental modernism” (Anne Reynes-Delobel, Aix-Marseille)

In this seminar, we will think about politics and poetics of emotion in relation to the representation of migrant masculinities in texts written in and about colonial France in the 1920s. Taking as our point of departure two short pieces of poetry and prose by expatriate writers Kay Boyle and Claude McKay, we will think about question of hospitality, identity, and vulnerability, in the critical context of what Lisa Downing polemically calls a necessary ‘turn against affects.’ Our objective will be to lay renewed emphasis on the messiness of the experiential, how bodies unfold into worlds, and what Susan Clark calls “the multiplicity of places for love.”

4. Starting from Forgiveness-A prospect of Archiving the Troubled Past (Raluka Bibiri, University of Bucharest)

In this session we shall discuss the possibility of forgiveness as a social practice, proposing an alternative to social antagonism between victims and perpetrators. In line with new theoretical directions that raise the possibility of a peaceful configuration that serves both parties, our approach examines the wider social shifts necessary to provide trans-generational and intra-generational amity through reconciliation and cultural repair.

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Section B: Racial Assemblages, PostRacial Figurations

5. Thresholds Through Socio-cultural Racial Assignments: Prose and Poems of an Egyptian Generation (Stephane Baquey, Aix-Marseille)

From the point of view of an artistic transmodernism as it happened in Egypt in the 1990s with a generation of prose poets, racism, as a socio-cultural construction, is a kind of kitsch – which doesn’t mean it doesn’t have an oppressive reality. Those poets stood on the margins of the official claim for a national identity when they were in their country. While many of them have left Egypt for Europe or America, being out of place, they don’t ground their discourse on the relevance of an Arab or a Muslim stigma in the societies where they have migrated to. Literature is not doomed to negotiate racial stereotypes. These writers rather cross thresholds between places, languages, citizenries, as they experience liminality through migration, solitude, dream, motherhood or death. Prose and poems by Iman Mersal, Yasser Abdellatif, Ahmed Yamani and Haytham El-Wardany will be read in order to decipher these moral and political crucibles.

6. Against Oppression Olympics (Astrid Franke, Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen)

In the short film “The Cry of Jazz” there is a moment when the suffering of African Americans is compared to the suffering of Jews and thus the history of transatlantic chattel slavery with the history of largely European Antisemitism and the Holocaust. Beginning with our interpretation of the small scene, we will try to make that moment productive: what can it teach us about the history of African Americans and Jews, about the history of Jazz, and relations of oppressed people to one another? Armed with terms such as intersectionality, the idea of proximity and, of course, Oppression Olympics, we will use the film as a springboard for thinking about ways to think productively and relationally across difference.

7. Thinking the postracial in the ‘ghettos of the world’
   (Stamatina Dimakopoulou, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens)

This seminar takes as its point of departure Jazz musician Max Roach’s Freedom Now Suite (1963) that came out in the centennial of the Emancipation Proclamation in the US as a paradigm of protest against racism, and as a backdrop for considering how the ‘case for blackness’ that Fred Moten makes, may be related to contemporary art, music and writing in the US and in Europe (for instance, Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Samuel Fosso, Ocean Vuong, Oxmo Puccino) that create eclectic representational spaces where racial politics may also catalyse tropes for a postracial imaginary.

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Section C: Community Poetics in the Future/Present

8. Belated Grammars: Threshold: Intimate Modernity (Danaï S Mupotsa, University of the Witwatersrand)
This module explores the chaotic but structuring force of intimacy as it meets the grammars of intimate modernity. By intimate modernity, we refer to its constitutive-political-economic-juridical-libidinal making of the sovereign subject and its making of forms of the customary, an ethnopoetics whose operative powers are necessary for the making of the “we” and their “Other”. The intimate, placed with its threshold, the customary, become a way to think about vernacular arrangements and forms of relation that are implicitly and explicitly multilingual, in the sense that these customs of relating to being in the world are practiced across multiple relations to the self, and the self in relation to others that might also include the language of operating within the grammatical logics of our various entries or relatedness to modernity, what I elsewhere refer to as a temporal ambivalence (Mupotsa 2019). These vernaculars also operate within, but also outside and besides the forms of rationality that operate within this ethnopoetics. For Macharia (2020), blackness sutures Africa and the African diaspora, where to be blackened is to be positioned belatedness as it refers into intimate modernity. The primary text for this is Vangile Gantsho’s collection of poetry, red cotton.

9. Decolonizing Community, Reinventing Living Together
(Mina Karavanta, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens)

The seminar will examine contemporary visual and literary narratives that represent the ways by which migrants reinvent their social and political lives within the context of communities that are based on the alliances and relations among different groups of people that include refugees, poor and economically disenfranchised citizens, neighbours and local actors. Supported by a transnational community of intellectuals, artists and activists that struggle for a democratic politics of solidarity and reciprocity across the borders of nation-states, contemporary maroon communities across Europe and Africa collectively transform and radicalize the ways we think about community, living together and political life. Squatting, occupying and taking shelter in empty buildings, some of which once housed refugees in between and after the World Wars, twenty-first century maroons claim the ruined spaces that they restore and turn into their temporary and, at times, permanent shelters. In the seminar, we will create an archive of such cases from Europe and Africa in order to reinvent the politics of living together and imagine community otherwise.

10. The Poetics of Teranga, Interculturality and Universalism
(Saliou DIONE, Cheikh Anta Diop University, Dakar (Senegal))

This seminar examines the related, yet historically variable expressions of postracial ideology and politics across diverse contexts in Africa and the West borderlines of the nation-space. It argues for a contested postracial shift while bringing to light a postracial transmodern framework based on the politics and poetics of teranga and of being and becoming in intercultural spaces, embodying here (Africa) and there (the West). The concept of teranga or hospitality in the Senegalese philosophy of human interactions demonstrates the different context-specific and objective-driven conditions of possibility for anti-race thinking and practices. Using personal examples of hospitality practices, it draws the links between the human, space/place, culture, and identities as it paves the way for a togetherness discourse and practice in the relationship between non-Europeans (Africans, Afropeans) and Westerners (Europeans and Americans). As conveyers of African and African diasporic cultural heritages, teranga and interculturality transcend race as they construct figures and spaces of negotiations that become sites of changes, dialogues, and contestation rather than a reflection of a fixed identity embodied by one race or based on race. The seminar seeks to serve as a space of dialogue aimed at opening up avenues for universalism thinking that results in transnational identity(ies) formation and
de-racialied boundaries. To this end, it argues for the existence of a universal being born from the contact with other cultures, migration (Afropeans, Afropolitans), knowledge production (transnational literature), contextual and situational ethos of (un)becoming and (un)belonging and search for one’s humanity, transnational identity(ies) and de-racialied boundaries.