Hawai‘i and Palestine: The Politics of Occupation in Settler Colonialism

Monday March 8th, 2021 3:30pm-5:00pm (PST)

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This talk is based on a chapter for a new book in-progress, “Indigenous Implications: U.S. Settler Colonialism and Palestine Solidarity Politics,” which explores the ethics of challenging one settler colonial state – Israel – while being located in another, the United States. U.S.-based Palestine solidarity activists often assert that Israel is engaged in “the longest occupation in modern history.” Yet, the U.S. has occupied Hawai‘i (along with several island colonies) for over a century. The occupations in both contexts are arguably part of broader settler colonial projects, and it is at this structural level that Hawai‘i has profound commonalities with Palestine. The implications of the settler colonial frame, then, necessitates challenging political discourses of exceptionalism regarding the Israel-Palestine case. It also prompts a set of questions regarding indigeneity and the attendant problematics regarding statist “solutions.”

J. Kēhaulani Kauanui is Professor of American Studies and Anthropology at Wesleyan University, where she teaches courses on Indigenous studies, critical race studies, settler colonial studies, and anarchist studies. She is the author of Hawaiian Blood: Colonialism and the Politics of Sovereignty and Indigeneity (Duke University Press 2008) and Paradoxes of Hawaiian Sovereignty: Land, Sex, and the Colonial Politics of State Nationalism (Duke University Press 2018). She is also the editor of Speaking of Indigenous Politics: Conversations with Activists, Scholars, and Tribal Leaders (University of Minnesota Press 2018), which emerged from a radio program she produced and hosted for seven years, “Indigenous Politics: From Native New England and Beyond” that was widely syndicated across the Pacific. Kauanui currently serves as a co-producer for an anarchist, majority-POC politics show called, “Anarchy on Air,” which builds on her earlier work on another collaborative anarchist program called “Horizontal Power Hour.” Kauanui is also a co-founder of the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association (NAISA).