University of Virginia
Political and Social Thought

Fourth Year Thesis Titles and Abstracts—Spring 2023

Preston Bowden

"The Plot Against American Democracy: White Power Politics in the American Conservative Movement and the Growing Threat to the American Democratic System"

The insurrection at the United States Capitol on January 6, 2021, marks an unprecedented moment in US history, where a presidential candidate purposely incited his followers to disrupt the electoral process in the interests of retaining power. Underlying the attack was President Donald J. Trump's consistent incendiary rhetoric and claims of voter fraud. Among Trump's audience stood white power extremists like the Proud Boys and Groypers. Moderate Republicans, fundamentalist Christians, white power militiamen, all united behind their leader to "Stop the Steal." Trump's audience understood his message loud and clear: if Trump is not put into office, they would be disenfranchised. The logic is to fight back and "fight like hell." In this thesis, I argue that the rhetoric inspiring the January 6th insurrection should be understood as a feature of America's system of white supremacy; I describe this rhetoric as "white genocide rhetoric."

In Chapter I, I map out the social structures of subjugation from which people draw meaning and identity. I utilize Benedict Anderson's theory of *Imagined Communities* to elucidate a framework for understanding how the concept of a nation as an identity is constructed and generates intense passions in the interests of wielding sovereignty over the state and space. I also factor Critical Race Theorist Charles W. Mill's *The Racial Contract* into Anderson's theory of the nation. By wielding its sovereignty, the *nation* premises its privileges and freedom on the subjugation of *others* defined as incapable of being members of the nation. When the subjugated *other* challenges the Racial Contract, the *nation* either creates new conditions in subjugation or enforces the previous stipulations by force. I also highlight fascism and its "mobilizing passions." At the end, I explore how American conservatism factors into social movement theory, ultimately settling on Rory McVeigh's "power devaluation model."

In Chapter II, I describe the white power movement and the core elements of white genocide rhetoric. Relying primarily on secondary material such as Kathleen Belew's *Bring the War Home* and Cynthia Miller-Idriss' *Hate in the Homeland*, I justify why I settle with the term "white power." I then describe the historical origins of the underlying ideas in white power ideology: pseudoscientific racism, Social Darwinism, and eugenics. I then contextualize the

thesis by describing the three phases of the KKK, the post-Vietnam era of white power, and white power's resurgence under Trump; along the way, I describe key events like the Greensboro massacre, the Oklahoma City bombing, and the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville. The chapter ends by explicating the concept of "white genocide rhetoric," what it emotionally evokes and its underlying conspiratorial apocalyptic logic.

In Chapter III, I analyze examples of white genocide rhetoric being utilized in mainstream conservative media and tie white genocide rhetoric into a narrative of the January 6th insurrection. From Francesca Bolla Tripodi's *The Propagandists' Playbook*, I use the concepts of "filter bubbles," and "ideological dialects," to aid in explicating an analysis of three examples of mainstream conservative media pundits using white genocide rhetoric; the creators of, and in, these three examples are Tucker Carlson, Ben Shapiro, and Jordan B. Peterson.

In the last section of Chapter III, I narrativize January 6th in the context of American white supremacy with an emphasis on the crucial role white genocide rhetoric played in Donald Trump's incendiary claims of voter fraud. I primarily pulled from two sources to construct this narrative: *The Storm is Here*, a first-hand account of 2020 through the perspective of the journalist named Luke Mogelson, and *The January 6th Report* from The Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the US Capitol. Key events like the plot to kidnap Michigan Governor Whitmer and the series of "Stop the Steal" rallies situates the insurrection within a period of cumulative political violence; the common denominator being Donald Trump and his use of "white genocide rhetoric."

By the end of the thesis, the threat that mainstreamed white power politics poses to the American democratic system ought to be clear. I offer the solution of incorporating media literacy into primary education; however, I am not optimistic educational interventions are possible in the current political climate. I end by signaling the alarm that *It Can Happen Here,* highlighting the alarming rhetoric and restrictive policies directed against transgender people by mainstream American conservatives.

Pak Ni Britney Cheung

"The Success Within Us: A Genealogy of the Entrepreneurial Self"

Self-improvement books have long expressed the American culture of success. This genre seeks to address a broad audience who aspire to become better versions of themselves; likewise, self-improvement language serves as a direct illustration of popular cultural discourse around selfhood and success. In this thesis, I argue that the contemporary American interpretation of selfhood and success is typified by the "entrepreneurial self," a subjective model by which each individual understands themself as already possessing the potential for success. I propose that three attributes of success – positivity, self-realization, and proactivity – represent the subjectivities of the contemporary American culture of success. I explore the systems of knowledge through which these attributes came to subjectify the self.

In Chapter One, I establish a cultural framework to illustrate how ideas emerge and flow into culture, which subsequently subjectify the self to particular interpretations of reality. I then define success as reflected in contemporary American discourse. Through surveying self-improvement books, I show that the culture of success assumes oneself to have limitless potential and describes success as a mental state of fulfillment. Crucially, the language of self-improvement literature implies that success is readily available to all. The individual does not have to become someone else; they realize success by uncovering the best version of themself. The project of self-improvement accordingly communicates three imperatives on the self: positive thinking, self-realization, and proactivity.

The next three chapters outline the genealogy of these imperatives as a convergence of three ethoses. Chapter Two discusses the positivity ethos – the notion that one's thoughts can transform reality – through a survey of the American Christian tradition. I begin by considering the Puritan concept of work as a duty and a shift toward pragmatism in early industrial America. I then connect New Thought's mind-cure concept in the late 1800s with evangelical teachings about positive thinking during the final decades of the 20th century. I argue that the positivity ethos subjects the self to continuously adopt an attitude of positivity toward their environment and themself.

Chapter Three examines the therapeutic ethos via developments in the psychological and advertising fields. I first consider the emergence of a therapeutic language derived from the ideas of Freud and humanistic psychologists. I then survey the legitimization and dissemination of therapeutic language post World War II, its use in consumer culture, and its appearance in countercultural ideas about personal freedom. I conclude with a description of the psychological self, which can be understood as someone who seeks to uncover and express their infinite authentic self. In this view, the therapeutic ethos subjects the self to a life-project of self-realization and expression.

Chapter Four discusses the neoliberal ethos, which links the therapeutic notion of personal freedom to the logic of markets. This ethos developed out of the economic conditions in the 1960s and 70s characterized by deindustrialization and a long period of stagflation. As middle- and low-income households experienced increasing financial precarity, a political rhetoric of market freedom and individual responsibility emerged. This language resonated with those who desired a sense of control over their economic circumstances, and the dominance of the neoliberal paradigm followed. I argue that the neoliberal ethos describes humans as rational agents with limitless potential, and thus conveys a duty on the individual to proactively seek success.

In my conclusion, I re-examine the entrepreneurial self and discuss how the imperatives of positivity, self-realization, and proactivity compel the self to be endlessly belabored. I propose an alternative interpretation of self-improvement which focuses on improving one's relationship with the self and the world, rather than positing an end goal of success.

Dafne Maria Gonzalez

"Chicanx Legacies: Fiction as a Mechanism for Tracing Multigenerational Race-Building"

Now dismissed as a portion U.S. history's past, the Chicano Movement is too often consigned to the Civil Rights era of the 1960s. However, the politics of the Chicano Movement reach far beyond the limits of mainstream U.S. history. The history of the formation and adoption of a Chicanx identity raises questions about the ways in which Chicanx perceptions of race are historically present in the work that was influenced by the Chicano Movement. Using Michael Omi and Howard Winant's racial formation theory, this thesis looks at the development of the Chicano Movement in the *barrios* of Southern California and argues that Chicanx fiction serves an indispensable mechanism for tracing the racial formation of a Chicanx identity across several generations.

In chapter one, I examine José Villarreal's *Pocho* as the first Chicano novel. I provide historical context that bridges the gap between its publication year, 1959, and the novel's setting, 1930. I analyze the novel's important themes that form a connection between the protagonist, Richard Rubio's, narrative and the history of the Chicano Movement. Furthermore, I look at the portrayals of Blackness in this novel to demonstrate that *Pocho* functions as a reflection of the anti-Black racial politics that permeate Mexican society. I argue that this novel engages in processes of racial othering that simultaneously define the racial boundaries of a Mexican-American, and later Chicanx, identity.

In chapter two, I analyze John Rechy's novel from 1991 titled *The Miraculous Day of Amalia Gómez*. I show that this narrative is a product of the ideological and political progress that the Chicano Movement has made since 1959. I specifically underscore the spread of Chicana feminism, led by Chicana theorists such as Gloria Anzaldúa, and scrutinize her concept of mestizaje as one of Indigenous erasure and anti-Blackness. Moreover, I argue that the protagonist, Amalia's, self-liberation is a metaphor for the Chicano Moratorium. Thus, I demonstrate that this novel contributes to a Chicanx racial project that centers the voice of Chicanx and Mexican-American strife.

In chapter three, I offer an analysis of Brando Skyhorse's 2010 novel, *The Madonnas of Echo Park*. I discuss its unique narrative structure in presenting separate stories, each told in a different perspective. Using a thematic framework to best analyze this novel's interconnected web of narratives, I discuss common themes of cultural healing, dispossession and reclamation, racial nuances, and visibility to argue that this novel complicates Omi and Winant's theorizations of racist and anti-racist racial projects. Additionally, I compare this novel to *Pocho* and *The Miraculous Day of Amalia Gómez* to assess the change and continuity of the racial politics undergirding the Chicano Movement.

Finally, I conclude this thesis with a look at ongoing debates about potentially recognizing "Latinx" as a racial group. I examine both sides of this argument and ultimately suggest that the role of race in the Chicano Movement, Chicanx identity formation, and Chicanx

and Mexican-American fiction indicate that we ought to rethink the relationships between race in the U.S. and the Latin American diaspora.

Alexander Hanna

"A New Image of Empire: Migrancy, Intertext, and Critique in Contemporary African Literature"

Narratives about Africa have long relied on a series of negative valences connecting Africa to a "Dark Continent" mythos characterized by malaise, barbarism, and regression. During European colonization, these stories often took the form of travel writing, a genre that deployed mobile and ostensibly all-seeing explorers authorized to make sociological and normative pronouncements upon Africans. I argue in this thesis that contemporary African diasporic novels challenge these narratives by appropriating and inverting the traveler motif through migrant characters who force readers to confront their customs through unfamiliar eyes, producing a potent and imaginative postcolonial critique.

Chapter I traces the history of European travel writing, clarifying how its production and reinforcement of a "Dark Continent" mythos legitimated imperial projects in Africa during the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries. I draw upon theoretical and historical analyses by scholars including Edward Said, Patrick Brantlinger, Bradley Deane, Bill Ashcroft, Mary Louise Pratt, and Stephen Arata. I also use Joseph Conrad's novella *Heart of Darkness* (1899) as a case study in colonial travel literature about Africa, exploring its relationship to empire as emblematic of wider attitudes towards the continent and its people.

Chapter II moves to analyze how African migrant novels defamiliarize life in the West by holding up Western customs and values for critique by immigrant characters who evaluate them through fresh eyes. I focus on defamiliarization as it pertains to Western environments, systems of racial categorization, attitudes towards the body, language, and its mythologized rendering of itself as utopian. This chapter interrogates a wide range of migrant novels but emphasizes three central texts: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* (2013), NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* (2013), and Dinaw Mengestu's *The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears* (2007).

Chapter III pivots to a discussion of how African migrant fiction explores issues of space and dislocation, emphasizing how border crossing functions as a source of both opportunity and peril. After a theory-heavy analysis of spatial fragmentation, temporal instability, and liminal places, I perform an extended close reading of Teju Cole's *Open City* (2011), exploring how the novel inverts colonial travel narratives to defamiliarize Western metropolitan areas in Brussels and New York. I also perform a second close reading of Akwaeke Emezi's *Freshwater* (2018), where I conceptualize the body itself as a spatial field that functions as a site of both travel and dwelling. Finally, I analyze how these novels approach homegoing as a spatial proposition.

Chapter IV discusses how the hybrid identities of immigrant protagonists disrupt the rigid binary between Europeans and Africans that was central to colonial projects on the continent. I draw at

length upon Homi Bhabha's influential work *The Location of Culture* (1994) to articulate hybridity as a source of both resistance and transformation. I then move to describe the function of hybridity in African migrant novels with a special focus on Helen Oyeyemi's *The Icarus Girl* (2005). I conclude with an analysis of the relationship between identity and homegoing, thereby complicating and deepening my arguments from Chapter III.

In the Conclusion, I step back to contextualize the significance of my argument in the preceding chapters, emphasizing how the novels I study can generate reader empathy, displace dominant narratives, and transform perspectives towards Africa.

Noa Kipnis

""To exist is to resist:" Tracking Solidarity Between Ireland and Israel/Palestine during the 20th Century"

In July 2022, President Joe Biden made a controversial statement in a speech on a trip to West Asia. A proud Irish American, he compared the history of British colonial rule in Ireland with their imperial presence in post-World War I Palestine. While his comment shocked some audience members, the connection President Biden made between Irish Catholics and Palestinians is anything but novel. Since the start of the 20th century, nationalist movements in Israel/Palestine and Ireland have looked to one another in political, social, and cultural expressions of solidarity. This thesis takes a comparative historical approach to investigate the evolution of the links between Ireland and Israel/Palestine during the 20th century.

In my first chapter, I analyze the relationship between Catholics in Ireland and Jews in Palestine throughout the beginning and middle of the 20th century. I argue that Catholic Nationalists in Ireland and Jewish Zionists in Palestine expressed solidarity with one another because they felt a shared sense of oppression under the British Empire and a desire to establish sovereign nations. During the early 20th century, Zionists and Irish nationalists met, influenced each other's fighting techniques, and compared each other's movements in books and newspapers. While there was solidarity between Irish Republicans and Jewish Zionists in the early 20th century because of their shared experiences under British colonialism, that solidarity shifted with the change in power dynamics in Israel/Palestine. The 1948 Arab-Israeli War led to Irish nationalists sympathizing with the Palestinians, marking a turning point in Irish relations with Israel/Palestine.

After the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, Israeli forces displaced thousands of Palestinians from their homes, and the 1967 Arab-Israeli War exacerbated this refugee crisis. For the Irish, who saw themselves as displaced people, rectifying this crisis was a high foreign policy priority. My second chapter argues that the 1967 Arab-Israeli War was another turning point in Ireland's relationship with Israel/Palestine. The war compounded the Palestinian refugee crisis and ended with complete Israeli control over Jerusalem, a city the Irish believed should

be internationalized.

My third chapter argues that, in the 1970s and 1980s, Irish and Palestinian nationalists established links between their resistance movements. These movements engaged in the same violent techniques. The chapter then explores how the British and Israeli governments had similar approaches to punishing and suppressing these nationalist groups. This chapter also analyzes the cultural and political links between the Irish and the Palestinians during this period by examining the Irish-Arab Society and Ireland's role in the Lebanese Civil War.

In my fourth and final chapter, I argue that Irish and Palestinian nationalist movements also established links with each other through two forms of nonviolent protest: creating art and engaging in hunger strikes. In these displays of nonviolent resistance, Irish and Palestinian nationalists continued to form links between their respective movements.

The historical links between Irish and Palestinian nationalists highlight the importance of transnational solidarity movements in transcending the structure of the state to achieve the liberation of oppressed groups.

Paola Linares

"Embodied Remembrance: Interpreting the Sterilization of Puerto Rican Womxn through Visual Arts"

How has the sterilization of Puerto Rican womxn been remembered and through what realms could I go looking for these memories? Analyzing the role of memory in the history of the sterilization of Puerto Rican womxn can help to continue tracing a feminist genealogy for the island and further uncovers the gendered, oftentimes violent, histories of Puerto Rico. Furthermore, the particular intention of seeking *different* methods to uncover the remembrance of these histories helps to shift the focus from identifying how and why the sterilizations happened to how they impacted Puerto Rican womxn (and their descendants up to this day).

The works of Ana Maria Garcia, Melanie Rivera Flores, and las Nietas de Nonó utilize different artistic methods in order to answer the question of how the sterilizations are remembered. Analyzing the artistic pieces from these three Puerto Rican womxn creators, who come from both the island and the diaspora, shows various interpretations of reckoning with the histories left about the sterilization of Puerto Rican womxn – and, in a more personal sense, the histories of their ancestors. I argue that the remembering occurring in these works reflects what can be interpreted as *a gendered, embodied inheritance of empire that is simultaneously a personal and collective endeavor.*

Chapter One examines *La Operación,* a documentary film created by Cuban-Puerto Rican director, Ana Maria Garcia. Through analysis of the documentary's context, intention, and circulation, Garcia remembers the sterilizations through a journalistic, exposé style piece that heavily critiques the role that larger imperial institutions had in the history of sterilizations.

Three particular elements from the film that I unpack are: the incorporation of explicit sterilization procedure scenes, the initiative of obtaining recorded testimony from the womxn who had been operated on, and the function of Garcia's narration throughout the film.

Chapter Two explores two Instagram posts titled "Not Informed" and "Interviews" created by Melanie Rivera Flores, an artist raised in Puerto Rico but currently based in Germany. The chapter begins first with historical context about the time period in which Melanie creates her pieces (i.e., 2018-2021). This proves to be a significant moment for feminist movements in the United States, Puerto Rico and beyond. I unpack the content of each Instagram post and highlight three key elements that advance Melanie's narrative of remembrance which are: the incorporation of a 'super-cut' style, the intention to manipulate audio, and the utilization of her pregnant stomach as a canvas.

Chapter Three examines a performance art piece titled *Illustraciones de la Mecánica*, produced by the Afro-Puerto Rican sisters known as Las Nietas de Nonó. My engagement with context works differently in this chapter because instead of focusing on the larger, historical happenings of the time, I focus more on the context of las Nietas de Nonó's upbringing, lived experiences, and the spaces that define their work. This piece is not only defined by their upbringing but also on the intention of bringing awareness to the experiences and historical treatment of *Afro*-Puerto Rican womxn. The three elements from Act One of *Illustraciones* that help advance the sisters remembrance project are: the aesthetic elements of the scene itself, the two characters the sisters embody, and the reenactments of 'operation.'

Grady Martin

"The Global War on Uyghurs: Why the Chinese State Manufactured Terror Threats to Legitimize the Uyghur Genocide"

In January 2002, the world was shocked to learn of a vast terrorist network operating out of Northwest China. Based in Xinjiang, a fundamentalist Islamic group called the East Turkestan Islamic Movement had murdered hundreds of people over the past four years. In response, the Chinese government launched mass crackdowns in Xinjiang. The campaign criminalized almost any practice of Islam and endorsed the persecution of Uyghurs, a Muslim minority group indigenous to Xinjiang. But there was one problem: the ETIM didn't exist.

The Chinese government had manufactured a series of terror attacks to justify sweeping discriminatory policy against Uyghur Muslims. Besides being violent and unjust, these policies were the immediate precursor to the Uyghur Genocide — the largest internment of religious and ethnic minorities since the Holocaust. A narrative, endorsed by the CCP, State Department, and many prominent research organizations, has formed that the Uyghur Genocide is a consequence of overzealous Chinese counter-terror policy in Xinjiang. This is an incorrect and damaging understanding of the Uyghur Genocide.

I argue that the Uyghur Genocide is better understood as a culmination of settler colonial policy within the context of the Global War on Terror. Ever since the Qing dynasty conquered Xinjiang in 1750, Chinese governments in Qing, Republican, and Communist forms have waged settler colonial campaigns against local indigenous groups. This led local groups to coalesce in solidarity, eventually coming to refer to themselves as Uyghur Muslims. As Uyghur communities ramped up independence movements, the Chinese state saw Uyghur identity itself as a threat to sovereignty in Xinjiang. Consequently, the state increased policing of Uyghur culture and identity, especially the practice of Islam. After 9/11, the state saw the burgeoning Global War on Terror as a way to justify assimilationist policy. The state began a mass campaign to link Uyghur independence movements (whether violent or nonviolent) with a fundamentalist Islamic terror threat. The ensuing public belief that Uyghur existence posed a threat to Chinese society and civilization encouraged the state to expand and harshen settler colonial policy, culminating in the Uyghur genocide as we see it today.

My first chapter goes over the history of Xinjiang from before Qing occupation to the 21st century. In my retelling of history, I highlight the implementation of assimilationist policy and Uyghur resistance. My second chapter details the history of oppression in Xinjiang from 2000 to the onset of the Genocide, with a particular focus on how the Chinese government portrayed Uyghur identity as a security threat.

My third and final chapter analyzes the material covered in the prior two chapters through the lenses of critical security studies and settler colonialism. I begin by using Securitization Theory as articulated by the Copenhagen School to investigate how the PRC co-opted the GWoT to portray Uyghurs as a security threat. I then interrogate how the policy justified through portraying Uyghurs as threats followed a familiar pattern of settler colonialism. I conclude with an analysis of the Genocide itself, finding that the genocide would not have occurred had the PRC not so successfully linked their colonial campaign against Uyghurs with the GWoT.

Caroline McGahren

"Testing the "Truth": The Role of Guatemalan Women's Art and Activism in Transitional Justice"

Gender-based violence exploded during Guatemala's thirty-six-year civil war (1960-1996), but was long entrenched in patriarchal and imperial social, political, and economic institutions, and persists into the present day. This thesis explores the following questions: How are Guatemalan women responding to gender-based violence and the legacy of women's and indigenous folks' persecution during the Guatemalan Civil War and genocide against Mayan people? What forms of collective healing, identity building, memory preservation, and social and political advancement are Guatemalan women employing outside of government sponsored reconciliation efforts and international truth commissions? Where do nation-wide or governmental responses to the civil war, Mayan genocide, and gender-based violence fall short?

What pieces are missing to secure a peaceful future, and where does Guatemalan women's activism and artistic creation fill in the gaps?

Chapter 1 conducts a historical analysis of the types of reconciliation efforts that took place at the national level following the official termination of the war during the 1996 Peace Accords, with a specific focus on the shortcomings of Guatemala's truth and reconciliation commission. The inability of a singular written report to sufficiently analyze entrenched racial, class, and gender rifts in Guatemala inhibited the truth and reconciliation commission from spurring the Guatemalan government to immediate or enthusiastic action. Victims and survivors of gender-based violence during the war are particularly underrepresented and dismissed in the truth commission report, contributing to widespread impunity of wartime perpetrators of sexual violence that has contributed to continuing endemic sexual violence and femicide in Guatemala.

In an effort to explore alternatives to truth and reconciliation commissions, and to honor the efforts of Guatemalan women survivors and their children to preserve historical memory in order to prevent future violence and empower and support fellow survivors, Chapters 2, 3, and 4 highlight the work of various Guatemalan artists and activists. Chapter 2 discusses the work of performance artist Regina José Galindo, whose often provocative and socially disruptive work creates uncomfortable but thought-provoking liminal spaces between theater and public life. Chapter 3 analyzes the grassroots activism efforts of Colectiva Actoras de Cambio (Collective of Women Actors for Change), whose five pillars of *memoria* (memory), *teatro* (theater), *justicia* (justice), *festivales* (festivals/celebrations), and *sanación* (healing/cleansing) incorporate the Mayan cosmovision and the Maya Tzolkin calendar into clinical psychological practices to provide holistic healing opportunities for survivors of gender-based violence. The Colectiva's Indigenous community focus groups, nation-wide festivals to celebrate Indigenous pride and women's rights, along with a commitment to empowering women through education about their bodies, anatomy, and pleasure systems present myriad opportunities for survivors of violence to safely embark on their personal healing journeys. Lastly, Chapter 4 amplifies the voices of already outspoken musicians Rebeca Lane, a feminist *mestiza* rapper and hip-hop artist, and Sara Curruchich, the first Maya Kaqchikel singer-songwriter to reach an international audience with music containing lyrics in an Indigenous Mayan language. Lane and Curruchich, who even joined forces for a musical collaboration, dig into topics of intimate partner violence, genocide, and the history of the Guatemalan civil war, as well as women's empowerment and Indigenous pride, all through skillful musicianship, catchy beats, and poetic lyrics. Together, this collection of women artists and activists, many of whom blur the lines between both roles, present a view into the vast array of effective alternatives to written reports as a method of seeking justice.

Maria Sophia McHugo

"Paradise Lost: Tourism, Neocolonialism, and the Landscape of New Providence, Bahamas"

What is known to the western onlookers about the culture of the Bahamas rarely exceeds its picturesque beaches and crystal-clear waters. The mythology of "paradise" is so deeply ingrained in the Bahamas that it is difficult to conceive of the landscape without conjuring these images. While visitors to the Bahamas and foreign investors alike seek to gain from paradise, the Bahamian population, by contrast, is entirely consumed by it. I argue that by contributing to the erosion of national identity and the perpetuation of racial hierarchies redolent of the plantation economy, the Bahamian tourism industry facilitates neocolonialism, which manifests itself in both the psyche and the landscape of the Black Bahamian majority.

In Chapter One, I present a condensed history of the Bahamas that extends from the moment of discovery by Christopher Columbus in 1492 to the eventual achievement of independence from the British Crown on July 10, 1973. In doing so, I pay close attention to the means by which the development of the modern tourism industry has consistently underpinned the social, economic, and political progress of the Black Bahamian majority, as well as how the colonial elite has worked to preserve the mythology of the Bahamas as paradise. This chapter is integral to understanding how the modern Bahamian tourism industry emerged as a neocolonial machination after independence.

In Chapter Two, I turn to the postcolonial theory contained in Aimé Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism* and Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* to establish a framework within which to analyze the relationship between tourism and neocolonialism in the Bahamas. I focus primarily on the impacts of colonialism on the culture and psychology of colonized populations. In conversation with the postcolonial criticism established by Césaire and Fanon, I provide an analysis of the modern Bahamian tourism industry, revealing the extent to which the Bahamas is reliant on tourism to maintain economic stability, and thus prosperity, perpetuating neocolonialism.

In Chapter Three, I present an original critical landscape analysis of New Providence, Bahamas, revealing the juxtaposition between the spaces occupied by tourists, which I refer to as the realm of the "visiting," versus the Black Bahamian population, comprising the "living." The landscape of Cable Beach forms my case study of the visiting, while the Over-the-Hill neighborhood represents the living. Recognizing landscape as a record of the negotiation of power, I ultimately demonstrate how the tourism industry, controlled almost entirely by foreign investors, dictates both the minds and the lands of the Black Bahamian majority, thereby enabling neocolonialism.

Jessica Samantha Moore

"Passing Across the Color Line: Reconciling the Realities of Race with the Myth of Color Blindness"

Passing is a historical practice wherein light-skinned Black people convinced white Americans that they were white, thereby gaining the benefits of whiteness. This phenomenon was most widespread in the 1920s but faded out of fashion by the mid-twentieth century. In this thesis, I

will rely on novels about passing to complete an in-depth analysis of the practice and its consequences. While I focus on the benefits and drawbacks of passing, my analysis of passing also reveals the extent to which race is socially constructed and shaped by everyday behavior. Once passing fades out of fashion in the mid-twentieth century, I change my focus from passing to an analysis of multiracialism. I establish parallels between passing—where Black people hid their Black roots—and certain types of multiracialism that similarly seek to minimize blackness through a romanticized version of hybridity. I end the thesis with a suggestion for which types of hybridity are harmful and which are potentially helpful.

In Chapter 1, I analyze Nella Larsen's *Passing.* I begin by giving the historical context of the period, then context from Larsen's own life that is relevant to the novel. The 1920s were structured around anti-Black laws and practices. At the same time, New Negro Renaissances and emerging Black cultures were booming across the nation. In this chapter, I will analyze how these dynamics affect the benefits and drawbacks of passing. I end this chapter with a discussion on the potentials for claiming a multiracial identity in this age as well as a short consideration of those who did push for a multiracial identity.

In Chapter 2, I analyze Brit Bennett's *The Vanishing Half* in the context of the mid-twentieth century. I describe the impact of improving race relations and the rising Black Power movement alongside continued racial discrimination. This period is generally understood to be the time when racial passing went out of fashion. I will explain why people may have chosen to continue passing—or not—and the consequences of each decision. I will also discuss the possibilities for a multiracial identity in this period. I will then conclude that while a multiracial identity was not possible for those who could be visibly identified as Black, identities for those who appeared white were more flexible.

In Chapter 3, I analyze Danzy Senna's *Caucasia*. In the setting of this novel, the late twentieth century, multiracialism is not only permissible but celebrated. Senna strongly criticizes multiracialism, believing that the idealized version of hybridity erases blackness while prioritizing whiteness. My analysis of her novel understands the passing in the novel as a metaphor for this type of Black erasure that happens through hybridity. I analyze the costs and benefits of passing for white. To conclude this chapter, I push back against the notion that hybridity is an identity we should strive for and point out the political implications of our racial identities.

In my conclusion, I move to an analysis of Barack H. Obama, a Black/white biracial man. I situate his presidency in the context of the then-ongoing move toward color blindness, the romanticization of hybrid identities, and the Black Lives Matter movement. I rely primarily on Obama's autobiographies and his 2008 Philadelphia campaign speech to analyze how he navigated his hybrid identity. To end the thesis, I push back against tropes of multiracial people and argue for a more complex understanding of multiracialism.

Darius Nowzari

"Piracy, Dates, and Oil: Transformation in the Persian Province of Arabistan

Pre-modern development in Arabistan was largely the outcome of the infrastructural and administrative advancements that took place in the nineteenth century to facilitate the cash-crop production of date palms. However, the discovery of oilfields, which led to the subsequent mechanization of the region, triggered a massive departure from the previous socioeconomic transformation. The focus switched, as petroleum became the most profitable commodity the province could offer to the global market. What followed was regional modernization, where the establishment of company towns dedicated to the oil industry proliferated throughout the province.

In the first chapter, I provide historical and geographical background to establish the pre-existing social conditions of the region. A Persian periphery, bordering current-day Iraq and the Persian Gulf, that was a site of great importance in ancient history. Its geographical situation provided the ideal environment for extensive agricultural production. However, without proper infrastructural works, commercial interests in Arabistan waned as Persian rulers felt no incentive to actively incorporate an unthriving province into the rest of the empire. Lacking in administrative presence, tribal confederacies contended for regional authority. The chapter then concludes with a literature review on the scholarship available on this topic.

In the second chapter, I chart the contention between two Arab tribes during the turn from an era of piracy to regional date production. The active administrative of policing against piracy, coupled with infrastructural development in both commercial and public works, facilitated the growth of the globalized date industry and the emergence of an international trading-market at the port of Muhammara. Within this period of regional development, the province and the people underwent a drastic social transformation to accompany the economic evolution of Arabistan.

In the third chapter, I examine the various local and foreign mechanisms that shifted the economic attention from dates to petroleum. While the highly prosperous cash-crop industry ushered in the expansive development of the region, numerous actors began looking at Arabistan beyond its date production capabilities. The discovery of vast oil reserves, buried deep in the Zagros territory, brought in various foreign investors looking to promote the English's neocolonial pursuits through the guise of modern prosperity and the promise of commercial interdependence.

In the fourth chapter, I conclude the thesis with the growth and development of the oil industry in Arabistan. After oil was first stuck, plans for building a refinery and expanding the scale of the extraction wells were commenced. However, the location of both those spaces were on tribal lands. Through underhanded tactics and manipulation, the Anglo-Persian Oil Company was able to legally seize the lands from the tribal population and construct the mechanical foundation of their petroleum empire. Through various stages of infrastructural growth, the oil company established company towns dedicated for the mass production of petroleum products. Within these towns, the people of the province were gradually being molded into the ideal

company laborer. As these towns proliferated all over, the region experienced another wave of social transformation that marked an era of oil modernity.

Giselle Pfaeffle

"Cyborg Futures: Indigenous Identity and Cyborg Feminism in Brazil"

Donna Haraway's seminal work "A Cyborg Manifesto" considered how the cyborg can challenge socially constructed identities by embodying a cybernetic challenge to the organic/inorganic binary. It formed the basis of a poststructuralist line of feminist thought now known as Cyborg Feminism, which attempts to understand the basis of human entanglements with nature, technology, and power. In this thesis, I use cyborg feminism as a lens for understanding decolonial projects in Brazil resisting capitalist, imperialist, and colonial exploitation.

I work towards an understanding of the cyborg as a mode of dual consciousness which is uniquely affinity with the concept of oppositional consciousness theorized by third-world feminists and post-colonial scholars alike. I further attempt to understand how the poststructuralist thinking at the foundation of the cyborg can decenter the subject in a rejection of the constant need to categorize, label, and identify which often forms the basis of "othering" and exclusion, serving as a limiting boundary on the creation of a unifying politics. Using the concept of "oppositional consciousness" as a way to understand the plasticity of identity inherent to the cyborg, without facilitating the erasure of historically situated identities, this thesis attempts to balance the space between essentialism and universality and construct a uniquely Brazilian oppositional cyborg.

My first chapter provides a theoretical basis for the rest of the work, summarizing the main tenets of Cyborg Feminism and its critiques. I briefly introduce critiques from ecofeminists concerned with the colonizing and exploitative potential of technology before considering the critiques of feminists of color concerned with Haraway's apparent erasure of race. I use these critiques to form an understanding of "oppositional consciousness" which will guide the further interpretations of the cyborg throughout the thesis.

In my second chapter, I situate the cyborg within the Brazilian context, tracing the emergence of the cyborg from the cannibal popularized in Oswald de Andrade's manifesto on cultural cannibalism published in 1928. I consider how the cannibal's practice of consuming, regurgitating, and subsequently subverting dominant culture is not unlike the cyborg's subversion of its disparate parts and oppressive origins and I use this historical context to introduce the Brazilian cyborg as straddling tradition and modernity.

In my final chapter, I consider the role of temporality in the resistive power of the cyborg. By considering first how teleological concepts of development have been employed in configuring "otherness" I then consider how the Brazilian cyborg challenges notions of "primitivism" to subvert these reductive temporalities. The final section of my analysis presents

cyberspace as a new realm to be decolonized. I present social media as a tool for either capitalist neo-colonial power, or radical decolonial politics. In a brief analysis of how Indigenous activists control their self-expression online, challenging facile divisions of tradition and modernity, I provide an example of how the Brazilian cyborg can challenge essentialized notions of identity that are entangled with space, time, and power.

Ultimately, using Brazil as an example, I attempt to understand how the cyborg can present a framing and methodology for decolonial projects, particularly because of its unique framing of the interconnectedness of technology, nature, and futurity.

Lucy Resar

"Race, Reproduction, and Rightlessness: California's Carceral State as a Site for Reproductive Oppression"

Over the past four decades, the United States has seen an exponential rise in the number of people behind bars, from 501,886 in 1980 to 1,873,000 in 2023. Within this increase, women are the fastest-growing segment of the prison population. Between 1977-2007, there was an 832% increase in the number of incarcerated women, a rate two times higher than that of men. Amid this growth, there are extreme racial disparities: in 2000, the imprisonment rate for Black women was six times that of white women. Despite these statistics, Black women and their specific reproductive health needs remain largely absent from scholarship on the prison system – a gap that this thesis seeks to fill. Centering the voices of women incarcerated throughout California, this paper builds a study of reproductive oppression through critical analyses of race, gender, and human rights toward a more nuanced understanding of mass incarceration.

As a guiding framework, I organize my chapters around the principles of the reproductive justice movement – a critical feminist framework coined by a group of Black activists in 1994. Emphasizing a holistic approach to bodily autonomy, the movement includes three central tenets: (1) the right to have children, (2) the right not to have children, and (3) the right to parent the children one does have in safe and healthy environments.

In Chapter 1, I begin with a brief history of mass incarceration, highlighting the distinctly gendered and racialized elements of this archive. I discuss enslavement, convict leasing, and eugenics as three sites of punishment that later combined to create the modern penal system. I then transition to the 'War on Drugs' and the dramatic growth of the nation's prison population beginning in the 1970s. Throughout this account, I emphasize the enduring nature of reproductive injustice, arguing that the criminalization of Black women's reproduction persists across the entirety of American history.

In Chapters 2 and 3, I explore the first two tenets of the reproductive justice movement, considering how carceral institutions obstruct one's right to freely choose whether or not to have children. I highlight the story of Kelli Dillon, one of 144 women who was forcibly sterilized in California prisons from 2006-2011, to discuss widespread trends of eugenics behind bars. I also

examine barriers to abortion and birth control to underscore the discretionary nature of reproductive care in penal settings – an injustice that has only heightened since the Supreme Court's ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*. Through each of these examples, I argue that the unregulated environment of incarceration threatens the right for women to exercise reproductive autonomy.

In Chapter 4, I look beyond the ability to decide whether or not to have children, toward the possibility of raising children in safe and healthy environments. Here, I center my exploration on the story of Kima, a mother incarcerated at the San Francisco jail who was allowed only 12 hours to bond with her newborn baby before her parental rights were revoked. While no two stories on the effects of incarceration are the same, I examine the oppressive treatment of Kima both during incarceration and after her release to argue that the penal system is designed for Black mothers to fail.

In my final chapter, I delve into the literature and organizing history of prison abolition to unite the principles of reproductive justice with the deconstruction of the prison system. I draw heavily on the work of Angela Davis, the leading scholar on prison abolition, as well as the writings of Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Mariame Kaba, and other grassroots thinkers and Black feminist organizers. Ultimately, I present the construction of a prison-free world as an essential pathway to securing reproductive justice for all communities.

Avery Schuster

"The Commodification of the Stateless: Refugee Rentierism and the Crisis of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon"

The mass migration of Syrians to neighboring countries in the Middle East due to the Syrian Civil War which started in 2011 has garnered continuous international attention. Providing for the approximately six million Syrian refugees has led to disaster for host countries in general, and Lebanon in particular. The condition of Syrian refugee lives and Lebanese lives is currently so poor that the possibility of Lebanon becoming a failed state is constantly increasing. This has impacted not only Syria, but also the Middle East at large and beyond. This thesis will be pursuing themes of neoliberalism and sectarianism in the shaping of political policies, humanitarian crises and humanitarian agencies, which have in turn furthered the exploitation and exclusion of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. I argue that the commodification and marginalization of Syrian refugees is primarily the result of sectarian policies and absenteeism in Lebanon, the continued threatening presence of Assad's regime, and the policies espoused by the Lebanese government and UNHCR.

The Introduction defines and contextualizes neoliberalism, sectarianism, and refugee rentierism, as well as the history and current political situation of the Middle East.

Looking through the lens of historical analysis, Chapter One demonstrates how the schismatic construction of Lebanon's national identity, and likewise the resulting hostility with which new groups are received, both limit the capacity of the country to be a host state. Throughout the past century of conflict with local and global powers, Lebanon's inherently fragmented

confessional system of government has made the Lebanese state value national security over unity and inclusive actions.

In Chapter Two I examine the events of the Arab Spring and the subsequent Syrian Civil War, thereby arguing that the implementation of neoliberal policies in Syria's authoritarian regime failed, leading to President Bashar al-Assad's violent reaction, and consequently, to mass death and displacement. The privatization of businesses, along with a focus on modernization, and likewise the simultaneous brutal repression of dissent have all created a time bomb in Syria that was ultimately detonated in 2011 by the Arab Spring. The mass resettlement of Syrians internally in Syrian IDP camps and externally in Lebanon and Turkey has diminished hopes of repatriation among the dispersed Syrian community.

Following my analysis in Chapter Three of the political policies of Lebanon and the programs espoused by the UNHCR, I contend that these policies and programs are indicative of refugee rentierism and the reductioning of refugee identity to that of an economic asset. Deemed "one of the worst humanitarian crises of our time," the living and working conditions in Lebanon have steadily worsened in the unfolding decade. The global humanitarian regime has responded by prioritizing development-based policies, which center the responsibility of refugee management on the host state.

In the Conclusion of this thesis, I synthesize the experiences of individuals in both Lebanon and Syria while drawing on stories from the Syrian refugee crisis and the ensuing emotional fallout. The above synthesis is then used as the basis for my ultimate, albeit speculative, discussion of the anticipated impact of prolonged statelessness, as well as the earthquakes which took place in February 2023 in both Syria and Turkey

Luke Sills

"Terry Eagleton: Criticism, Crisis, and the Poetry of the Future"

The aim of this thesis is to shed some light on the work of the Marxist literary critic and theorist, Terry Eagleton (b. 1943). I focus on three aspects of Eagleton's work: his reflections on criticism in the early 1980's, his fiction through the late 1980's and 1990's, and his "theological turn" in the 2000's, particularly his 2002 study, *Sweet Violence: The Idea of the Tragic*. I do this through three "figures": the "loser," the "martyr," and the "scapegoat."

Eagleton has published over fifty full-length studies since 1966, making it almost cliché to remark that it is unclear how to concisely describe his body of work, or that it would be difficult to define something like an "Eagletonian" critical practice. However, I think the internal multiplicity or contradictoriness of Eagleton's work is perhaps a bit overstated.

I understand Eagleton to be a polemical thinker. While Eagleton seems to have more or less maintained the same kind of Marxist commitment throughout his career, it is in response to the changing intellectual climate and consensus around him that his positions seem to shift. In other words, Eagleton frequently "thinks Marxism through again," and is constantly recasting a

similar set of problems from different angles or through different discourses.

The account this thesis offers is partly an historical one. I begin with Eagleton in the 1980's, which is not only the decade of his most famous book, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, but also a decade which cemented a certain historical shift to the political right and the inauguration of a new neoliberal consensus. If this is an interesting moment to begin tracking Eagleton's work, it is partly because loss begins to constitute a key thematic in the face of total ideological defeat for the left – however total or not this defeat would prove to be.

One of the driving questions for this thesis is how a Marxist criticism might reconstitute itself on the basis of this sense of loss, and if there is something productive that might be wrought from it. I bring this theme up through 2002, to *Sweet Violence: The Idea of the Tragic*, effectively catching him up to my contemporary moment.

For Eagleton, style is an integral aspect of the project of Marxist criticism, or of the social function of criticism more generally. There is a sense in which accessibility becomes a means of challenging the boundary between academia and political society, a boundary Eagleton insists that socialist criticism in particular needs to find a way to leap. In this sense, constantly "thinking Marxism through again" is as much about challenging content as reworking form or style.

Ryan Parker Smith

"Listening to U.S. Courtroom Interaction: Technologies of Desubjectification and Normalization"

This thesis examines three technologies regularly employed in vocal and conversational interaction in U.S. courtrooms: transcription, animation, and interruption. In doing so, it reveals some of the most salient mechanics and effects of power exercise, knowledge production, and (de)subjectification in U.S. courtroom interaction.

In Chapter I, I examine the technology of transcription as a device for linguistic standardization or "normalization." I examined Pennsylvania legal codes and general federal standards for court reporter certification to find the root cause of this court reporters' inability to transcribe AAE. I found that national standards for certification, as drawn up by the National Court Reporters Association, appeal to only two texts that endorse a standardized, rather than diversified, skillset and are certified to reinforce notions of "standard" or "normal" language (which is granted a status of superiority over "non-standard" or "non-normative" language). These technologies not only put subjects with "non-standard" or "non-normative" voices at risk of procedural injustices, but they also serve to desubjectify, pathologize, and discipline these subjects.

In Chapter II, I examine the technology of animation (that is, the re-performance of an utterance) as a device for the destruction of the subject, as constituted in the original utterance formulation. I investigate two objects of courtroom animation: text messages and rap utterances (lyrics, songs, videos, etc.). I found that the animation practices in each source all led to a desubjectification of the authors of the animated utterances and recasting these authors as

stereotypical. I then imagine the trial as a play that is an aestheticization of politics that serves to distract subjects from their own subjectivity and voices, as well as the political struggles of the original contexts of their conflicts. The constant re-performance of this play serves to embed the stereotypical characters in the play into U.S. social consciousness.

In Chapter III, I examine the technology of interruption as a device for reconstructing gendered norms of interaction, norms of male dominance and female desubjectification. I draw from two sources—a comprehensive study on gendered interruptions in the U.S. Supreme Court and a 1993 study on the reconstruction of violence in objection sequences in sexual assault trials—to suggest that courtroom practices of interruption operate in an asymmetrical way to commit a violent desubjectification of female participants. I lean on Sara Ahmed's notion of "structures that bruise" to suggest that these cases are evidence of the way in which power structures affect the body (i.e., making the female body silent and emotionally re-traumatizing victims of sexual assault). In this chapter, and throughout the thesis, I listen critically to how voices are constructed, represented, and heard in the U.S. legal system as sites of power exercise, construction of social norms and roles, and (de)subjectification.

Allegra Stewart

"The New Green Scare: Corporate Influence and the Politics of American Dissent"

This thesis examines two periods in which private industries have engaged in cultural, legislative, and legal campaigns to limit environmental and animal protest. I compare the Green Scare of the early 2000s - in which increased radical activism led by the Earth and Animal Liberation Fronts that threatened the fiscal viability of corporations led to cultural fearmongering and the eventual criminalization of their very movement - to current attempts by the fossil fuel industry and its allies to quash anti-pipeline protest. I argue that these contemporary efforts represent a new manifestation of the Green Scare, though with some meaningful differences. Using the case study of the Line 3 pipeline, I demonstrate the ways that corporations have become ever more successful in constraining activism aimed at combating the climate crisis: giving these companies outsized power to permanently shape the landscape of American dissent.

My first chapter discusses the cultural framing of radical environmental and animal activists as terrorists, and the necessity of this narrative in eliminating resistance to the subsequent and unprecedented legislative and legal targeting of these movements. Tracing the collaborative efforts of private enterprises and their public sector allies, this discussion of the Green Scare reveals how companies harness their considerable social and political power to systematically target oppositional protest movements. In my second and third chapters I conduct an in-depth examination of the Line 3 pipeline conflict and the influence that the pipeline's owner, Enbridge Energy, exerted over the processes and governing bodies charged with approving and eventually overseeing completion of project. My analysis makes clear Enbridge's

power in the permitting and policing processes around the project, and in ensuring the passage of legislation specifically criminalizing the actions of those resisting Line 3.

This thesis not only demonstrates the existence of a New Green Scare, but also outlines the ways that corporate interests oppositional to democratic ideals have been increasingly incorporated into governance. In comparing the current crackdown on activism against oil and gas infrastructure projects to the original Green Scare, I uncover the necessity of narrative framing as a precursor to the concreate legislative and legal criminalization of environmental protest. This thesis further reveals a tactical shift in the ways that corporations have gone about subverting movements, and the increasingly widespread impact of this switch on the feasibility of protest.

In addition to the identification of a New Green Scare, this thesis also contributes to scholastic understanding about fossil fuel industry control over government and society more broadly. Building upon the concept of Petro-hegemony, I extend this discussion of fossil fuel power into those around sovereignty. Having established in Chapter 1 to 3 the outsized influence of the fossil fuel industry on the perception of, and decision making around, the Line 3 pipeline I argue that the industry operates with a level of self-determination supposedly reserved for autonomous states. This concept, which I have termed Petro-sovereignty, builds upon previous discourses and invites new and meaningful discussion about the intersections of protest, sovereignty, and environmentalism.

Sydney Sutherland

"The "Nocturnal Body" of Democracy: A Biopolitical Analysis of United States Intervention in the Nicaraguan Contra War"

The core questions of this thesis stems from the line of thought. How can the relationship between the United States and Nicaragua be characterized as imperial, and what are the methods of control? Following that, what would it mean to classify the Contra War as a colonial war? To answer these questions, this thesis is divided into five chapters.

In Chapter I, I will discuss the biopolitical theories I will draw from, specifically the work of Michel Foucault, Giorgio Agamben, and Achille Mbembe. I will introduce each theorist before moving into a discussion of how their thoughts could apply to the idea of empire. Chapter I concludes with a delineation of two sets of criteria: what makes a biopolitical empire, and what makes a colonial war or act of retribution in a biopolitical context. Chapter II will cover the relationship between the United States and Nicaragua from the William Walker affair in the 19th century to the end of the Somoza dynasty in 1979. It will also give a short summary of the history of the FSLN, the revolutionary movement that took over the Nicaraguan government after the fall of Somoza, and conclude with a discussion using the aforementioned criteria to determine what makes the relationship one of biopolitical empire.

Chapter III will provide both an overview of the Contra War, as well as the importance of narrative control to maintain imperial power. Chapter IV will discuss the methods of biopolitical

control, monitoring, and surveillance that the United States utilized to control both the contra troops and the Nicaraguan civilians themselves. Chapter V will discuss the ways in which the Contra War reduced Nicaraguan civilians to “bare life,” or life that has been judged meaningless by power. Finally, the conclusion will review both sets of criteria and conclude with a few thoughts on Nicaragua today.