



YAN P. LIN CENTRE FOR THE  
STUDY OF FREEDOM AND GLOBAL ORDERS  
IN THE ANCIENT AND MODERN WORLDS

SPEAKER SERIES OF  
THE RESEARCH GROUP ON GLOBAL JUSTICE

# WORLDLINESS & POLITICS: On Edward Said and Global Justice

November 4, 2016, 2-4PM  
Arts Building, Room 160  
McGill University

## SPEAKER

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## ABSTRACT

Contemporary scholars of global justice, international ethics, and human rights often respond to political crises in an instrumental fashion by searching for quick solutions to imminent problems through reference to either ideal moral theories of justice or international norms. This impulse, I argue, evacuates contemporary global politics of its immediate and remote historical context. Hidden from view behind universalizing narratives and international institutions are the imperial legacies of dispossession, extraction, and racial hierarchy that helped shape the current moment. This paper turns to the work of the late Edward Said as a methodological antidote to this form of ethical presentism. Drawing particularly from Said's call for 'worldliness,' the paper explores how Said's concern for those denied the 'permission to narrate' coupled with his fine grained attention to language in context enabled him to develop contrapuntal readings of history that insistently dragged empire and exclusion back into our accounts of the present. The paper concludes by thinking more extensively about what a Saidian influenced, worldly disposition to global justice might look like.

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