



Teaching Palestine: Pedagogical Praxis and the Indivisibility of Justice

An International Conference

Call for Proposals

Date: March 12-30, 2018

Deadline: November 15, 2017

Organized by: Arab and Muslim Ethnicities and Diasporas Studies
San Francisco State University
USA

Ibrahim Abu Lughod Institute for International Studies,
Birzeit University
Palestine

Institute of Women Studies
Birzeit University
Palestine

& other Palestinian & International academic and research institutions

Concept/CfP:

Initiated by the Arab and Muslim Ethnicities and Diasporas Studies (SFSU) and co-sponsored by the Ibrahim Abu Lughod Institute for International Studies and the Institute for Women's Studies at Birzeit University and a host of Palestinian and international universities and research institutions. *Teaching Palestine: Pedagogical Praxis and the Indivisibility of Justice* international conference will be convened in Palestine between March 12 and 30, 2018.

This academic year, 2017-2018, coincides with significant anniversaries in Palestinian history: the 50th anniversary of the 1967 Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, Sinai and the Golan Heights (June 5, 2017); the 35th anniversary of the Israeli invasion of the Lebanon and the Sabra and Shatila Massacre (September 17, 2017); the 100th anniversary of the

Balfour Declaration (November 2, 1917); and the 70th of the UN Partition of Palestine (November 29, 1947), Deir Yassin Massacre (April 9, 1948) and the Nakba (May 15, 1948).

The current political and historical moment is particularly significant. Israeli colonialism, racism and occupation is deepening and entrenching. By contrast, Palestinian resistance to the Zionist project is appropriately taking multiple/different shapes and forms in all the geographies of dispossession, displacement and precarious existence. Shaping Palestinian politics is a regional and international context that is characterized by deepening poverty, civil wars, imperialist interventions, unrestrained neoliberal economic policies, hostile alliances, and the recolonization of previously decolonized nations. Rooted in xenophobic, Orientalist, Zionist, and other supremacist Ideologies, the consolidation of global and regional alliances under the guise of the so-called “war on terror” has fueled an alarming rise in Islamophobic and anti-Arab racism as well as an escalation in targeting marginalized communities.

These political, social, economic and socio-cultural dynamics shape the learning environment within and outside the classroom and extends beyond campus grounds. The rise of the neoliberal corporate university has shrunk the emancipatory spaces expanded by the radical movements of the 1960s and 1970s in both the Global North and South, including anti-colonial national liberation movements. Epistemological and pedagogical transformations were particularly significant in challenging Eurocentric and colonial education as well as claiming community control over the curriculum. This was noticeable in the United States particularly in Oceanhill-Brownsville and at San Francisco State University where the 1968 Student Strike demanded a college for 3rd world studies. The 1968 SFSU student strike went beyond the free speech movement to produce a radical transformation of the curriculum. It also opened spaces for initiating and building the Arab and Muslim Ethnicities and Diasporas Studies as a pedagogical, scholarly and communal site that challenges colonial, Islamophobic, Orientalist and Zionist hegemonic knowledge on Arab and Muslim communities, in general, and Palestine, in particular.

The emergence of Palestinian autonomous universities, their accreditation, and standards of excellence and innovation has been part and parcel of the Palestinian anti-colonial struggle and liberation movement that impacted Palestinian education under Israeli colonial rule in both the '48 and the '67 areas as well in refugee camps and the Palestinian exilic Diasporas. Palestinian struggle for decolonizing the curriculum for future generations resonates with similar struggles elsewhere, such as the South African uprising against Bantu Education in 1976, the rejection by the American Indian Movement of Boarding schools in North America, and the insistence on resisting the “English Only” instruction in Puerto Rico and other colonized sites in the Western Hemisphere. Black Studies

Decolonizing the curriculum was effected by and contributed to the emergence of social movements that were in turn harshly suppressed by state apparatus. Examples are abound from Latin America to the Philippines, Indonesia to Mexico, and Central and South-West Asia to North Africa and Southern Africa. Palestine was not an exception. Throughout Palestinian history, Israel has targeted and harshly suppressed campus activism as well as the infrastructure of Palestinian education. For example, during the 2002 reinvasion, Israel destroyed several schools and educational institutions, including the buildings of the Palestinian ministries of Education and Higher education. During the 1987 Intifada, Israel closed Palestinian universities and schools for several years and proceeded to ban popular clandestine education and punish educators and

parents who violated this ban. Not a single commencement at any of the Palestinian universities has ever enjoyed a full graduating class.

Targeting Palestinian education has been a strategic goal of the Israeli state and its research and academic institutions. *Teaching Palestine* --its history, geography, colonization, generations, and resistance--as an emancipatory pedagogical and advocacy project outside of Palestine has also been targeted. At San Francisco State University and elsewhere in the academy, educators of Palestine and advocates for justice in/for Palestine have been subjected to relentless campaigns that seek to silence, intimidate and bully teachers and students who study, research and engage in the praxis of Palestine. Aimed at creating a chilling effect of new McCarthyism, these campaigns are launched by a well-funded and politically connected Israel lobby network intent on stemming the expanding tide of support for justice in/for Palestine on US college campuses. These attacks are not divorced from similar campaigns in the US academy that target dissenting and critical voices of neoliberalism and the rise of Trump and his Alt-right administration.

Targeting Palestinian education has also been increasingly evident in pressures applied by U.S. and other international donor agencies, such as the World Bank, to impose revisions in Palestinian curriculum in return for funding Palestinian Authority institutions. The goal is to reverse the anti-colonial grounding of Palestinian education that accompanied the rise of the Palestinian liberation movement. Similarly, in its attempts to re-write history, the U.S. white supremacist industry has intensified its campaign to reinstate the pre-1960s Eurocentric and colonial education to normalize as “neutral” genocide, slavery, racism, exclusion and exploitation. In both cases (and many others) the goal is to erase resistance legacies, de-educate future generations and produce docile citizenry that does not question the unjust status quo.

Teaching Palestine will therefore bring together participants who will historicize and contextualize the praxis of Palestine in its multiple manifestations and nuanced dialectics. It will provide a much needed space to think through how to move between the inside of the classroom and the outside of campus, and above all hold ourselves accountable to a complex, nuanced and exciting intellectual line of inquiry. Building on multi-site conversations inside and outside the academy, scholars, advocates and activists will weave theory and praxis in pedagogical, intellectual and community imaginaries, teaching about justice-centered knowledge production on Palestine.

To insure reciprocity in intellectual/community exchange and deepen the sense of solidarities, *Teaching Palestine* conference participants will spend 1-2 days at each of the sites of the sponsoring universities in a formal conference setting *and* informal interaction with communities on and off campus (villages, refugee camps and town as well as faculty, students and staff). In the process, conference participants will visit geographies of Palestinian anti-colonial indigenous resistance.

We invite international participation that is historically contextualized and currently relevant to discuss justice-centered knowledge production in ways that intentionally invoke and take into account opportunities and limitations of comparative analysis. We particularly seek participants from the global North and South with the understanding that the North exists in the South and vice-verse to challenge the boundaries of what teaching and learning mean, in settings including but not limited to scholarly associations, university classrooms, other classrooms, prisons, formal

and informal union/labor settings, social movement and activist contexts, and informal and formal teaching and learning spaces.

Please submit a **300 word** abstract of individual presentations or **500 word proposals (along with individual abstracts)** of pre-organized panels, roundtables, workshops or other creative format by **November 15, 2017**. **Bios of 250** words of all participants are required by the time of submission.

For more information please email conference co-organizers:

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