Humanities Seminar, Fall 2022  
Challenges of Power and the Self: Visual Arts and Literature  
Professors Peter Kalb (Fine Arts) and Harleen Singh (WGS, GRALL, and SAS)

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
- Perusall 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
     [https://search.ebscohost.com](https://search.ebscohost.com)

Art and Events:
- 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 Bienal de la Habana – a reinvention of the non-aligned soft power held in Cuba in 1989

Texts to Accompany discussion of art and events:
- 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


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.
- *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:

**American Empire**


2. *Apocalypse Now* (Coppola, 1979)

**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:**

- Trinh T Minh-ha “Other than Myself, My Other Self,” (1994).

**Immigration and the Undoing of Empire**

     doi:10.1344/AFLC2020.10.4
2. *Persepolis* (Graphic Novel, Marjane Satrapi, 2003) Iran-Iraq War, France, Immigration, American engagement
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 Afropolitanism 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)

Texts to Accompany discussion of art and events: