

## **CROSSDISCIPLINARY GRADUATE SEMINAR PROPOSAL**

**Zahid Chaudhary**  
**Dept. of English**

### **SEMINAR DESCRIPTION**

#### **Postcolonial Visuality**

This course will provide students with a genealogy of the newly-expanding field of visual culture studies through a postcolonial optic. We will take as our point of departure the 1936 essays by Martin Heidegger and Walter Benjamin, on the function of art under modernity. These two foundational essays, written in the force field of the social and historical contradictions within Europe that were finding their expression in fascism and totalitarianism, articulated new and urgent questions about the relationship of technology to art, of aesthetics to politics, and of knowledge to representation. In this seminar we will explore the implications of this questioning for global visual culture. How is perception constituted by the serial nature of modern images? What are the relationships between materiality and the image, history and simulacra, power and looking? How must we rethink and revise notions of form, aesthetics, the picturesque, and the sublime in light of colonial and postcolonial visual culture? As we work through these questions, we will engage with issues of subjectivation, the production of vision, and theories of comparative modernities. The aim here is not only to analyze the production of the “Western” gaze upon the “East,” but also to explore, in Rey Chow’s words, “the fact that the ‘East,’ too, is a spectator who is equally caught up in the dialectic of seeing.”

### **EXPLANATION OF INTERDISCIPLINARY RANGE**

Visual culture studies as well as postcolonial theory cut across the disciplines, bringing into dialogue work from literary studies, film studies, anthropology, geography, and history. I imagine students from all of these disciplines will find this seminar to be of interest. The seminar draws on the European tradition of critical theory, particularly German scholarship from the Frankfurt School, as well current work in postcolonial theory and visual culture. It provides a forum in which writers as diverse as Martin Heidegger, WJT Mitchell, and Gayatri Spivak are juxtaposed in order to arrive at a substantial dialogue on the confluence of postcolonial histories and visual modernity. Students will receive an introduction to some of the critical terms of visual culture studies, critical theory, and postcolonial theory, while simultaneously learning about the debates within each of these fields that cut across disciplinary boundaries.

## PRELIMINARY SYLLABUS

### Unit 1: Technology & Vision

- Weeks 1-4: Martin Heidegger, "Origin of the Work of Art"  
 --, "The Age of the World Picture"  
 --, "The Question Concerning Technology"  
 Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical  
 Reproduction"  
 "A Short History of Photography"  
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 Susan Buck-Morss, "Aesthetics & Anaesthetics"  
 Martin Jay, "The Scopic Regimes of Modernity"  
 Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in  
 the Nineteenth Century*  
 Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*

### Unit 2: On Historical Difference

- Weeks 5-7: Benedict Anderson, "Census, Map, Museum"  
 Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*  
 Edward Said, *Orientalism*  
 Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?"  
 Dipesh Chakravarty, *Provincializing Europe*  
 Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its  
 Object*  
 Timothy Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt*  
 W. J. T. Mitchell, *Landscape and Power*

### Unit 3: Visual Practices in the Post/Colony

- Week 8-10: Ivan Karp & Steven Lavine, Eds. *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and  
 Politics of Museum Display*  
 Tim Barringer, *Colonialism and the Object*  
 William Rubin, "Primitivism" in *Twentieth-Century Art: Affinity of the  
 Tribal and the Modern*  
 Malek Alloula, *The Colonial Harem*  
 Deborah Poole, *Vision, Race, and Modernity*  
 Iftikhar & Elizabeth Dadi, Selected Artwork: "The Clash of Civilizations"  
 "The West and the Rest"  
 "Love"  
 Christopher Pinney, *Camera Indica*  
 --, ed. *Photography's Other Histories*

## BUDGET

In addition to the stipend of \$1500 for course development, I would like to request the following expenses for **four** invited guests (two full professors and two artists) who will offer a workshop linked to the course.

### Invited Guests:

**Susan Buck-Morss**, Professor of Political Philosophy and Social Theory, Dept. of Government, and Professor of Visual Culture, Department of Visual Studies, Cornell University

**Miriam Hansen**, Ferdinand Schevill Distinguished Service Professor in the Humanities, University of Chicago

Honorarium	750	
Hotel (2 nights)	250	
Airfare	500	
Taxi	100	
Dinners (2)	300	(150 x 2)
Lunches (2)	100	(50 x 2)
Reception	150	
Flyers	25	
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Subtotal	2175	
(x2)	4350	

Artists:

**Iftikhar Dadi**  
**Elizabeth Dadi**

Honorarium	1000	(500 x2)
Hotel (2 nights)	250	
Airfare	1000	(500 x2)
Taxi	100	
Dinners (2)	300	(150 x 2)
Lunches (2)	100	(50 x 2)
Reception	150	
Flyers	25	
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Subtotal	2925	

**Grand Total: 7275**