

DIPESH CHAKRABARTY

is the Lawrence A. Kimpton Distinguished Service Professor of History and South Asian Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago, a founding member of the *Subaltern Studies Collective*, and a founding editor of *Postcolonial Studies*.

Connecting postcolonial and planetary perspectives, his work has transformed the way we make sense of our present. His books illuminate how so-called global modernity emerged through entanglements of empire, labor, and ecological processes. By bringing in insights and experiences of the Global South, he reveals that the Eurocentric narrative of progress and emancipation never described a self-contained process.

Recently, Chakrabarty has argued that humanity, differentiated by culture and global power relations, has profoundly impacted planetary conditions. Drawing on Earth system science, he decenters the role of human agency and invites us to rethink politics, responsibility, and freedom from beyond the human vantage point. For Chakrabarty, planetary awareness reveals the limits of the nation-state and the ambivalent role of modern technology. He is the acclaimed author of *Provincializing Europe* (2000), *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age* (2021), and *One Planet, Many Worlds* (2023).

THE CENTRE FOR SOCIAL CRITIQUE BERLIN

was founded in 2018 as the Humanities and Social Change Center at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin and was renamed as the Centre for Social Critique in 2022. Research at the Centre focuses on the crises of democracy and capitalism, spanning from diagnostic analysis to conceptual groundwork.

Each year, the Walter Benjamin Lectures bring a leading critical theorist to Berlin, allowing a broad audience to participate in current debates on social and political issues. The lecture series is named after the Berlin-born philosopher Walter Benjamin and dedicated to his intellectual integrity and political commitment in the face of historical catastrophe.

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WALTER-BENJAMIN-LECTURES

DIPESH CHAKRABARTY

A SECOND DECLINE OF THE WEST?

>> DEUTSCHE
ÜBERSETZUNG

JUNE 23-25TH
2026
6-8 PM

3
LECTURES

A SECOND DECLINE OF THE WEST?

The rise of authoritarian tendencies and xenophobic cultures in the democracies of the world, the transformation of China into a technological and economic powerhouse, and global forms of terrorism are often seen as successive tipping points in a long-term narrative – available in a variety of forms since at least Oswald Spengler’s magisterial formulation of it – of the “decline” of the West. When we add to these factors the uncertainties associated with various environmental problems of a planetary scale, unprecedented developments in technology, and demographic prospects of humanity, the acceleration of modernization seems at last to be at odds with the values of modernity. The metaphor of decline of one civilization that yields place to another seems all too inadequate to capture the sense of crisis that seems not to be a matter of one civilization alone.

This series of lectures explores the meaning of the multiple challenges faced by humanity by revisiting the project of provincializing Europe that I once essayed twenty-five years ago. Would the renewal of the aspiration to emancipatory human futures that was once a flawed, contested, but universal legacy of Europe’s colonization of other peoples’ lives and lands, now require us to provincialize America or even humanity itself?

THE BETWEEN AND BETWIXT NATURE OF OUR TIMES

Our times are full of forebodings and questions of decline reminiscent of Spenglerian tropes. One is reminded of thinkers of the 20th century who theorized their times as suspended between the “no longer” and the “not yet.” I will focus on the nature of our present, between a declining sense of the global, that *no longer* seems adequate; and an incipient planetary awareness that is *not yet* available.

GLOBALIZATION AND THE POLITICS OF PROVINCIALIZING EUROPE

Provincializing Europe was a response to Globalization. The idea of a shared and emancipatory future was one of the strongest global legacies of imperial Europe. At the same time, the global world was built on the backs of indigenous and enslaved peoples who were rendered homeless by the expansion of Europe. Can one feel emancipated in a state of homelessness? How are loss and liberty related?

INDIGENEITY AS PLANETARITY: PROVINCIALIZING AMERICA?

The planetary climate crisis renders the Indigenous condition universal. I will develop a critique of an “engineering” approach to global warming and discuss why and how this is a “provincial” response by the world’s privileged. Would “provincializing America” be in principle a different project today from what provincializing Europe meant when becoming global was our only concern?

JUNE 23, 6 PM:

The Between and Betwixt Nature of Our Times

JUNE 24, 6 PM:

Globalization and the Politics of Provincializing Europe

JUNE 25, 6 PM:

Indigeneity as Planetary: Provincializing America?

MIT DEUTSCHER ÜBERSETZUNG

Admission is free. No registration required. Recordings will be published on criticaltheoryinberlin.de

Guest at

 Haus der Kulturen der Welt

LOCATION

Haus der Kulturen der Welt
Miriam Makeba Auditorium
John-Foster-Dulles-Allee 10
10555 Berlin

