



[Emperor Claudius subdues Britannia](#)

TH 3390 – SPRING 2016 - [Syllabus](#)

EMPIRE & CAPITAL -

THEOLOGICAL

CONSIDERATIONS

Professor

Mark Lewis Taylor

Office

Hodge 115/Phone 497-7918

Time

8:30-11:20 a.m. Tuesdays

Room:

Stuart Room 3

GOALS

- 1** To introduce course members to the general structures and dynamics of contemporary studies of “globalization,” in the context of U.S. and European coloniality of power, class and empire – all as challenges to critical reflection in theology and ethics.
- 2** To situate discussions of globalization, empire and capital (a) within *historical* contexts of colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism, as these also entail the hetero-patriarchy and white supremacy that I foreground analytically more extensively in two other courses, and (b) within *the cultural or ideological* discourses that reflect, critique and resist the above historical legacies of structural violence.
- 3** To understand how Christianity has been integral to imperial and capitalist structural violence, and how forms of Christian faith and practice have offered and still remain resources for critical resistance to these forms of structural violence, and to their transformation or overthrow.
- 4** To reflect on how Christian faith, and other spiritual traditions, can help create structured love & justice amid today’s U.S. neoliberalism, empire and capital (often what in U.S. is masked as “globalization”).



[Elvira Arellano](#)

TEXTS

The books used in this course are listed here, with explanations of where you can find them (Akademos, Online, and so on).

■ **Texts below at AKADEMOS. The bolded text, below, I term the “core text” for this course):**

BAPTIST, Edward. *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Rise of American Capitalism*. Basic Books, 2014.

KAHL, Brigitte. *Galatians Reimagined: Reading with the Eyes of the Vanquished*. Fortress Press, 2010.

KLEIN, Naomi. *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. Picador, 2008.

KWOK, Pui-Lan, and RIEGER, Jeorg. *Occupy Religion: Theology of the Multitude*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2012.

LOPEZ, Davina. *Apostle to the Conquered: Re-Imagining Paul’s Mission*. Fortress Press, 2010.

MARABLE, Manning. *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America*. Revised edition (South End Press, 1999. (Only available on Blackboard, **BB**))

NIXON, Rob. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Harvard University Press, 2011. (Shown in bold, since it is a kind of “core text.”)

TAYLOR, Mark Lewis, *Religion, Politics and the Christian Right: Post-9/11 Powers and American Empire*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005.

■ **Texts below are those from among which only ONE will be required reading. (I have not ordered them since you will want to make purchases of your choice as inexpensively as you can.) Those shown in brackets are not discussed in Nixon’s book.**

[LIMON, Graciela. *The River Flows North*. A novel. Arte Público, 2009.]

MAATHAI, Wangari. *Unbowed: A Memoir*. Anchor, 2005.

MUNIF, Abdelrahman. *Cities of Salt*. Trans. Peter Theroux (Cape Cod Scriveners, 1987).

[NGUYEN, Viet Than. *The Sympathizer*. A novel. Grove Press, 2015.]

[ROY, Arundhati. *Capitalism: A Ghost Story*. Haymarket Books, 2014]; must add below: _____ . *For the Greater Common Good*. New York: Modern Library, 1999. Also available at: <http://www.narmada.org/gcg/gcg.html> .

SARO-WIWA. Ken. *A Month and A Day & Letters*. Ayebia Clarke Pub., 2005.

SINHA, Indra. *Animal's People*. A novel. Simon & Schuster, 2007.

[URREA, Luis Alberto. *The Devil's Highway: A True Story*. Back Bay Books, 2004.]

■ **Other Helpful Texts (only on library reserve, only occasionally assigned reading from some of these):**

CANNON, Katie Geneva. "Racism and Economics," in Cannon, Townes, and Sims, *Womanist Theological Ethics*. WJK Press, 2011, pages 3-21.

DAVIS, Angela Y. *Abolition Democracy: Beyond Empire, Prisons and Torture*. Seven Stories Press, 2005.

HARVEY, David. 2010. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford University Press, 2005.

_____. *The New Imperialism*. Oxford University Press, 2003

HORSLEY, Richard A. *Jesus and Empire: The Kingdom of God and the New World Disorder*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002.

KLEIN, Naomi. *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*. Alfred Knopf, 2014.

LOWE, Lisa. *The Intimacies of Four Continents*. Duke University Press, 2015.

STOLER, Anne Laura. *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History*. Duke University Press, 2006.

PUI-LAN, Kwok, RIEGER, Jeorg, COMPIER, Don. Eds. *Empire and the Christian Tradition*. Fortress Press, 2008.

WARIBOKO, Nimi. *Economics in Spirit and Truth: A Moral Philosophy of Finance*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

■ **Articles, on Reserve and Available as Hyperlinked Below in the Agenda:**

1. James Baldwin, "[Stranger in the Village](#)," from *Notes of a Native Son*. 1953 (Beacon Press, 1984). Online.

2. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "[Manifesto of the Communist Party](#)" (find online)

3. Njabulo S. Ndebele, "[Game Lodges and Leisure Colonialists](#)," from *Blank: Architecture After Apartheid*, eds. Hilton Judin and Ivan Vladislavic (David Phillips Press, 1998).

REQUIREMENTS

Percentages of grade, which are given below after each requirement, are not the basis for an exact calculus of grade, but rather suggest how the requirements are weighted relative to one another.

1. Faithful **attendance** in class. Please let me know if you have to miss a class (15 percent).
2. **Reading of assigned materials** (15 percent). There are never more than 100 pages assigned per week, usually between 70-90 pages. (I give page number amounts in parentheses for each week.)
3. Presentation on *one* **the three panels**, which are planned for three dates of the course (Oct. 11, Nov. 15 and Dec. 13). These panels will be held in front of the whole class on those dates. Students, when serving in the panelist role are asked to make a statement of *no more than five (5) minutes long*. I or the TA will moderate and we will be strict time-keepers. You may engage any of the readings for the weeks when you are a panelist. Try to choose from the readings and share just one – maybe two – salient points in your 5-minute presentation.

There will normally be 8-10 panelists on each of these dates, so it would be good if your group, once it is set up could consult with each other before hand, so that we don't have panelists all focusing on one reading on the same day. All groups will be set by the third week. At the class, immediately after the panel, *please provide a written form of your 5-minute statement* to the professor or to the TA. (As to procedure, normally after all the presentations have been made, the moderator will invite panelists to converse with one another before we, then, open up to the larger class. Again, the entire class comes each time, for the whole three hours, whether you are a panelist that week or not. (30 percent)

4. Submission of a **final paper** that analyzes one of the “creative writings” discussed by Rob Nixon in his book (these are listed below, and I have added some novels not in the Rob Nixon book). The paper's analysis should show evidence of engaging the critical conceptual and theological readings of the course. I will, within the first three weeks of the course, provide a written document to give you guidance in writing this paper (still leaving you freedom to be creative and to think for yourselves). I will also indicate what I expect the basic content to be, and how I will evaluate the paper. (40 percent).

The “Creative Writings” to Choose From: brackets [] indicate “not discussed in Nixon”

DU BOIS, W. E. D. *Dark Princess: A Romance*. A novel. 1928. University Press of Mississippi, 1995 (reissue)

LIMON, Graciela. *The River Flows North*. A novel. Arte Público, 2009.

MAATHAI, Wangari. *Unbowed: A Memoir*. Anchor, 2005.

MUNIF, Abdelrahman. *Cities of Salt*. Trans. Peter Theroux (Cape Cod Scriveners, 1987).

NGUYEN, Viet Than. *The Sympathizer*. Grove Press, 2015.

ROY, Arundhati. *Capitalism: A Ghost Story*. Haymarket Books, 2014, paired with below:

_____. *For the Greater Common Good*. New York: Modern Library, 1999.
Also available at: <http://www.narmada.org/gcg/gcg.html> .

SARO-WIWA. Ken. *A Month and A Day & Letters*. Ayebia Clarke Pub., 2005.

SINHA, Indra. *Animal's People*. A novel. Simon & Schuster, 2007.

URREA, Luis Alberto. *The Devil's Highway: A True Story*. Back Bay Books, 2004.

OUTCOMES

1. Students will show at least a working first knowledge (theoretical and practical) of the basic dynamics and structures of contemporary “neoliberalism” and “globalization.”
2. Students will show facility in expressing their understandings of the historical and political dimensions of early Jesus movements and “Christianity.”
3. Students will be able to articulate their own understanding of what is meant by the “spiritual” and “theological” dimensions of the problematics of “empire and capital.” Here, even if students do not choose to embrace and work with the instructor’s notion of theology as reflection on the “spectrality of disposable peoples,” they should still show how their notions of “spirituality” and “theology” critically engage or depart from what the instructor proposes in class – and either is alright, by the way (!).
4. Students will demonstrate some sense of what it is for them to be “writer/artist/activist” as theologian, pastor, teacher/scholar, and/or community organizer, and so on. On this notion of “writer/artist/activist” see the discussion of “writer/activists” in Rob Nixon’s book, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (22-30).

SPECIAL NOTES

This course usually poses strong challenges to us all, as we explore together new and often excluded theological visions and perspectives on life, politics (empire and capital) and spirit. All views of all participants are to be treated with openness and respect.

In this spirit, I expect a classroom that does not ridicule any member for positions taken or theologies advocated, and certainly that does not strike at peoples’ being. The N-word, the B-

word, and any other racially, sexually, or gendered pejorative term has no place in the classroom. Those terms do not work to good end. They usually are words that perform harm and abuse, especially on this campus. Inclusive language regarding human beings – with respect to gender and all modes of human difference – is expected. (If you don't already, practice speaking - in this course at least - of God without using the masculine pronoun.

All students with learning or other disabilities, or anyone with conditions of life and trauma that make it difficult to complete course requirements, you are welcome to be in touch with me. I emphasize, though, that Dr. Rose Ellen Done in the Office of Academic Affairs is the one who grants official consideration to students working with these disabilities and conditions. Extensions on the final paper must be cleared through Dr. Dunn's office.

COURSE FORMAT

AGENDA

SEPT 13 INTRODUCING THE COURSE: EMPIRE, CAPITAL - & THEOLOGY? (98 pages reading)

Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*,
“Preface,” ix-xiii, “Introduction,” 1-44.



[Rob Nixon](#)

Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine*, pp. 3-48 (HB)/3-58 (pb).

- (a) “Blank is Beautiful: Three Decades of Erasing and Remaking the World,”
- (b) “The Torture Lab: Ewen Cameron, the CIA and the Maniacal Quest to Erase and Remake the Human Mind”



[Klein](#)

In class: Documentary film: *The End of Poverty? Think Again*.
2010. Cinema Libre Studio.

-On youTube:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pktOXJr1vOQ&wide=1>

-Official website for *End of Poverty?* documentary film:

<http://www.theendofpoverty.com/>

-Debates and critique of the film (with bios on cast):

<http://povertythinkagain.com/critical-response-to-the-film-the-end-of-poverty>.

With so much wealth in the world, why is there still so much poverty?



HOW EMPIRE & CAPITAL GENERATE SLOW STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE

His novel [Indra Guha's Animal's People] gives focus to three of the defining characteristics of the contemporary neoliberal order: first, the widening chasm – within and between nations – that separates the mega-rich from the destitute; second, the attendant burden of unsustainable ecological degradation that impacts the health and livelihood of the poor most directly; and third, the way transnational corporations exploit under cover of a free market ideology the lopsided universe or deregulation, whereby laws and loopholes are selectively applied in a marketplace a lot freer for some societies and classes than for others.

Rob Nixon

SEPT 20 US “PRECISION” WAR AND “SLOW” VIOLENCE (69 pages)

Nixon, Chapter 7 “Ecologies of the Aftermath: Precision Warfare and Slow Violence,” 199-232.



[The war photo no one would publish \(in the US\)](#)



[The Mines Advisory Group](#)

Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told*, “Introduction: The Heart, 1937,” xiii-xxvii.

Klein, *The Shock Doctrine*, pp. 49-71 (HB)/59-87 (pb), “The Other Doctor Shock: Milton Friedman and the Search for a Laissez-Faire Laboratory”

Lisa Lowe, “The Intimacies of Four Continents,” in Stoler, *Haunted By Empire*, 191-208.

[Lowe](#)



SEPT 27 RACIST VIOLENCE IN “SLOW”/LATE CAPITALISM: How Empire Constrains the Americas & Black/Brown U.S. America (93 pages)

Klein, *The Shock Doctrine*, 75-97 (HB)/
91-120 (pb), and 142-54 (HB) and 177-193 (pb)

a—“States of Shock: The Bloody Birth of the Counterrevolution”

b—“The New Doctor Shock: Economic Warfare Replaces Dictatorship”



photo, [Jean Marie Simon](#)

Manning Marable, “The Meaning of Racist Violence in Late Capitalism,” in Marable, *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America*, 231-54.

Baptist, Chapter 1, “Feet, 1783-1810”, pp. 1-37.

Mumia Abu-Jamal, [“The Meaning of Ferguson” 2:28](#).



Maya women against
[Mexican military occupation, 1998](#)



Ferguson, MO, 2014 [Business Insider](#)

**OCT 4 “NEOLIBERALISM” & THE “ENVIRONMENTAL PICARESQUE” -
Introducing the “Picaros”
(79 pages)**

Nixon, “Slow Violence, Neoliberalism and the Environmental Picaresque,”
in *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, 45-67.



[Manning Marable](#), “A Critical Reassessment,” in Marable, *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America*, Updated edition. Pages xvii-xxxix. **BB**.

Baptist, Chapter 2, “Heads – 1791-1819,” 39-74.

OCT 11 “NEOLIBERALISM” AND OIL (90 pages)



[A. Mounif](#)

Nixon, “Fast-forward Fossil: Petro-despotism and the Resource Curse,”
in *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, 68-102.

David Harvey, “All About Oil,” Harvey, *The New Imperialism*, 18-25 (only). **BB**

Klein, Chapter 18 “Full Circle,” in *The Shock Doctrine*, 360-82.

Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*,
“Introduction: One Way or Another, Everything Changes,” 1-28. [**BB**]

**PANEL 1 – YOUR RESPONSES TO NIXON &
ONE OTHER READING SO FAR
(address any of the reading to this point in class)**

OCT 18 RACE, WHITE RACISM & IMPERIAL GLOBALIZATION (54 pages)

**(Guest Speaker: Dr. Anthony Monteiro, former professor
Temple University, “On Du Bois’s Novels”)**

Nixon, “Stranger in the Eco-village: Race, Tourism and Environmental Time,” in *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, 175-98.

W. E. B. Du Bois, “The Souls of White Folk,” from *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil*. Dover, 1920, 17-29. [BB]



[Du Bois](#)

Baptist, Chapter 4 “Left Hand, 1805-1861,” 111-144.

Manning Marable, “The Black Poor: Highest Stage of Underdevelopment,” 53-67, in Manning Marable, *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America*. **BB**

James Baldwin, “**Stranger in the Village**,” from *Notes of a Native Son*. 1953 (Beacon Press, 1984). Online.

Njabulo S. Ndebele, “**Game Lodges and Leisure Colonialists**,” from *Blank: Architecture After Apartheid*, eds. Hilton Judin and Ivan Vladislavic (David Phillips Press, 1998).

**FALL READING PERIOD,
Oct 19 - Oct 4
(for this course)**

**NOV 1 STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE & WOMEN – LAMENT & CREATION
(85 pages)**

Rob Nixon, “Slow Violence, Gender and the Environmentalism of the Poor,” in *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, 128-149.

Baptist, “Seed, 1829-1837”, 215-45



[Wangari
Maathai](#)

Manning Marable, “Groundings With My Sisters,” 69-103, in Marable, *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America*. **BB**

NOV 8 UNIMAGINED COMMUNITIES – TOWARD “GOSPEL” (92 pages)



[Arundhati Roy](#)

Rob Nixon, “Unimagined Communities: Megadams, Monumental Modernity, and Developmental Refugees,” in *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, 150-74.

Klein, “You and What Army?” in *This Changes Everything*, 367-87 [**BB**].

Pui-lan Kwok and Joerg Rieger, “Why Occupy Religion?” 1-10, “The Multitude Springs into Action,” 31-56.

Mark Lewis Taylor, “The Specter of Prophetic Spirit,” in Taylor, *Religion, Politics and the Christian Right*, 96-109.



[Obama relents to Standing Rock Sioux and Supporters resistance to pipeline](#)

PART II

THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL

“DISPOSABLE PEOPLES” AS “SPECTRAL HUMANS”

What is at stake is not to present literary works in the context of their age, but to present the age that perceives them – our age – in the age during which they arose. It is this that makes literature and organon of history; and to achieve this, and not to reduce literature to the materials of history is the task of the literary historian.

Walter Benjamin, 1931

FOR REST OF SYLLABUS, ONLY READINGS IN RED ARE REQUIRED

NOV 15 “SPECTRAL GALATIANS” – Haunting Nero’s Dreams and Critical New Testament & Theological Studies (84 pages)



Brigitte Kahl, “Introduction: The Critical Re-Imagination of Paul and of Justification by Faith,” 1-30, in Kahl, *Galatians Re-Imagined*.

Joerg Rieger and Pui-lan Kwok, “Theology of the Multitude,” 57-82, in *Occupy Religion*.

PANEL 2 -
TOWARD A COUNTER IMPERIAL CHRISTIAN FAITH ?
(address the readings of this week only)

**AAR/SBL MEETINGS &
FALL FESTIVALS
November 21-28**

NOV 29 **SPECTRAL GALATIANS – Haunting Imperial Histories** (adjusted to 75 total required pages)



[Korean “Comfort Women”](#) Against Military Sexual Slavery



[Marching Families of Disappeared Daughters in Ciudad Juarez, Mex.](#)

Lopez, “Preface” and “The Nations in Nero’s Nightmare,” in *Apostle to the Conquered*, xi-xv, 1-25.

Kahl, from Chapter 1: “Remapping Galatia: In Search of a Displaced Context,” 31-42, 72-74 (“Rome’s Global War on Galatian Terror”), and 74-5 (“Conclusion: Galatia(ns) as Topos of Roman Law and of Imperial Justification”) in *Galatians Re-Imagined*. (15 pages)



[Kahl](#)

Kahl, from Chapter 2: “Dying Gauls/Galatians Are Immortal,” 77-82 and 125-27 (“Conclusion: The Great Altar as a Mirror of Paul’s Galatia and the Occidental Self), in *Galatians Re-Imagined*). (7 pages)

Kahl, from Chapter 3: “Creating the World Out of Dead Gauls: Imperial Monotheism, Virgil and the Arena,” 129-34 and 164-165 (“Conclusion: Paul and

the Messianic Clash of Monotheisms”), in *Galatians Re-Imagined*. (7 pages)

Lopez, “The Fate of the Nations in Roman Imperial Representation,” 26-35 and 45-55. (19 pages)

Joerg Rieger and Pui-lan Kwok, “Reimagining the God of the Multitude,” 83-110, in Rieger and Kwok, *Occupy Religion* (27 pages)



[Kwok Pui-lan](#)

DEC 6 SPECTRAL GALATIANS – Haunting as Resisting & Organizing against Structural Powers of Empire & Capital (66 required total pp.)



[Movement4BlackLives](#)



[Indian workers strike 2016, largest in centuries](#)

Kahl, from Chapter 4: “Roman Galatia: The Imperial Resurrection of the Dying Gauls/Galatians,” 169-73 and 204-207 (“Conclusion: Imperial versus Messianic Justification),” in *Galatians Re-Imagined*. (7 pages)

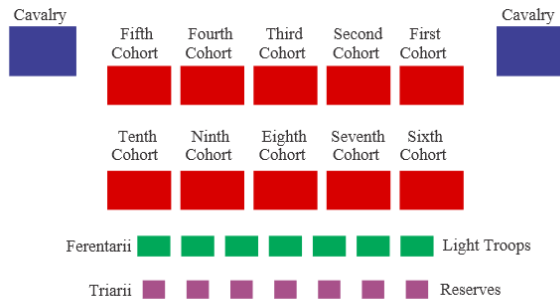
Lopez, “Re-Imagining Paul as Apostle to the Conquered,” in Lopez, *Apostle to the Conquered*, 119-163. (44 pages)

Kahl, from Chapter 5: “Under the Eagle’s Wings and (C)laws,” 209-218 (“Jews in Asia Minor as Insiders and Outsiders of the Roman Order”), 218-27 (“Roman *Nomos*, Jewish Torah, and Galatian Foreskin as Point of Friction”) and 242-43 (“Conclusion: Imperial *Koinon* versus Messianic *Koinonia*”), in *Galatians Re-Imagined*. (20 pages)

Kahl, from Chapter 6: “*Amēn* and *Anathēma*: Galatians at the Great Altar of Pergamon,” 245-85.

Joerg Rieger and Pui-lan Kwok, “Envisioning the Church of the Multitude,” 111-32, in Rieger and Kwok, *Occupy Religion* (22 pages)

Structure of a Roman legion – see below:



Dispersion of Legions at end of Augustus Caesar's Reign

**DEC 13 GALATIANS' & PAUL'S SPECTRAL GOSPEL OF THE CRUCIFIED
(9 pages required reading)**



On crucifixion

Kahl, from chapter 6, pages 287-89 (“Conclusion: Messianic Faith versus Imperial Idolatry”), in *Galatians Re-Imagined*. (2 pages)



Lopez

Lopez, “Dislocating Paul’s Universalism,” in Lopez, *Apostle to the Conquered*, 164-173 (9 pages).

[Omit *this* reading: due to publishing delay] Nami Kim and Wonhee Anne Joh, editors, *Critical Theology against U.S. Militarism in Asia*. Palgrave-Macmillan, 2016. Pages to be announced.

**PANEL 3 TOWARD A COUNTER *U.S.* IMPERIAL FAITH
A FUTURE FOR MOVEMENTS, CHURCHES – AND HOPE ?
(choose to address any readings from between Nov. 29
and through this week's reading)**