

2020-21 Events Programming
With Video Recording Links (not all events were recorded)

Wednesday, September 30, 2020

A talk by Amitav Ghosh

"Future or Past? Climate Change as Seen From the Global North and South"

With Amitav Ghosh

Time: 5:00pm - 7:00pm

In the West, no matter whether in economics, science or indeed, fiction, climate change is almost always imagined in relation to the future. In the global South the imagining of climate change is markedly different. This talk will examine some of the differences between the two perspectives.

Amitav Ghosh was born in Calcutta in 1956 and raised and educated in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Iran, Egypt, India, and the United Kingdom, where he received his PhD in social anthropology from Oxford. Acclaimed for fiction, travel writing, and journalism, his books include *The Circle of Reason*, *The Shadow Lines*, *In an Antique Land*, and *Dancing in Cambodia*. Ghosh has won France's Prix Médicis Étranger, India's prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award, the Arthur C. Clarke Award, and the Pushcart Prize. In 2019 *Foreign Policy* magazine named him one of the most important global thinkers of the preceding decade.

This talk is cosponsored by the Institute for Religion, Culture and Public Life and the South Asia Institute. It is part of the project "Rethinking Public Religion in Africa and South Asia," funded by the Henry Luce Foundation.

Friday, October 9, 2020

ICLS Understanding Systemic Racism Series

"Race, the Human, and Humanity in These Times"

**Featuring Étienne Balibar, Columbia University,
and Nahum Chandler, University of California, Irvine**

Moderated by Anupama Rao, ICLS Associate Director

Time: 10:00am - 12:00pm

Organized by Prof. Lydia H. Liu, Director of ICLS
and Prof. Anupama Rao, Associate Director of ICLS

Sponsored by the Institute for Comparative Literature and Society
and The Ambedkar Initiative at ICLS

YouTube recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9IX0k58jmLM>

About the Series: The Institute for Comparative Literature and Society is committed to the goal of social justice through education and critical scholarship. To address the urgent need to combat racism in our times, we introduce a new 2020-2021 conversation/lecture series called "Understanding Systemic Racism" to reflect on the roots of racial discrimination, class oppression, colonial injustice, and other institutionalized oppression and sanction for violence against Black people and peoples of color. We stress the importance of opening the U.S. centered conversations surrounding race and identity toward a broad and comparative reckoning with racism and its violent histories around the world. This exciting webinar series is programmed in conjunction with our Ambedkar Initiative that links Columbia University with the anti-caste legacy of B. R. Ambedkar to reflect on his continued relevance to discussions about social justice, affirmative action, and democratic thinking in a global frame.

Friday, October 23

Mailman School of Public Health

The Yusuf Hamied Distinguished Lecture

by Gita Sen, PhD (Public Health Foundation of India)

“Is Inequality Toxic for Public Health Agendas?”

Time: 10:00am - 11:30am

YouTube recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cDQs4c9irRU>

Gita Sen is a Distinguished Professor and Director at the Ramalingaswami Centre on Equity and Social Determinants of Health, at the Public Health Foundation of India. She is Adjunct Professor of Global Health and Population at the Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health. Prof. Sen received her M.A. in Economics from the Delhi School of Economics and her Ph.D. from Stanford University. Dr. Sen was the first chairperson of the World Bank's External Gender Consultative Group and was a member on the Millennium Project's Taskforce on Gender Equality. She has worked with the United Nations, including as the lead consultant for the United Nations Population Fund's 2003-2007 India Population Assessment. She serves on the Scientific and Technical Advisory group for the World Health Organization's Department of Reproductive Health and Research. Her publications include *Development Crises and Alternative Visions: Third World Women's Perspectives* (with Caren Grown, 2013); *Gender Equity in Health: the Shifting Frontiers of Evidence and Action* (2010 *Women's Empowerment and Demographic Processes – Moving Beyond Cairo* (2000); and *Population Policies Reconsidered: Health, Empowerment and Rights* (1994).

Friday, October 23, 2020

ICLS Understanding Systemic Racism Series

"Urban Democracy: Caste and the City"

Featuring Suryakant Waghmore (Indian Institute of Technology Bombay)

Moderated by Anupama Rao, ICLS Associate Director

Time: 10:00am - 11:30am

Organized by Prof. Lydia H. Liu, Director of ICLS
and Prof. Anupama Rao, Associate Director of ICLS

Sponsored by the Institute for Comparative Literature and Society
and The Ambedkar Initiative at ICLS

YouTube recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z-MEc6-cXdM>

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Friday, October 30, 2020 at

A lecture by Pamila Gupta (University of the Witwatersrand)

“Of Sky, Water and Skin: Photographs from a Zanzibari Darkroom”

Time: 12:00pm - 1:30pm

To view YouTube recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w7WMORckF5c&t=16s>

Abstract: For this paper, Gupta proposes to take up the concept and physical space of a photographic ‘darkroom’ located in Stone Town, Zanzibar to explore a set of images from the Capital Art Studio (1930-present) collection produced by Ranchhod Oza (1907-1993), and inherited by his son Rohit Oza (1950-). She employs a concept of darkness to read this visual archive differently and propose multiple ‘other lives’ for a set of images. First, by bringing this African photography collection to light, she is taking it out of the ‘dark rooms’ of history in one sense (Hayes 2017) and exposing it for interpretation. Second, she focuses her lens on the Oza physical darkroom located in the back of the studio on Kenyatta Road in Stone Town, where photographs of a range of Zanzibari persons were both developed and printed and that open up the darkroom as a place of photographic complexity and sensorium, and not just mechanical reproduction (Jansen 2018). Third, Gupta develops darkness as a form of beauty in certain images of sky, water and skin from this archive that showcase Zanzibar’s position as an Indian Ocean island and port city whilst under rule by the Omani Sultanate (1698-1964) and British Protectorate (1890-1963). Fourth, she conceptualizes the Zanzibar Revolution of 1964 as a time of visual darkness, which temporarily restricted photographic practices operating in Stone Town under the new Afro-Shirazi political party. Throughout her analysis, Gupta uses a framing of ‘darkness’ to interrogate photography as an aesthetic practice deeply immersed in materialities and metaphors of dark and light, black and white, and as integral to Zanzibar’s oceanic islandness.

This lecture is part of the year-long project Oceanic Imaginations, led by Mana Kia and Debashree Mukherjee (MESAAS) and sponsored by the Institute for Religion, Culture and Public Life. Please register at ircpl.columbia.edu/calendar/of-sky-water-and-skin to receive the webinar link.

Friday, November 6, 2020

Understanding Systemic Racism:

"Race, Caste, and Democracy" with

Nico Slate (Carnegie Mellon University)

Moderated by Anupama Rao, ICLS Associate Director

Time: 12:00pm - 1:30pm

Organized by Prof. Lydia H. Liu, Director of ICLS
and Prof. Anupama Rao, Associate Director of ICLS

Sponsored by the Institute for Comparative Literature and Society
The Ambedkar Initiative at ICLS

YouTube recording: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U_Rt1i34IUI&t=16s

About the Series: The Institute for Comparative Literature and Society is committed to the goal of social justice through education and critical scholarship. To address the urgent need to combat racism in our times, we introduce a new 2020-2021 conversation/lecture series called “Understanding Systemic Racism” to reflect on the roots of racial discrimination, class oppression, colonial injustice, and other institutionalized oppression and sanction for violence against Black people and peoples of color. We stress the importance of opening the U.S. centered conversations surrounding race and identity toward a

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Friday, November 13

A Panel Discussion with Debashree Mukherjee (MESAAS)

On her new book,

Bombay Hustle: Making Movies in a Colonial City

Discussants:

William Elison (Religious Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara)

Neepa Majumdar (Film and Media Studies, University of Pittsburgh)

Gyan Prakash (History, Princeton)

Time: 10:00am - 12:00pm

To view the event recording online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-86cytPxio8>

William Elison is Associate Professor, Department of Religious Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara. An ethnographer and historian, he works in the areas of South Asian Religions, Religion and Media, and Visual Culture. Much of his work has focused on the problem of mediation of subject positions by visual forms such as sacred icons and popular cinema. His most recent publication is *The Neighborhood of Gods: The Sacred and the Visible at the Margins of Mumbai* (2018), which was part of the *South Asia Across the Disciplines Series*, a joint venture of the university presses at Berkeley, Chicago, and Columbia.

Neepa Majumdar is an Associate Professor of English and Film and Media Studies at the University of Pittsburgh. Her research interests include star studies, film sound, South Asian early cinema, documentary film, and questions of film history and historiography. Her book *Wanted Cultured Ladies Only!: Female Stardom and Cinema in India, 1930s to 1950s* (2009) won an Honorable Mention in the 2010 Best First Book Award of the Society for Cinema and Media Studies. Her essays have appeared in *The Canadian Journal of Film Studies*, *South Asian Popular Culture*, and *Post Script*, and various anthologies on sound in film and film analysis.

Debashree Mukherjee is Assistant Professor, Department of Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies. She is affiliated with Center for Comparative Media; Film & Media Program, School of the Arts; Institute for Research on Women, Gender, & Sexuality (IRWGS). Prof. Mukherjee is a film historian and media theorist working across the fields of production studies, new materialisms, feminist film historiography, postcolonial studies, and South Asian studies. Her new book, *Bombay Hustle: Making Movies in a Colonial City* (Columbia University Press, 2020), presents a practice-oriented history of the consolidation of the Bombay film industry in the 1930s. The book investigates the material relations between cinema's bodies, machines, aesthetics, and environments as they intersect with practices of modernity and freedom in late colonial India.

Gyan Prakash is the Dayton-Stockton Professor of History, Princeton University. His general field of research and teaching interests concerns urban modernity, the colonial genealogies of modernity, and problems of postcolonial thought and politics. Until the dissolution of the Subaltern Studies group in 2008, he was a member of its editorial collective, actively involved in the publication and other intellectual activities of this group of scholars. His most recent publication is *Emergency Chronicles: Indira Gandhi and Democracy's Turning Point* (2019)

Friday, November 13, 2020

Understanding Systemic Racism

The Third Annual Ambedkar Lecture by

Isabel Wilkerson, author of *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*

“Race, Caste and Social Justice”

Time: 6:30pm - 8:00pm

Organized by the Ambedkar Initiative at Columbia University and
Anupama Rao, Associate Director of ICLS

YouTube recording:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oSL_dl4xJh8&list=PLyzYfx7JvzJ6VkebE5FLlv9BuhrZAqW6Z

Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Isabel Wilkerson is the author of the New York Times’ bestseller *The Warmth of Other Suns*. She will be speaking on her latest book *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*.

The Ambedkar Initiative at ICLS is supported by the Office of EVP of Arts and Sciences; Barnard Provost’s Office; Office of the Deans of Humanities and Social Sciences; Institute for Research in African-American Studies; African American and African Diaspora Studies Department; Institute for Religion, Culture and Public Life; Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies Department; Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race; CU Libraries; and CU Press

About the Series: The Institute for Comparative Literature and Society is committed to the goal of social justice through education and critical scholarship. To address the urgent need to combat racism in our times, we introduce a new 2020-2021 conversation/lecture series called “Understanding Systemic Racism” to reflect on the roots of racial discrimination, class oppression, colonial injustice, and other institutionalized oppression and sanction for violence against Black people and peoples of color. We stress the importance of opening the U.S. centered conversations surrounding race and identity toward a broad and comparative reckoning with racism and its violent histories around the world. This exciting webinar series is programmed in conjunction with our Ambedkar Initiative that links Columbia University with the anti-caste legacy of B. R. Ambedkar to reflect on his continued relevance to discussions about social justice, affirmative action, and democratic thinking in a global frame.

Monday, November 23

A talk by Usha Iyer (Stanford)

“Corporealizing Colonial Modernities:

Dancer-Actresses as Choreographers of New Mobilities.”

Time: 10:00am - 12:00pm

To view Event recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cUtuSdX8c3A>

Co-sponsored by the Institute for Research on Women, Gender, and Sexuality.

[Usha Iyer is Assistant Professor, Film and Media Studies, in the Department of Art and Art History, Stanford University.](#) Professor Iyer's research and teaching interests lie at the intersection of cinema, performance, and gender studies with a specific focus on stardom, body cultures, spectatorial desire and engagement, and the political economy of transnational media. Her new book, [Dancing Women: Choreographing Corporeal Histories of Popular Hindi Cinema](#) (Oxford University Press, 2020), examines the role of dance in the construction of female stardom in popular Hindi cinema from the 1930s

to the 1990s, theorizing and historicizing film dance, a staple “attraction” of the popular Indian film form, in relation to the construction of cinematic narratives, star bodies, and spectator-citizens.

Monday, November 30, 2020

**“Public Health, Leadership, and Public Trust in India:
Discussing Pandemics and their Aftermath”**

Speakers:

Rama V. Baru, Professor, Centre of Social Medicine and Community Health, Jawaharlal Nehru University

Siddharth Varadarajan, Founding Editor of The Wire, India

Time: 11:00am - 12:00pm

Moderated by Kavita Sivaramakrishnan, Associate Professor of Sociomedical Sciences; Faculty Director, Yusuf Hamied Fellowships Program, Columbia University

YouTube recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h7xhjUjUo9M>

Event abstract: Across South Asia as the COVID-19 pandemic deepens, it has exposed challenges relating to public trust in pandemic preparedness, containment and questioned the power and limits of expert knowledge. How has the political and public health leadership in India projected pandemic related interventions, and what are the fluid borders between public health facts, lived experiences and media propaganda? The pandemic crisis is also linked to significant historical antecedents over the past decades. The COVID-19 pandemic follows decades of neoliberal policies and health systems reforms in India and across the world, that have had severe implications for affordable access to health services and enlarged the private health sector. How has this shaped access to care and the ethics of accountability during a crisis? How do pandemic politics distract and deploy 'history' and deepen 'other' forms of social stigma and virulent marginalization, and how has the media been critical in these debates? What futures can we see in a post- pandemic world, to rebuild and overcome some of these fractures?

Wednesday, January 27

A talk by Wazmah Osman (Media and Communication, Temple University)

On her new book,

Television and the Afghan Culture Wars:

Brought to You by Foreigners, Warlords, and Activists

Discussant: Manijeh Moradian (Barnard College)

Time: 5:00pm – 6:30pm

Organized by the Institute for Research on Women, Gender, and Sexuality and co-sponsored by the South Asia Institute and the South Asia Journalists Association of the Columbia Journalism School.

Portrayed in Western discourse as tribal and traditional, Afghans have intensely debated women's rights, democracy, modernity, and Islam as part of their nation building in the post-9/11 era. Wazmah Osman places television at the heart of these public and politically charged clashes while revealing how the medium also provides war-weary Afghans with a semblance of open discussion and healing. Fieldwork from across Afghanistan allowed Osman to record the voices of Afghan media producers and people from all sectors of society. Afghans offer their own seldom-heard views on the country's cultural progress and belief systems, their understandings of themselves, and the role of international interventions. Osman looks at the national and transnational impact of media companies like Tolo TV, Radio Television Afghanistan, and foreign media giants and funders like the British Broadcasting Corporation and USAID.

By focusing on local cultural contestations, productions, and social movements, *Television and the Afghan Culture Wars* redirects the global dialogue about Afghanistan to Afghans and thereby challenges top-down narratives of humanitarian development.

Wazhmah Osman is a filmmaker and Assistant Professor in the Klein College of Media and Communication at Temple University. She is a faculty member in the Master of Science in Globalization and Development Communication program and the PhD program in Media and Communication; and is a faculty affiliate of the Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies (GSWS) program, and at the South Asia Center at University of Pennsylvania. Osman earned her PhD in 2012 from New York University, where she studied Media, Culture and Communication, and was a graduate of the Culture and Media program of the Anthropology Department. Her research and teaching are rooted in feminist media ethnographies that focus on the political economy of global media industries and the regimes of representation and visual culture they produce. Her critically acclaimed documentary, *Postcards from Tora Bora*, has been shown in festivals around the world. Her most recent publication, *Television and the Afghan Culture Wars: Brought to You by Foreigners, Warlords, and Activists* was published in November 2020 by the University of Illinois Press. She is the coauthor, with Robert Crews, of the upcoming *Afghanistan: A Very Short Introduction*.

Manijeh Moradian is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Barnard College. She received her PhD in American Studies from NYU and her MFA in creative nonfiction from Hunter College, CUNY. Her book, *This Flame Within: Iranian Revolutionaries in the United States*, is forthcoming from Duke University Press. Her essays and articles have appeared in Routledge Handbook of the Global Sixties, Scholar & Feminist Online, Women's Studies Quarterly, Comparative Studies of South Asian, Africa, and the Middle East, Social Text online, jadaliyya.com, tehranbureau.com, Bi Taarof, and Callaloo. She is a member of the Iran Page editorial board at *Jadaliyya* and a founding member of Raha Iranian Feminist Collective.

Friday, January 29

A panel discussion with Manan Ahmed (History)

On his new book,

The Loss of Hindustan: The Invention of India

Panelists:

Vishakha Desai (Chair, Committee on Global Thought)

Purnima Dhavan (History, University of Washington)

Ayesha Ramachandran (Comparative Literature, Yale University)

YouTube video of event at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wdLkpIkEIM4>

Co-sponsored by the Committee on Global Thought, the Heyman Center for the Humanities, and the Institute for Social and Economic Research and Policy

Manan Ahmed is Associate Professor in the History Department at Columbia University. He is an historian of South Asia and the littoral western Indian Ocean world from 1000-1800 CE. His areas of specialization include intellectual history in South and Southeast Asia; critical philosophy of history, colonial and anti-colonial thought. He is interested in how modern and pre-modern historical narratives create understandings of places, communities, and intellectual genealogies for their readers. Prof. Ahmed's second book, *The Loss of Hindustan: The Invention of India* (Harvard University Press, 2020), tells a history of the historians of the subcontinent from the tenth to the early twentieth century. The core of the book is the history *Tarikh-i Firishta* which was written by Muhammad Qasim Firishta (b. ca. 1570) in the Deccan in the early seventeenth century. Broadly, the book presents a concept-history of "Hindustan," a political and historiographic category that was subsumed by the colonial project of

creating British India and the subsequent polities of “Republic of India” and “Islamic Republic of Pakistan.”

Dr. Vishakha N. Desai is Chair, Committee on Global Thought; Senior Advisor for Global Affairs to the President of Columbia University; and a Senior Research Scholar for the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University. She also serves as Senior Advisor for Global Programs to the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation. From 2004 through 2012, Dr. Desai served as President and CEO of the Asia Society, a global organization dedicated to strengthening partnerships between Asia and the U.S. In 2012, in recognition of Dr. Desai’s leadership in the museum field, President Barack Obama appointed her to serve on the National Museum and Library Services Board. An internationally renowned scholar of Asian art, she has published and lectured extensively on the intersection of traditional and contemporary arts and policy in diverse countries of Asia. Dr. Desai holds a B.A. in Political Science from Bombay University and an M.A. and Ph.D. in Asian Art History from the University of Michigan, in addition to honorary degrees from Williams College, Centre College, Pace University, The College of Staten Island, and Susquehanna University.

Purnima Dhavan is an Associate Professor in the Department of History at the University of Washington. Her Fields of Interest include Comparative Gender; Environmental History; Islamic Studies; Literature; Science and Technology; and South Asia. Her research interests encompass the social and cultural history of early modern South Asia, 1500-1800. The ways in which religious, linguistic, and status identities shaped the political and cultural institutions of the Mughal period are central to her work. Prof. Dhavan’s first book, *When Sparrows Became Hawks: the Making of Khalsa Martial Tradition* (2011) examined the transformation of North Indian peasants into high-status warriors as they became members of the Sikh warrior order, the Khalsa. Her second book project, *The Lords of the Pen: Literary Associations in Early Modern South Asia*, examines the literary activities of poets in emerging urban centers of the Mughal Empire to understand how participation in literary associations shaped understandings of caste, gender, and religious identity, to engage with larger questions of how notions of the “public” and “common good” emerged in different parts of the world.

Ayesha Ramachandran is an Associate Professor of Comparative Literature at Yale University. Her research interests include Early modern European literature and cultural history; Renaissance poetry; history of science and technology (sixteenth and seventeenth century); cartography and literature; early modern empires and international law; history of philosophy; Europe and the Indo-Islamic world. Her recent work focuses on Europe’s relations with an expanding world. Her first book, *The Worldmakers* (University of Chicago Press, 2015) charts transnational encounters and the early mechanisms of globalization from the late fifteenth to the early eighteenth centuries. It was awarded the MLA’s Scaglione prize in Comparative Literary Studies (2017), the Milton Society of America’s Shawcross Prize for the best book chapter on Milton (2016), and the Sixteenth Century Studies Association’s Founder’s Prize for the best first book manuscript (2015). In addition to literary and intellectual historical questions, Prof. Ramachandran is interested in early modern maps (particularly world mapping), the history of science and technology, early modern empires, and the rich visual archive of illustrated books in the period). Her current book project, *Lyric Thinking: Humanism, Selfhood, Modernity*, argues for the central importance of lyric form and language in shaping new intellectual possibilities for the self in the early modern period and beyond.

Wednesday, March 10, 2021

[A lecture by Nusrat Chowdhury \(Amherst College\)](#)

"A Second Coming: Mimicry and Monumentality in Bangladesh, 50 Years On"

Time: 4:15pm - 6:00pm EST

In this talk, Dr. Chowdhury takes the birth centennial of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the founding father of independent Bangladesh, as a point of entry in exploring the generative potential of mimicry in contemporary democracies. The repertoire of signs around the figure of Mujib around this historical moment (2021 marking the country's 50th anniversary of Bangladesh) allows a vantage point from which to understand Bangladeshi political culture that came into sharp focus with the condensation of corporeal and symbolic energies around the replication of the leader's likeness. The talk centers on the English-language novel, *The Black Coat* by Neamat Imam (2013), which pivots on the theme of impersonation and ends with the ongoing religious opposition to anthropomorphic reproductions. Chowdhury argues that the compulsion to mimic via statues, photographs, works of art, or reenactment ceremonies carries within it an ambivalent and generative politics. In every act of mimesis there is both a promise and a menace. Modern sovereign power manages this uncertainty through the specular and the spectacular, or what I describe as "monumentalised reproducibility."

This lecture is part of the Rethinking Public Religion in Africa and South Asia project at the Institute for Religion, Culture, and Public Life (in collaboration with the Institute for African Studies and the South Asia Institute). The project is funded by the Henry Luce Foundation.

Thursday, March 11

ICLS Understanding Systemic Racism Series

**“Between Radical Promise and Despair:
Dalit Literature and Movement in Karnataka”
with**

**[Devanoora Mahadeva](#) (writer) and
[Prithvi Chandra Shobhi](#) (KREA University)**

YouTube recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ktAL7SFAVtE>

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The Ambedkar lecture series is cosponsored by the Office of EVP of Arts and Sciences; Barnard Provost's Office; Office of the Deans of Humanities and Social Sciences; IRAAS; AAADS; IRCPL; MESAAS; CSER; CU Libraries; Columbia Committee on Global Thought and CU Press.

Tuesday, March 16

Committee on Global Thought Lunchtime Seminar

A talk by [Durba Mitra](#) (Harvard)

“Indian Sex Life: Sexuality and the Colonial Origins of Modern Social Thought”

Moderated by Yasmine Ergas, Director of the Specialization on Gender and Public Policy, Columbia University

Co-sponsored by The South Asia Institute and the Institute for Research on Women, Gender, and Sexuality at Columbia University

Join Professor Durba Mitra of Harvard University for a discussion of her work *Indian Sex Life: Sexuality and the Colonial Origins of Modern Social Thought*. CGT member Yasmine Ergas will moderate the seminar. Bringing together vast archival materials from diverse disciplines, Mitra reveals that deviant female sexuality was critical to debates about social progress and exclusion, caste domination, marriage, widowhood and inheritance, women's performance, the trafficking of girls, abortion and infanticide, industrial and domestic labor, indentured servitude, and ideologies about the dangers of Muslim sexuality.

Durba Mitra is Assistant Professor of Women, Gender, and Sexuality and Carol K. Pforzheimer Assistant Professor at the Radcliffe Institute at Harvard University. Mitra works at the intersection of feminist and queer studies. Her research and teaching focus on the history of sexuality, the history of science and epistemology, and gender and feminist thought in South Asia and the colonial and postcolonial world. Mitra's book, [*Indian Sex Life: Sexuality and the Colonial Origins of Modern Social Thought*](#) (Princeton University Press, 2020), demonstrates how ideas of deviant female sexuality became foundational to modern social thought. Her current research explores the history of Third World feminist theory and South-South solidarity movements.

Mitra is a faculty associate of the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs and is on the Asia Center Council at Harvard. She is a member of the editorial board of the journal *Signs*, incoming editor of "Books in Brief" for *GLQ: Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies*, and a contributing editor for *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*. Mitra is a recipient of the 2019 Roslyn Abramson Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching at Harvard, which recognizes teachers for "excellence and sensitivity in teaching undergraduates," and the 2020 Star Family Prize for Excellence in Faculty Advising. Mitra is a founding member of [*xpMethod: Group for Experimental Methods in Humanistic Research*](#), where she is the moderator for the GenderSex Collective. She co-organizes the "[Architectures of Knowledge](#)" workshops, which has led to collaborative research projects on digital archives in [Mumbai](#), India and [Lahore](#), Pakistan.

Friday, March 19, 2021

A Master Class with Vidya Dehejia (Barbara Stoler Miller Professor of Indian and South Asian Art, Department of Art History and Archeology)

Time: 10:10am – 12:00pm

YouTube Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UvVuSjE1noQ>

In the course of her career, Vidya Dehejia has combined research with teaching and exhibition-related activities around the world. Extensive field travel in South Asia, with visits to sites of importance in Southeast Asia, has given her first hand familiarity with the art of the region. Her background in classical Sanskrit and Tamil, and knowledge of a range of modern Indian languages has proved invaluable. Her writings have incorporated translations of ancient poetry, and material from unpublished manuscripts, in order to illuminate an artistic milieu. She has explored at length the theoretical basis for the portrayal of visual narratives in the context of India's sculpture and painting, and has examined issues of gender and colonialism. Over time, her work has ranged from Buddhist art of the centuries BC to the esoteric temples of North India, and from the sacred bronzes of the South to the art of British India. Management and curatorial experience at the Smithsonian's Freer and Sackler Galleries provided broader scope to convey the excitement of her field to non-specialist audiences.

[Full Faculty Profile](#)

The South Asia Institute has organized an interdisciplinary series of online "Master Classes" with Columbia South Asia faculty. The Master Classes will provide an opportunity for students to hear faculty present their work, to meet and interact (remotely) with each speaker, and to become more integrated into Columbia's South Asia community. Students are encouraged to do the assigned readings in advance.

Tuesday, March 30, 2021

A panel discussion with Sanjukta Sunderason (University of Amsterdam)

On her new book,

Partisan Aesthetics: Modern Art and India's Long Decolonization

Discussants:

Iftikhar Dadi, Associate Professor and Chair, Department of History of Art, Cornell University

Debashree Mukherjee, Assistant Professor, Department of Middle Eastern, South Asian, and

African Studies; Columbia University.

Dwaipayan Banerjee, Associate Professor in the Program in Science, Technology, and Society;

Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Time: 11:30am - 1:00pm

[Link to Cornell Event Page](#)

Organized by the South Asia Program at Cornell University and co-sponsored by the Columbia South Asia Institute.

[*Partisan Aesthetics*](#) explores art's entanglements with histories of war, famine, mass politics and displacements that marked late colonial and postcolonial India. Introducing "partisan aesthetics" as a conceptual grid, the book identifies ways in which art became political through interactions with left-wing activism during the 1940s, and the afterlives of such interactions in post-independence India. Using an archive of artists and artist collectives working in Calcutta from these decades, Sanjukta Sunderason argues that artists became political not only as reporters, organizers and cadre of India's Communist Party, or socialist fellow travelers, but through shifting modes of political participations and dissociations. Unmooring questions of Indian modernism from its hitherto dominant harnesses to national or global affiliations, Sunderason activates, instead, distinctly locational histories that refract transnational currents. She analyzes largely unknown and dispersed archives—drawings, diaries, posters, periodicals, and pamphlets, alongside paintings and prints—and insists that art as archive is foundational to understanding modern art's socialist affiliations during India's long decolonization. By bringing together expanding fields of South Asian art, global modernisms, and Third World cultures, *Partisan Aesthetics* generates a new narrative that combines political history of Indian modernism, social history of postcolonial cultural criticism, and intellectual history of decolonization.

Sanjukta Sunderason is an historian of 20th century aesthetics, working with the interfaces of visual art and political thought. She is interested in particular in the ways in which art reflects and reframes struggles, imaginations, and dialogues around 20th-century decolonization. Her first book, [*Partisan Aesthetics: Modern Art and India's Long Decolonization*](#) (Stanford University Press, 2020) studied left-wing aesthetics in dialogue with formations of modern art in late-colonial and early postcolonial India. She is currently working on two book projects: first, a co-edited volume on the aesthetics of the postcolonial left in South Asia (with Lotte Hoek, University of Edinburgh); and second, a monograph on ideas/forms of the transnational in the art of decolonial liberation movements. Sanjukta lives and works in the Netherlands, where she is Assistant Professor in the department of History of Art, University of Amsterdam

Monday, April 5

**A discussion of *Radicalizing Her*
with author Dr. Nimmi Gowrinathan**

Respondent: Dipali Mukhopadhyay (University of Minnesota)

Moderator: Lila Abu-Lughod (Anthropology)

Time: 4:15pm – 5:45pm

Co-sponsored by the Institute for Research on Women, Gender, and Sexuality and the South Asia Institute

YouTube video of event at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ZCzOGqWDck&t=3s>

Though the female fighter is often seen as an anomaly, women make up nearly 30% of militant movements worldwide. Historically, these women--viewed as victims, weak-willed wives, and prey to Stockholm Syndrome--have been deeply misunderstood. *Radicalizing Her* holds the female fighter up in all her complexity as a kind of mirror to contemporary conversations on gender, violence, and power. Dr. Gowrinathan spent nearly twenty years in conversation with female fighters in Sri Lanka, Eritrea, Pakistan, and Colombia. The intensity of these interactions consistently unsettled her assumptions about violence, re-positioning how these women were positioned in relation to power. Gowrinathan posits that the erasure of the female fighter from narratives on gender and power is not only dangerous but also, anti-feminist. She argues for a deeper, more nuanced understanding of women who choose violence.'

Lila Abu-Lughod is Joseph L. Bottenwieser Professor of Social Science, Institute for Research on Women, Gender and Sexuality and Department of Anthropology. Abu-Lughod's work has focused on three broad issues: the relationship between cultural forms and power; the politics of knowledge and representation; and the dynamics of women's and human rights, global liberalism, and feminist governance of the Muslim world. Current research has focused on feminism, geopolitics and gender violence building out from her most recent book, *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* (2013).

Dr. Nimmi Gowrinathan is a writer, a scholar, and an activist. She is a Visiting Research Professor at the City College of New York. Gowrinathan's research interests include gender and violence, female extremism, social movements, issues of asylum, ethnic conflict, and the impact of militarization, displacement, and race in Sri Lanka. Her work on the female fighter has been featured in publications as varied as *Vice*, *Harper's*, *Foreign Policy*, *Freeman's Journal*, and *The New York Times*. She is the publisher of *Adi Magazine*, a literary magazine aiming to rehumanize policy, the author of the blog "Deviarchy," and created the "Female Fighters Series" at *Guernica Magazine*. Her forthcoming book, *Radicalizing Her*, examines the complex politics of the female fighter (Penguin 2021).

As a Visiting Professor at the City College of New York, she founded the "Politics of Sexual Violence Initiative," exploring the impact of sexual violence on women's political identities, and "Beyond Identity: A Gendered Platform for Scholar-Activists," a program that seeks to train immigrants and students of color in identity-driven research, political writing, and activism anchored in an analysis of structural violence.

Dipali Mukhopadhyay is Associate Professor in the global policy area at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota. Her research focuses on the relationships between political violence, state building, and governance during and after war. She is currently serving as senior expert on the Afghanistan peace process for the U.S. Institute of Peace. She is the author, with Kimberly Howe, of *Good Rebel Governance: Revolutionary Politics and Western Intervention in Syria* (forthcoming), and the monograph *Warlords, Strongman Governors and State Building in Afghanistan* (2014).