

# **LIBERALISM INFECTED: REVISITING POLITICAL AND SOCIO-LEGAL THOUGHT IN THE AFTERMATH OF COVID-19**

## **COURSE SYLLABUS**

### **✓ General**

The Covid-19 pandemic erupted amidst of a broader and deeper challenge facing liberal democracies and simultaneously extenuated this crisis. We understand this crisis to pertain to liberal-legal institutions, and human and civil rights values and narrative. The purpose of the course is to invite students to rethink the building blocks of modern political and socio-legal theory and the narratives which endow them with meaning and pave imaginatively new directions. This invitation, grounded in an interdisciplinary theoretical inquiry and critical reflection on the crisis within the crisis (of liberal democracies – both states' institutions and civil societies - dealing with the pandemic crisis) thus transforms the predicament into an opportunity to re-examine basic assumptions and to propose new paths for co-existence, an existence that seeks to replace exclusionary populism with a vision of inclusive democracy. Its subject matter and methodologies reflect SUN's (and indeed CEU's) mission as they advance its ethos.

That the vision of liberal democracy is undergoing a crisis is by now self-evident: the rise of nationalism, populism, the politics of polarization and the ensuing upsurge of "illiberal democracies" and their construction of new "enemies of the people" (in diverse regions like the U.S, Brazil, Hungary, Poland and Israel), the refugee crisis, the widening economic gaps and social polarization have been undermining the values of liberalism and liberal institutions – the judicial system, communications, culture, and the academic world.

Liberalism has come to be considered a sectarian position, and those who champion it are thought to be advancing particularistic interests, suited to their own Weltanschauung and lifestyle. It appears somewhat ironic that liberalism, that propounds a universal vision of equality and freedom, has come to be considered particularistic. There is, however, some logic in this: in a society that has such profound cultural and values-driven diversity, it is difficult for liberal values, including universalism, equality, freedom of the individual from tradition and authority, and the very principle of the rule of law to serve as a common springboard for a shared life.

The Covid-19 pandemic, erupting amidst this crisis, can thus be understood as both a metaphor for and as a crystallization of the malaise of liberal democracies, providing a crucial point in time for assessing this critique in the light of the ways and means they have taken to contain and control it.

### **✓ Brief Course Overview**

This 2-week course will return to foundational questions of liberal democracy through the perspective of the new global pandemic. The fundamental questions accentuated by our experience with and management of the pandemic include individual freedom versus collective attachments; expert knowledge v. populist sentiments; and, indeed, questions arising from the very notion of the social contract, the role of the state and the rule of law.

The course, which in view of current restrictions due to the yet present Covid-19, will be taught long-distance, comprises two parts:

1. An invitation extended to the students to reflect on and share their experience in facing the pandemic on a personal, professional, and national level (e.g., anxiety, economic insecurity, care, pause from daily routines, solidarity, different forms of isolation, intimacy and social interaction; (mis)trust).
2. A sustained discussion of the major building blocks of liberal democracies and their relationship to personal experiences. The discussion is designed to explore both historical/imaginative narratives of plagues and the extent to which some of the existing political, social and legal theories – particularly of human rights discourse and its critics - capture or fail to exhaust the experience of the pandemic in its multiplicity.

Throughout the course, you will be accompanied by Ana Chiritoiu and Alexandra Oanca for consultation and guidance. Information about hours etc. will be posted on the course's website.

### ✓ **Detailed Program, Bibliography and Assignments**

#### **General**

Students are requested to read and reflect on two books written by Jose Saramago: *Blindness* (English Trans.1997) and *Seeing* (Eng. Trans. 2006). The first book appears to tell the story of a physical epidemic; the second of a political epidemic. These novels will be the focus of discussion in the first class of the second part of the course and will also serve as a point of departure for its final assignment.

The course consists of 7 modules. The distribution of points is as follows:

- Up to 10 points for each module - credited for the preparatory assignment (s) prepared for it.
- Up to 30 points for the final assignment

#### → **Part I: Experiences and Reflection**

Orna Ben-Naftali and Shai Lavi

We all learn by reflecting on our experiences. Reflection requires a perspective. By the summer of 2021, we all would hopefully have some perspective which would allow us to articulate, share and reflect on our experiences with the pandemic. In the context of this discussion, the students would be introduced to Paul Klee's painting *Angelus Novus* and to two modes of reflection on the past: does the angel, "buffeted by the unbearable, inescapable storm we call progress" enable us "to understand humanity that proves itself by destruction" (Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writing 2*: 456) or, conversely, does the image impel us to move forward "by turning our gaze to the horrors of the past, in the hope that we will not thereby be turned to stone" (Terry Eagleton, *Walter Benjamin: or Towards a Revolutionary Criticism*).

## Bibliography:

### > Mandatory

- Walter Benjamin, *Theses on the Philosophy of History* (1942)

### > Assignment

In preparation for our first meeting, in addition to the reading, and perhaps in relation to it, please write a short piece describing a specific moment in the time of the pandemic, which was of special significance to you experientially, intellectually, or emotionally and that has stayed with you. (up to 500 words).

**Please submit your short essay by Friday, July, 9.**

Following this first meeting, students will spend the week (July 12 – July 16) reading and preparing the assignments required for submission for the second part of the course.

## **Part II: Lectures, Discussions**

### ▪ **Literary and Political Imagination of Plagues/ Emergencies: Nature, Power and People**

Prof. Orna Ben-Naftali

Pandemics have ignited our anxieties as well as our literary and political imagination since time immemorial. They are a major disruption not only in our routines but also in the way we understand our place in the world. Placing us between the determined and the arbitrary, they bare our vulnerabilities, shake our faith in the great divide we have erected between nature and organized human society and defy what Robert Cover referred to as our 'nomos' (our laws and the narratives which endow them with meaning). They expose major stories we tell ourselves as cover stories. The starting point of this session is the proposition that since we are the authors of these stories, we may also alter them, especially how they develop and unfold. In order to assess the value of this proposition, it is necessary first to read and think about these texts.

The first meeting will mention some of the great literary accounts of (real and imagined) plagues, and then focus on Jose Saramago's *Blindness* and on its sequel, *Seeing*, relating them to political imagination and discourse.

The second meeting, beginning with the hypothesis - common to the social contract theories - that the political state is a better alternative to the state of nature, will focus on the ensuing relationship between nature and politics; security and freedom; obedience to the will of the sovereign/ rule of law; law and violence; the state of emergency and risk management (the management of people considered dangerous).

## Bibliography

1<sup>st</sup> Session (July 15, 13.30 – 15.00 CET)

### > Mandatory

- José Saramago, *Blindness* (Eng. Trans.(1997)
- José Saramago, *Seeing* (Eng. Trans. 2006)

➤ Recommended

- Chaucer, "The Pardoner's Tale" in *The Canterbury Tales*
- Defoe, *Journal of The Plague Year written by a Citizen who continued all the while in London*
- Thomas Mann, *Death in Venice*
- Camus, *The Plague*

2<sup>nd</sup> Session (July 15, 16.00 – 17.30 CET)

➤ Mandatory

- Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapters XIII, XIV, XVII
- John Locke, *Second Treaties on Civil Government*, Chapters II, III, VIII (Sect. 95-99), IX.
- Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology*, Chapter 1

➤ Recommended

- Walter Benjamin, 'Critique of Violence' in *Selected Writings*, Vol. 1, 236 (M. Bullock & M/W. Jennings, eds. 1996).
- Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception* (2005)
- Orna Ben-Naftali, Michael Sfard, Hedi Viterbo, *The ABC of the OPT: A Legal Lexicon of the Israeli Control over the Occupied Palestinian Territory* pp. 6-12; 17-21

➤ Assignment

Considering the way both *Blindness* and *Seeing* illuminate each other, write a short paper (no longer than 300 words) focusing on what are the people of the capital blind to and what do they see? Who is blind; who sees and what may the impact of either blindness or seeing be on how we think about power and legitimacy; the rule of law and the state of exception/ emergency? **The paper has to be submitted by July 14, 17:00 CET.**

▪ **Pandemics, Ancient and Modern**

Prof. Ewa Atanassow

In this part of the course, we shall consider the wide-ranging ramifications of Covid-19 in comparative light. In the first seminar session we'll discuss Thucydides' account of the plague that broke out in Athens at the beginning of the Peloponnesian war (430 BC). This first-hand account by an author who himself survived the infection is also the first extant historical record of a transcontinental pandemic that set, as one scholar put it, the gold standard for plague narratives. Offering a detailed description of the illness that took the life of thousands of Athenians including their illustrious leader Pericles, Thucydides' narrative analyzes the circumstances that enabled the spread of the disease, and its effects on democratic society. It thus reflects on the conditions that need to be in place if the rule of law, ethical norms and human solidarity are to have a hold on society - indeed, if there is to be society at all. Having probed Thucydides' analysis and its implications, in the second session we shall return to our current situation in order to consider the paradoxes of the pandemic laid out by the IWM-based political commentator Ivan Krastev, paying special attention to the putative relationship between democracy and dictatorship.

Bibliography:

➤ Mandatory

- Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, translated by M. Hammond, edited by P.J. Rhodes (Oxford Classics, 2009), book 2, sections 34-54, pp. 89-100.
- Ivan Krastev, *Is It Tomorrow Yet? Paradoxes of the Pandemic* (Penguin 2020), pp. 1-15; 35-65 (+ endnotes on pp. 73-77). Students are advised to read the entirety Krastev's short book.

➤ Assignments:

In preparation for the two seminar sessions, write two short reflections (300 words each) in response to the following prompts:

1. Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War*

- a. **Pick a passage from Thucydides' text and write a short commentary on it, noting unfamiliar concepts and raising questions for discussion.**

Or

- b. **In 1-2 paragraphs, reflect one of the following questions:**

How does Pericles' praise of Athenian democracy relate to the plague that engulfed Athens in the early years of the Peloponnesian war? Why are these two narratives placed back to back in Thucydides' account? In light of this account, what are the preconditions – legal, political, psychological, moral - for a functioning democratic society?

2. Krastev's *Is it Tomorrow Yet?*

- a. **Pick one of the paradoxes of the pandemic that Krastev identifies and comment on it, raising questions for discussion.**

Or

- b. **In 1-2 paragraphs, reflect one of the following questions:**

What for Ivan Krastev are the paradoxes of the pandemic, and how specific are they to our time? What is the relation between democracy and dictatorship? In light of Krastev's analysis, what are the main political, legal and policy lessons we should draw from our current predicament?

**Please submit the assignments by Sunday, July 18, 2021.**

## ▪ Expertise and Life: Two Liberal Democratic Prejudices

Prof. Roger Berkowitz

The Covid-19 event has brought attention to two related prejudices of modern liberal democracy: first, the prejudice in favor of expert driven governance, and second the prejudice that life is our highest human value. In these sessions, we focus on these two liberal-democratic prejudices as they come together in the current crisis. Over and over again, we are told to "Listen to the experts." But there are problems with such advice. First, experts in the social sciences and in government have a poor record of being right. And yet experts continue to assert mastery which they do not have. This over-confidence is a kind of lying, a refusal to see the real world in its complexity. And this lying by those in power hollows out authority and respect for liberal institutions. Second, the rule of the experts gains power as countries become more centralized and in need of administration. When people are told society is too complex to be governed by anyone but experts, they are disempowered. The result is animosity and resentment against experts that may well, in Arendt's words, "harbor all the murderous traits of a racial antagonism." Third, within the public health field, the first priority is saving lives. Public health experts believe they can save lives; as a result, they push for public policies that value life over a meaningful life. They are thus complicit in what Giorgio Agamben calls the rule of bare life and what Hannah Arendt calls the victory of *animal laborans*. We see this above all in the acceptance of rules that the sick must die alone and be buried without funerals. We will explore how expert discourses drive us to abandon fundamental human connections that make human life meaningful and privilege life over a meaningful human life.

### Bibliography

1<sup>st</sup> Session (July 19, 15.30 – 17.00 CET)

#### Part I

##### > Mandatory

- Giorgio Agamben, "Clarifications" (Published March 17th, 2020)  
[https://itself.blog/2020/03/17/giorgio-agamben-clarifications/?fbclid=IwAR1hwfk8kBY3\\_U9frRzSS1jxbiAck1CWFB8n4yo3n8nc5I\\_E0JzIgTGT\\_Q](https://itself.blog/2020/03/17/giorgio-agamben-clarifications/?fbclid=IwAR1hwfk8kBY3_U9frRzSS1jxbiAck1CWFB8n4yo3n8nc5I_E0JzIgTGT_Q)
- Giorgio Agamben, A Question 4.13.2020  
[https://itself.blog/2020/04/15/giorgio-agamben-a-question/?fbclid=IwAR3eBGBF9AK1vqqvX0MV3AN76QWB\\_MgDP0DdIaht2swx4Uw\\_c9\\_B8I4k6hHw](https://itself.blog/2020/04/15/giorgio-agamben-a-question/?fbclid=IwAR3eBGBF9AK1vqqvX0MV3AN76QWB_MgDP0DdIaht2swx4Uw_c9_B8I4k6hHw)
- Nathan Pinkoski, CORONAVIRUS AND THE CULT OF EXPERTISE  
<https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2020/03/coronavirus-and-the-cult-of-expertise>
- Roger Koppl, Expert Failure, Chapter 1, Section on "Defining Expert" 37-42

##### > Recommended

- Gil Eyal, The Crisis of Expertise 1-20

#### Part II

##### > Mandatory

- GUTIERREZ- BRIZUELA v. LORETTA E.LYNCH  
<https://www.ca10.uscourts.gov/opinions/14/14-9585.pdf>

➤ Recommended

- Chevron v. National Resources Defense Council 467 U.S. 837 (1984)  
<https://caselaw.findlaw.com/us-supreme-court/467/837.html>

➤ Assignments

Guiding Questions:

Write short essays of less than 2 pages on two of the following questions:

1. What is the Crisis of Expertise?
2. Pick one point made by Giorgio Agamben that you find persuasive or non-persuasive and explain why.
3. Read Justice Gorsuch's Concurring Opinion in Gutierrez v. Lynch. Why does he worry that administrative law is doing away with the separation of powers?

**Please submit the assignments by July 18, 2021**

2<sup>nd</sup> Session (July 20, 15.30 – 17.00 CET)

Part I

➤ Mandatory

- Hannah Arendt, On Violence, *Crises of the Republic*, 105-133; 176-184; 196-197

Part II

➤ Mandatory

- Friedrich Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, 24-71

➤ Recommended

- David Graeber, The Utopia of Rules, 3-17
- Friedrich Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, 1-9;

➤ Assignments

Guiding Questions Class 2: Write short essays of less than 2 pages on the following questions:

1. On page 108, 170 of Hannah Arendt's "On Violence," she raises the question of the potential danger of intellectuals in politics. She elaborates on this danger in fn 99 on pages 196-97. What is the danger that intellectuals pose to democratic politics?
2. Hayek describes two different types of freedom on pages 25ff. What are these two ideas of freedom and how do they differ?
3. On page 69, Hayek writes: "It is the price of democracy that the possibilities of conscious control are restricted to the fields where true agreement exists and that in some fields things must be left to chance." Do you agree? Why?

**Please submit the assignment by July 19, 2021**

- **Derogations and Emergency**  
Prof. Jana Lozanoska

Protection of human rights, individual freedoms or public health protection of the collective/communities during pandemics. This session will discuss this balance along the protection of human rights, liberalism and rule of law in relation to the political theories of Smith and Agamben. It will tackle the notions of state of exception and sovereignty as proposed by both scholars in correlation with the derogation of human rights amidst Covid-19 pandemic and proclamation of public emergency on the pretext of public health protection.

#### Background class readings:

##### ➤ Mandatory:

- CCPR General Comment No. 29: Article 4: Derogations during a State of Emergency\*  
Adopted at the Seventy-second Session of the Human Rights Committee, on 31 August 2001.
- Schreuer, C. Derogation of Human Rights in Public Emergency: The Experience of the European Convention on Human Rights, 9 *Yale Journal of International Law*, Vol.9:113, 1982.
- Kolbert, E. Pandemics and the Shape of Human History, A Critic at Large, *The New Yorker*, March 30, 2020. available at: [https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/04/06/pandemics-and-the-shape-of-human-history?fbclid=IwAR2syuiFX-p-xX2YRzcZZA1Cc74hjJfKSV5QOS39F3HzoUv\\_V7CJ2e19MBI](https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/04/06/pandemics-and-the-shape-of-human-history?fbclid=IwAR2syuiFX-p-xX2YRzcZZA1Cc74hjJfKSV5QOS39F3HzoUv_V7CJ2e19MBI)

##### ➤ Recommended

- Toebes, B. Human rights and public health: towards a balanced relationship, *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 19:4, 2016, pp. 488-504.

#### In-class readings:

##### ➤ Mandatory

- Schmitt, C. Political Theology, Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty, George Schwab (trans.), Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005, pp.5-37.
- Humphreys, S. Legalizing Lawlessness: On Giorgio Agamben's State of Exception, *European Journal of International Law*, Volume 17, Issue 3, June, pp. 677-687, 2006.
- Reflections by Alvitazos, Bilkova and al., European Commission for Democracy Through Law (Venice Commission), *Respect for Democracy, Human Rights and Rule of Law During State of Emergency*, CDL-PI (2020) 005 Rev.
- Lebret, A. COVID-19 pandemic and derogation to human rights, *Journal of Law and the Biosciences*, 2020, pp.1-15.

##### ➤ Recommended

- Epstein, H. Are Tyrants Good for Your Health, *The Lancet*, Vol. 383, 2014, April 26.

- Burkle M. F. Declining Public Health Protections within Autocratic Regimes: Impact on Global Public Health Security, Infectious Disease Outbreaks, Epidemics, and Pandemics, *Guest Editorial*, Columbia University, 2020.

### ➤ Guiding Questions

Please try to dissect through the following questions while preparing for the session:

#### A. Guiding preparatory questions for the session in relation to background readings

1. What is derogation of human rights, and which are the criteria for its proclamation?
2. Is “public emergency proclamation” on the pretext of “public health” protection as regulated in international human rights law contrary to rule of law in liberal democracies? What kind of constitutional guarantees and procedural safeguards, if any, should be observed and be in place?

#### B. Guiding questions for the in-class readings

1. What is the state of exception? Who decides on it? Is the “state of exception” as proposed by both Smith and Agamben assumed under what is understood as the derogation of human rights by proclaiming public emergency?
2. Whether liberal democracies are truly liberal democracies if their respective constitutions provide for suspension of rights?

### ➤ Assignment

1. Select one context/country where the Constitution was suspended during Covid-19 and rights derogated from under emergency provision.
2. Explain the context.
3. By following the readings and the class discussions, identify which were the problems, challenges and threats to human rights, democracy and rule of law.

Note: You should prepare the assignment as a PowerPoint presentation using bullet points **to be submitted by July 20, 2021**. You may also include images as long as they are referenced. Provide conclusion, recommendations and bibliography at the end of the presentation.

- **Beyond Emergency: Solidarity and Providence**  
Prof. Shai Lavi

Covid-19 elicited an unprecedented global response. For several weeks across the global life practically came to a halt as the larger part of humanity was sentenced to solitary confinement. A daunting sense of a deep crisis of the health, economic, and – in some key instances – political systems prevailed. States stepped in with drastic measures to contain the epidemic and enacted emergency regulations imposing quarantine, enforcing extreme surveillance mechanisms, and closely regulating the movement of people and commodities. Many a time, at the cost of basic human and civil rights, and always with a growing intrusion of state power into different life spheres.

Clearly, Covid-19 created an emergency situation, infringed upon civil rights, authorized sovereigns and state officials with unprecedented powers, and exposed the always already potentiality of state power to undermine the rule of law. But is this the full story of the global pandemic?

The purpose of this section is to explore alternative narratives to both the liberal and critical perspective that frames pandemics as a state of emergency. It seeks to highlight the following aspects of the Covid-19 affair:

1. It is not the State, or not the State on its own that responded to the pandemic. What role did society play in this recent pandemic and what can we learn from bottom-up practices such as “social distancing” and other forms of social solidarity and care?
2. Even with respect to State power, what more can we say than a critical stance toward state power (e.g., Foucault, “power is not bad, but always dangerous”)? Does it make sense to view of the State not only through its ability to abuse its power but through its providence?

### Bibliography

1<sup>st</sup> Session (July 21, 15.30 – 17.00 CET)

#### ➤ Mandatory

- Kar Keung Cheng, Tai Hing Lam, Chi Chiu Leung, "Wearing face masks in the community during the COVID-19 pandemic: altruism and solidarity", *The Lancet* 2020, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(20\)30918-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30918-1)
- Andrew Benjamin, Solidarity, Populism and COVID-19, *Philosophy Today* 64 (4):833-837 (2020)
- Ryan Nolan, “‘We are all in this together!’ Covid-19 and the lie of solidarity”, *Irish Journal of Sociology* 2021, Vol. 29(1) 102–106  
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0791603520940967>

2<sup>nd</sup> Session (July 22, 15.30 – 17.00 CET)

#### ➤ Mandatory

- Adi Ophir, “The Two-State Solution – Providence and Catastrophe”, *Theoretical Inquiries in Law* 8(1) (2007), 117-160

#### ➤ Assignments

1. Is solidarity a lie in the sense that Nolan uses the term? Demonstrate your answer through a personal experience where you confronted an act of solidarity or its absence during the pandemic. (up to 300 words)
2. What is Adi Ophir’s main argument in the assigned article? What do you find convincing in his argument and what is less convincing and why? (up to 300 words)

**Please submit the assignments by July 20, 2021**

- **Crisis Reloaded: Urban Alterities from Europe to the Middle East and Back**  
Prof. Daniel Monerescu

*Session 1: Urban Illiberalism in Hungary* (July 23, 13.30 – 15.00 CET)

Prof. Daniel Monerescu

From its origin in Wuhan, China, the Coronavirus pandemic has been a predominantly urban phenomenon. In Hungary, 59 percent of the deceased came from Budapest. Similar numbers reported in major metropolitan centers worldwide, reflect the dramatic tension between top-down biopolitical governability and the unruly politics of cities. Indeed, the four classical sociological characteristics that endow cities with dynamic vitality – size, density, permanence, and heterogeneity – were also accountable for the disproportional number of fatalities in urban areas. What Zygmunt Bauman called the “destructive order and creative chaos” of cities has been the Achilles heel of the “global war against COVID-19.”

This section will explore alternative formulations of crisis, solidarity and calamity in urban and social theory. Expanding the discursive framework of “crisis,” we will critically examine the current epidemic discourse in relation to a series of other ongoing crises including the “refugee crisis” in Europe and the “humanitarian crisis” in Palestine. The perspective of urban alterities (Jewish, Roma, refugees, the urban poor and other racialized subjects) will enable us to scrutinize different biopolitical strategies enacted by illiberal democracies. As a transnational crisis, which both challenges national sovereignty and redefines the spatial closure of international borders, the COVID-19 epidemic will serve as a case study to critically examine the differential access to resources. In times of crisis, growing urban inequalities shed light on the political economy of poverty while pushing urban actors to organize collectively within and across networks of solidarity.

#### Bibliography:

##### ➤ Mandatory

- Kallius, Annastiina, Monerescu, Daniel and Rajaram, Prem Kumar. 2016. “Immobilizing Mobility: Border Ethnography, Illiberal Democracy and the Politics of the ‘Refugee Crisis’ in Hungary” *American Ethnologist* 43(1):25-37. <https://doi.org/10.1111/amet.1226>
- Geva, Dorit. “Orbán’s Ordonationalism as Post-Neoliberal Hegemony.” 2021. *Theory, Culture & Society*. doi:[10.1177/0263276421999435](https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276421999435)

##### ➤ Recommended

- Susan Sontag. 1988. *AIDS and Its Metaphors*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Chapters 1 and 2.
- Isin, Engin F. 2002. *Being Political: Genealogies of Citizenship*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. Chapter 1.
- Monerescu Daniel. 2019. “The University as Public Enemy: CEU, Institutional Precarity and Academic Solidary” *Social Anthropology/Anthropologie Sociale* (Forum on Politics and Precarity) 27(2): 97-99.

## ➤ Assignments

How do you know urban alterity when you see it? Who defines the category of the urban Other? How do illiberal regimes make alterity more or less salient?

1. (Re)Produce a representation (a clip, a graffiti, a media report etc.) showing the impact of illiberalism and/or the pandemic on urban alterities from your own lived context.
2. In 2-3 paragraphs, describe the example you brought.

**Submit your examples on the e-learning platform by Thursday, July 22<sup>nd</sup>, midnight.** Before the class, make sure you read your colleagues' examples, as in Session 2 we will organize a roundtable to discuss them.

*Session 2: Workshop: Representing Alterities and Crisis on the Margins (July 23, 15.30 – 17.00 CET)*

Alexandra Oancă, Ana Chirițoiu

Starting from the cases of urban alterities discussed in the previous session and from the examples brought by students, in this workshop we focus on the representation of these alterities and the joint challenges brought about by the pandemic, illiberalism, and methodological humanitarianism. To illustrate, minority groups that were already marginalised before the pandemic, such as the Roma, have been severely hit by the pandemic, and have witnessed renewed forms of disenfranchisement. Racial scapegoating, mediatic spectacles in the name of security, and the closing off of entire neighborhoods have been justified not only by the 'exceptional' circumstances of the pandemic, but also by the 'outcast' status of such groups. At the same time, mainstream representations of the effects of the pandemic on such groups take on a victimising, patronising air that ends up reproducing the very marginalization that they denounce. This paradox constitutes the focus of our workshop, and starting from it we will seek ways to overcome it through multimodal representation.

Specifically, in this session we examine how the pandemic has highlighted and even produced the circumstances for 'exceptionalizing' certain populations, rendering them either insufficiently 'civilized', or outright disposable. In addition, we discuss how representation informs our understanding of these processes and these populations themselves. We also tackle the methodological challenges that such research foci pose, and their implications on blurring the boundaries between scholarship and engagement.

The session will tackle questions such as: What new forms of collaboration and engagement have emerged in the context of the pandemic? How is research in this context shaped by demands to decolonise scholarship and by the need to support the struggle of communities against social exclusion? How can the social sciences shape priorities of marginal populations in the post-pandemic world? How could these new directions inform policies, laws, and modes of representation?

## Bibliography:

### ➤ Recommended

## Othering & marginalization:

- Bauman, Zygmunt. 2013. *Wasted Lives: Modernity and Its Outcasts*. John Wiley & Sons.

- Briggs, Charles L. 2020. "From the Cholera Epidemics to COVID, Racialization of Disease Is an Old Trend." UC Press Blog. Accessed April 3, 2021. <https://www.ucpress.edu/blog/50734/from-the-cholera-epidemics-to-covid-racialization-of-disease-is-an-old-trend/>.
- Hooks, bell. 1989. Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness. *The Journal of Cinema and Media*. 36: 15-23.
- Singer, Merrill, and Barbara Rylko-Bauer. 2021. "The Syndemics and Structural Violence of the COVID Pandemic: Anthropological Insights on a Crisis." *Open Anthropological Research* 1 (1): 7–32. <https://doi.org/10.1515/opan-2020-0100>.

#### Roma, Covid and illiberalism (illustrative)

- BBC Report on Bulgarian Roma and Covid-19: <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-europe-55928910>
- Policy report: ERGO Network 2021: The impact of Covid-19 on Roma communities in the European Union and the Western Balkans <https://ergonetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Ergo-covidstudy-final-web-double-v2.pdf>
- Ciaian, Pavel and D'Artis Kancs, 2019. Marginalisation of Roma: root causes and possible policy actions. *European Review*, 27(1), pp.115-130.
- Gay y Blasco, Paloma and Maria Félix Rodríguez Camacho. 2021. 'COVID-19 and its Impact on the Roma Community: The Case of Spain.' *Somatosphere*. <http://somatosphere.net/forumpost/covid-19-roma-community-spain/>
- Murji, Karim and Giovanni Picker. 2021. Racist morbidities: a conjunctural analysis of the COVID-19 pandemic. *European Societies*, 23(sup1), pp.S307-S320.

#### Multimodality

- Alvarez Astacio, Patricia, Gabriel Dattatreyan and Arjun Shankar. "Multimodal Ambivalence: A Manifesto for Producing in S@!#t Times." *American Anthropologist* 124. 2 (2021). <https://anthrosource.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/aman.13565?af=R>
- Shankar, Arjun. 2014. "Towards A Critical Visual Pedagogy: A Response To The 'end Of Poverty' Narrative." *Visual Communication*, 13, 3 (August 1, 2014): 341-356. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470357214530065>.
- <http://www.americananthropologist.org/multimodal-anthropologies/>

#### **Final assignment**

The final assignment will be a joint exercise by study groups of 3-4 students working on a paper together.

The paper (not exceeding 1000 words) will offer a review of both *Blindness* and *Seeing* undertaken in the light of 3 of the 6 modules comprising the course. It has to present, at the outset, a proposition/ argument about how the texts and discussions affect/ illuminate the reading of the novels.

The assignment has to be submitted by **Monday, July 26<sup>th</sup> at 17:00**

a) **Course Schedule (topics, allocation of hours among faculty members, teaching mode, etc.)**

Week 1 (July 12 – 16)

<b>Monday 12 July 2021</b>	<b>Tuesday 13 July 2021</b>	<b>Wednesday 14 July 2021</b>	<b>Thursday 15 July 2021</b>	<b>Friday 16 July 2021</b>
			13:30 – 15:00  Literary imagination of plagues: nature, power and people  Prof. Orna Ben-Naftali	
15:00–16:30 <u>Opening session</u>  Covid-19: Reflective Experiences  Ben-Naftali & Lavi			16:00 – 17:30  Political imagination of Emergencies: nature, power and people  Prof. Orna Ben-Naftali	

Week 2 (July 19 – 23)

	<b>Monday 19 July 2021</b>	<b>Tuesday 20 July 2021</b>	<b>Wednesday 21 July 2021</b>	<b>Thursday 22 July 2021</b>	<b>Friday 23 July 2021</b>
13:30–15:00	Pandemics, Ancient and Modern (1)  Prof. Ewa Atanassow	Pandemics, Ancient and Modern (2)  Prof. Ewa Atanassow	Derogations and Emergency (1)  Prof. Jana Lozoska	Derogations and Emergency (2)  Prof. Jana Lozoska	Crisis Reloaded: Urban Alterities from Europe to the Middle East and Back (2)  Prof. Daniel Monerescu
15:30–17:00	Expertise and Life: Two Liberal Democratic Prejudices (1)  Prof. Roger Berkowitz	Expertise and Life: Two Liberal Democratic Prejudices (2)  Prof. Roger Berkowitz	Beyond Emergency: Preparedness, Solidarity and Providence (1)  Prof. Shai Lavi	Beyond Emergency: Preparedness, Solidarity and Providence (2)  Prof. Shai Lavi	Crisis Reloaded: Urban Alterities from Europe to the Middle East and Back (2)  Prof. Daniel Monerescu