Decolonize Newark Now!
Regenerating futures | Reckoning toxic pasts

Fall 2023 – Th 2:30-5:20 pm — Jack Tchen + friends

*Decolonization is not a metaphor* writes Eve Tuck (Unangał) and Wayne Yang. It is unsettling the entangled histories we commonly reference as the founding of a colonial place, such as Newark. It is not simply acknowledging our historical pluralism, inclusive
of Indigenous and descendants of enslaved peoples. That’s historically simplistic and violently, systemically rationalized by the delusions of wealth and power.

This semester will focus on the natural and archaeological “artifacts” found excavating the land of the HLLC building site, just opened in Fall 2022. Far more than a real estate “property” these unearthed fragments speak to us of past lives and ecologies. And without understanding and context, the Puritan culture from which they emerged “bewitch” our present.

This research seminar challenges us to dig underneath and around, to research, to learn from and to reorganize, and to hack the hidden assumptions and practices of “business as usual.” In order to decarbonize and truly grapple with global warming, we need to decolonize what we do in the present. In the spirit of what American pragmatists John Dewey and Jane Addams advocated as “learning by doing,” we are relearning by redoing.

What are the deep colonial patterns we obliviously repeat, without conscious awareness? We need to get out of the classroom, getting to know “all our relations” surviving in the hidden and ignored living worlds of Newark, Greater Newark, and beyond still with us in the subaltern present. We will research our enspirited, regenerative bioregion before it was “discovered” and occupied by European settler colonists.

Ultimately decolonization is about The Land and a whole ecosystem of power, wealth building, and knowledge advancement—all premised on the imperial and spiritual domination, control, mastery, classification, and commodification.

Our future depends on breaking up and breaking away from anthropocentric dominion, that human-centric political culture lording over all wetlands, “weeds,” plants, bugs, fish, biomes, and humans deemed dangerous, invasive,

Jack.Tchen@rutgers.edu