

Monday, 18.12.2023; 4:15 - 6:00 pm CET

Sandro Mezzadra, University of Bologna, Italy

Postcolonial configurations of capital and labor. Thinking with W.E.B. Du Bois and F. Fanon

Abstract:

The talk will start by discussing the notion of “postcolonial capitalism,” which has been the center of lively debates in recent years. The main question addressed will be the possibility to discern a global standard in the development of capitalism as well as its political implications. The relation between capital and “difference” will be critically discussed with reference to the work of such important scholars as Lisa Lowe, David Roediger and Dipesh Chakrabarty. Building on this theoretical discussion, the talk will introduce the work of W.E.B. Du Bois and F. Fanon, delving into the ways in which they grappled with the relation between colonialism, race, and capitalism. Their contribution, and more generally the contribution of the “black radical tradition” to the understanding of the so-called primitive accumulation of capital will be discussed with a focus on the displacement of its spatial coordinates. Both the operations of capital and the composition of living labor appear to be characterized by a wide array of differences that translate into the establishment of hierarchies that traverse the social fabric writ large. One of the main questions asked at the end of the talk will regard the many ways in which the racial and colonial configurations of capital and labor described by Du Bois and Fanon, strike back today in former metropolitan centers.

Bio:

Sandro Mezzadra is Professor of Political theory at the University of Bologna (Department of Arts) and is adjunct fellow at the Institute for Culture and Society of the Western Sydney University. He has been visiting professor and research fellow in several places. In 2024 he will hold the International Chair of Contemporary Philosophy at the University of Paris 8. His recent work has centered on the relations between globalization, migration and capitalism, on contemporary capitalism as well as on postcolonial criticism. He participates in the ‘post-workerist’ debates being one of the founders of the website www.euronomade.info. Among his books: *Diritto di fuga. Migrazioni, cittadinanza, globalizzazione* (2006), *La condizione postcoloniale. Storia e politica nel presente globale* (2008), *Nei cantieri marxiani. Il soggetto e la sua produzione* (2014; English edition *In the Marxian Workshops*, 2018) and *Un mondo da guadagnare. Per una teoria politica del presente* (2020). With Brett Neilson he is the author of *Border as Method, or, the Multiplication of Labor* (Duke University Press, 2013), *The Politics of Operations. Excavating Contemporary Capitalism* (Duke University Press, 2019), and *The Rest and the West. Capital and Power in a Multipolar World* (forthcoming from Verso, 2024).