

Humanities Seminar, Fall 2022

Challenges of Power and the Self: Visual Arts and Literature

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Description:

The course will use visual art and literature to consider how ideas of the "self" and the "other" are reformulated during decolonization, the cold war, and the world order that followed. Using the breakdown of the British Empire and the consolidation of American reach from World War II onward, the course will examine gender, race, identity, colonization, postcoloniality, and sexuality in/as representation and narrative. This course will examine the text and image as separate, parallel, and yet conjoined and overlapping threads of cultural production. How does literature and art create and reflect the image, the moment, the individual or history? How is art narrative and how does the novel or the poem evoke an image, a scene, or a sequence of events?

Assignments and Class Events:

- Curatorial project with statement and wall text. 500 words, 200 words, wall texts 5 objects. Combine 2 of 3 media (novel, film, art) 1500 words total, divided. Needs a meeting with prepared draft statement. [group of three]
- Film Review 3 page
- Text Essay 3-5 pages
- Perusal Texts
- Reflection Text 3-5 pages
- Critical Conversations on Campus
- Guest Lectures
- Field Visit to the Institute of Contemporary Art and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston

Texts, Art, and Themes

Colony and its Demise

1. *Heart of Darkness* (Conrad, 1899) 19th Century Colonialism, Africa, Polish-British Writing in English
 - Edward Said, "Two Visions in Heart of Darkness," *Culture and Imperialism*, 1993.
2. *The Skeleton* (Pinjar) (Amrita Pritam, 1950) Decolonization, India, Partition, Women's Narratives, Translation
 - Rao M. "Pinjar and Khamosh pani: The Bitter Harvest of Untold Stories." *South Asian Cinema*. 2004;5-6:114-122. Accessed March 28, 2022.
<https://search.ebscohost.com>

Art and Events:

- Rasheed Araeen, *The Other Story: Afro-Asian Artist in Post-War Britain: A history of artists coming from the colonized nations to London and redefining British Art*.
- Signals Gallery. A center for international artistic dialog that serves in many ways as a chapter two to Araeen's other story.
- Festac 77. The Festival of African Culture. An international arts and culture held in Lagos, Nigeria that set the model for expressing variety and power of non-aligned

- nations (countries asserting identities apart from the Cold War options of US or Soviet blocs)
- The Third Bial de la Habana – a reinvention of the non-aligned soft power held in Cuba in 1989

Texts to Accompany discussion of art and events:

- Rasheed Araeen, “Introduction: when chickens come home to roost,” in Araeen, *The Other Story* (1989).
- President Leopold S. Senghor “Black Culture,” Introduction to Festac77 exhibition catalog, (1977).
- Gerardo Mosquera, “The Third Bial de la Habana in its Global and Local Contexts,” (2011).
- Signals Newsbulletin. Facsimile of the newspaper put out by the gallery between 1964-66. (selections).

After Empire

1. *Buddha of Suburbia* (Hanif Kureishi, 1990) Immigration, the aftermath of colonialism in England, Sexuality
 - Güreñci Sağlam B. “Rocking London: Youth Culture as Commodity in The Buddha of Suburbia.” *The Journal of Popular Culture*. 2014;47(3):554-570. doi:10.1111/jpcu.12145
2. *My beautiful Launderette* (Stephen Frears, 1985), Queer Sexuality, Race, Immigration, Islam in England
 - Nguyen V. “Queer Intimacy and the Impasse: Reconsidering My Beautiful Launderette.” *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*. 2017;48(2):155-166. doi:10.1353/ari.2017.0018
3. *Lipstick Traces* (Griel Marcus, 1989) Chapter One. The birth of Punk rock, working class angst, immigration, Xenophobia

Art and Events:

- *Sensation: Young British Artists from the Satchi Collection: A spectacle of an exhibition that created a stage for a generation of British artists (YBAs) representing diverse UK identities. The show also made a stir when it travelled to the US raising complex issues of patronage, obscenity, censorship, religion, gender and race.*
- Phil Collins, *The World Won't Listen* (2004-2007): A four-channel video installation by British artist of the YBA generation featuring karaoke performances by fans of the 1980s British band, The Smiths in Bogata, Istanbul, Bandung, and Jakarta demonstrating the power of cultural artifacts across geography, nationality and time.
- *Vagabondia* (2000): A two-channel video installation visualizing the relation of Black British subjects within the past and present of European colonizing and resistance from within the John Soane Museum, a monument to the accumulation of the British Empire.

Texts to Accompany discussion of art and events:

- Stuart Hall, “Creolite and the Process of Creolization,” (2003).
- Isaac Julien, “Creolizing Vision,” (2003).

- Andrea Fraser, “A ‘Sensation’ Chronicle,” (2001).

American Empire

1. *Dog eaters* (Jessica Hagedorn, 1990) Philippines, American occupation, Biracial Children, sexuality
 - Sohn SH. “From Discos to Jungles: Circuitous Queer Patronage and Sex Tourism in Jessica Hagedorn’s *Dog eaters*.” *MFS: Modern Fiction Studies*. 2010;56(2):317-348. doi:10.1353/mfs.0.1694
2. *Apocalypse Now* (Coppola, 1979)
 - Fehlhaber, S. (2013). “The Anti-Experience as Cultural Memory: Francis Ford Coppola’s *Apocalypse Now* and the Vietnam War.” *As/Peers: Emerging Voices in American Studies*, 6, 55–78.
 - Maslowski, M. (2007). “The Evil of Modernity: Joseph Conrad’s Heart of Darkness and Francis Ford Coppola’s *Apocalypse Now*.” *Yearbook of Conrad Studies*, 3, 195–21

Art and Events:

- Selections of work by David Medalla and Manual Ocampo. Medalla a founder of Signals is a quintessential global artist; Ocampo started his career in 1990s Los Angeles. Each offers visions from outside the Philippines of Filipino identity and history.
- Maya Lin’s Vietnam War Memorial and related reckonings with the war by US and Vietnamese artists working in sculpture, video, and painting including Jun Nguyen-Hatsushiba, Tiffany Chung, Thao Nguyen Phan, Matthew Brandon.
- Omar Fast *5000 Feet is the Best* (2011) a video that emulates documentary and narrative filmmaking to address the consequences of drone warfare and the interaction between US military power and the Middle East.
- Harun Farocki’s *Serious Games III: Immersion* (2009) part of a series of found footage videos addressing the digitization of military training and the consequent impact on the mental health and imagination of the US forces and the limits of empathy.

Texts to Accompany discussion of art and events:

- Drake Stutesman, “Interview with Jun Nguyen-Hatsushiba,” (2006).
- Marsha Meskimmon “Reinscribing Histories Vietnam and Representation,” (2003).
- Matthew Brannon, “Concerning Viet Nam,” (2019).
- Trinh T Minh-ha “Other than Myself, My Other Self,” (1994).

Immigration and the Undoing of Empire

1. *The In-Between World of Vikram Lal* (VG Vassanji, 2003) Mau Mau Rebellion, Kenya, Colonialism, Immigration
 - Orao J. “Nationalism, Subversive History and Citizenship: The Quest for Identity in the Postcolonial Nation in M. G. Vassanji’s *The In-Between World of Vikram Lal*.” *Anuari de Filologia: Literatures Contemporànies*. 2020;10:69-86. doi:10.1344/AFLC2020.10.4

2. *Persepolis* (Graphic Novel, Marjane Satrapi, 2003) Iran-Iraq War, France, Immigration, American engagement
 - Ostby M. “Graphics and Global Dissent: Marjane Satrapi’s *Persepolis*, Persian Miniatures, and the Multifaceted Power of Comic Protest.” *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*. 2017;132(3):558.
doi:10.1632/pmla.2017.132.3.558
3. *Homeland Elegies* (Ayad Akhtar, 2020) Trump years, Immigration, Being Muslim in the US after 9/11
4. *Namesake* (Mira Nair, 2006) Based on Jhumpa Lahiri’s novel
5. *Minari* (Lee Isaac Chung, 2020)

Art and events

- Installations by Bodys Isek Kingelez, Yinka Shonibare, and Kiluanji Kia Henda artists from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola, and Nigeria respectively whose work provides a jumping off point from different decades and places to discuss Afropolitianism and African identity and history in the late 20th and 21st centuries.
- The work of Belgian and Congolese collaborative On-Trade-Off: multi-media work dealing with extractivism and relations between former colonized and colonizing nations.
- Contemporary Iranian Art – Book talk by Talinn Grigor UC Davis (former Brandeis University Architectural History Professor)
- *Extraordinary Realities* (2020) and *Make Me a Summary of the World* (2018): Exhibitions by South Asian artists Shahzia Sikander and Rina Banerjee which engage questions of migration, immigration, and aesthetics through the lens of excess, virtuosity, craft, and accumulation.

Texts to Accompany discussion of art and events:

- Salah Hassan, “Contemporary African Art as a Paradox: Is ‘Afropolitan’ the Answer,” (2020).
- Lotte Arndt and Oulimata Gueye, “On-Trade-Off: Countering Extractivism by Transnational Artist’s Collaboration” (2020).
- Talinn Grigor, *Contemporary Iranian Art* (2014).
- “Chillava Klatch: Shahzia Sikander Interviewed by Homi Bhabha,” in *The Renaissance Society, Shahzia Sikander* (1999).
- Allie Biswas, “Interview with Rina Banerjee,” in *Make me a Summary of the World* (2018).