



University of California
Center for New Racial Studies
A MULTI-CAMPUS RESEARCH PROGRAM

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Spring 2014 Colloquium Series

The UCSB Center for New Racial Studies is sponsoring an informal series of talks to facilitate productive scholarly relationships between UCSB faculty, policymakers, community members, and students interested in research and teaching on race and ethnicity. The series features scholarship from an array of methodological and epistemological traditions to provide a diverse perspective and encourage lively discussions, as well as interdisciplinary and collaborative work. We hope that you will join us to learn more about this scholarship.



Monday, April 14th, 4pm-5pm
Thormahlen Seminar Room
North Hall 2111

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Vanquishing the ‘Specters of Colonialism’: Indigenous Studies approaches, 1860s Visual Culture, and early U.S./Japan relations

Academic interests in Indigeneity and transnationalism are on the rise, but theoretical apparatuses for addressing the complexities that arise when these topics are considered in concert have been slow to emerge. To introduce a framework that I term “specters of colonialism”—that calls into question the haunted logics of empire that influence *how* and *if* Indigenous subjects are engaged with—I will analyze a widely circulated political cartoon titled “Our Visitors,” published by *Harper’s Weekly* in 1860. “Our Visitors” portrays a kimono clad man extending a candle labeled “Japan” towards the lamp on Uncle Sam’s predecessor Brother Jonathan’s table—a lamp, labeled ‘civilization.’ I read this image as simultaneously documenting history and anticipating transnational exchange between the U.S. and Japan, all while visually erasing the very real and imagined roles that Indigenous peoples played in these histories. “Our Visitors” actively renders Indigenous dispossession—central to the settler colonialism and nation-building projects that both the U.S. and Japan were engaging in at the time—invisible. That Indigenous dispossession remains nearly invisible, or is simply used as a touchstone, rather than a specific lens of analysis, in large swaths of contemporary scholarship, is a 21st century academic challenge. For unlike the hauntings more familiar to post-colonial and cultural studies critiques that serve to recover silenced histories, the ‘specters of colonialism’ work to encourage, and are invested in maintaining, this historical blindness. I argue that the ‘specters of colonialism’ that are present in the logics of empire, embedded in archives, reinforced in educational systems, and present in the cyclically reproduced and consumed “haunted” knowledge about Indigenous peoples, must be vanquished if we are to successfully examine the multi-dimensional ways that Indigeneity, transnationalism, and Ethnic Studies can overlap, entwine and inform one another into the future.