

Timothy Mitchell

Short Bio

Timothy Mitchell writes about colonialism, political economy, the politics of energy, and the making of expert knowledge. Trained in the fields of law, history, and political theory, he works across the disciplinary boundaries of history and the social sciences. Many of his writings explore materials from the history and contemporary politics of Egypt, where he has conducted research over many years.

In 2026, he published a new book on capitalism, colonialism, and our relationship to the future, examining how we came to organise collective life on the principle of its impoverishment. We live in an age in which extraordinary wealth seems to arrive from unfathomable sources, as when tech firms that have never made a profit are valued at billions of dollars. While seeming extraordinary, this mode of acquiring unearned wealth, the book argues, is commonplace. It is a key to understanding how capitalism came into being and a clue to grasping why the catastrophe of climate collapse has come upon us. Published by Verso Press, the book is titled [*The Alibi of Capital: How We Broke the Earth to Steal the Future on the Promise of a Better Tomorrow.*](#)

Like his earlier works, including [*Colonising Egypt*](#), [*Rule of Experts*](#), and [*Carbon Democracy*](#), the book combines the study of the built world, technical devices, ecological processes, and the history of economic and political concepts.

Mitchell is the William B. Ransford Professor of Middle Eastern Studies at Columbia University. His is based in the Department of Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies, for which he served as chair from 2011 until 2017, and again from 2026.