

Concepts in Postcolonial Theory: Modernity

Fall semester 2006
Graduate seminar
Instructor: R. Sunder Rajan

Course Description:

This is envisaged as the first in a sequence of seminars treating in depth of key concepts in postcolonial theory such as modernity, hybridity, otherness, the colonial encounter, race, resistance.

Modernity, associated with post-Enlightenment projects of emancipation, rationalism, 'progress', social reform, secularism and the like, brought about a major and inevitably fraught transformation in the culture and politics of Europe's colonies; and it continues to require complex negotiation in postcolonial societies.

The focus of this course will be on the debates around modernity and its diverse aspects in colonial and postcolonial India. The readings will include the writings of early political figures (Gandhi, Nehru and Ambedkar), as well as contemporary historians, political scientists, anthropologists and cultural theorists (Sumit Sarkar, Ashis Nandy, Partha Chatterjee, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Arjun Appadurai). We will also pay attention to the debates among feminists and writers on caste about the political valence of modernity; the interrogation of the historical meaning of modernity itself; and the conceptualisation of 'alternative modernities'.

Other regions of the non-Western world --in China, Japan, and other East and Southeast Asian countries, the Middle East, or Latin America--are equally significant sites for such a study, each with its own particular conjuncture and shape of modernity. We will aim at developing a broad comparative perspective by reading selected works of intellectuals in these locations.

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Weekly schedule

1: introduction and overview

Readings: all the texts in Section I ('General'); read Kant with Habermas, Foucault and Chatterjee, 'Talking about our Modernity in Two Languages'; Marx, with Antonio, Berman; Cooper for overview.

2: colonialism and modernity I (History):

Readings: Chatterjee *The Nation and its Fragments*, Chapter 2; S. Sarkar; Cohn; Bhabha; Burton; Sinha; Sangari and Vaid. On 'early modern India', see Subrahmanyam, Pollock.

3. colonialism and modernity II (Culture)

Readings: essays in Niranjana et al, ed. *Interrogating Modernity*: Udaya Kumar

4. Nationalism and modernity: Gandhi; Nehru versus Gandhi

Readings: Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*; see also letter to Polak, Gandhi-Nehru letters, Gandhi on machinery, all in Parel volume; also, Nandy on Gandhi in *Intimate Enemy*; Nehru; Khilnani on 'Nehru's faith'

5. Caste and modernity

Readings: Ambedkar; Nagaraj; Aditya Nigam; Guru). For a good, short introduction to Ambedkar, read Gail Omvedt, *Ambedkar: Towards and Enlightened India*. Delhi: Viking/Penguin, 2004. On caste and gender: essays in Rao.

6. Gender and modernity: essays from Chaudhuri; Sangari and Vaid; Burton; Uberoi; T. Sarkar; Sunder Rajan

7. Contemporary debates I:

Readings: (For general background on post-Independence and contemporary India, read Khilnani, *Idea of India*; Deshpande; Thapar); Rudolphs; Chakrabarty; Chatterjee, Dhareshwar; Nandy (on Nandy, see essays in Lal); Gupta; Sen; Bardan

8. Contemporary debates II: Cont'd from previous week.

9. Globalization and modernity

Readings: Appadurai; Gyan Prakash; Gikandi

10. Review, and *SAQ* special issue essays.

11. Japan, China and East Asia

Readings: Harootunian, Paik, Barlow, Chow, Ko. (selections/chapters to be specified)

12. Latin America

Readings: Mignolo, Dussel. (chapters to be specified)

13. Africa and modernity

Readings: Appiah, Comaroff, Mbembe, Gilroy. (chapters to be specified)

14. Modernity and the Arab world

Readings: Abu-Lughod, Mitchell, Mahmood, Asad, Rejali, Hasso. (essays/chapters to be specified)

Course requirements:

Attendance and participation in class; two class presentations (2000 words); final term paper (6000 words).

Reading-list

(Most of the prescribed readings are chapter excerpts or single essays. Photocopies of most of them are available on file; some are available online. Book-store orders for some essential books have been placed, but the only indispensable book is Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*. Almost all the books are available in the NYU library).

General:

Antonio, Robert J. *Marx and Modernity*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2003. Part II, 'The Juggernaut of Capitalist Modernity'.

Bauman, Zygmunt. *The Bauman Reader*. Ed. Peter Beilharz. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000.

Berman, Marshall. *All that's solid melts in air: The Experience of Modernity*. Penguin: New York, 1998. Introduction.

Cooper, Frederick. *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005; Chapter 5, 'Modernity'.

Foucault, Michel. 'What is Enlightenment' in Paul Rabinow ed. *The Foucault Reader*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984.

Giddens, Anthony. *The Consequences of Modernity*. Stanford UP, 1990

- Habermas, J. 'Modernity an Incomplete Project', in Hal Foster ed. *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays in Postmodern Culture*. Seattle Bay Press, 1983.
- Kant, Immanuel. 'What is Enlightenment?' in *On History*, ed and trans. Lewis White Beck. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963, pp.1-10.
- Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. *The Communist Manifesto*. 1848. Selection in *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*.
- Mitchell, Timothy. *Questions of Modernity*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

India/South Asia context

- Ambedkar, B. R. "The Annihilation of Caste," along with Gandhi's critical response, "A Vindication of Caste," and Ambedkar's "Reply to the Mahatma," in Dr. *Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches*, Vol 1, compiled by Vasant Moon (Bombay 1979): pp. 36-96.
- Appadurai, Arjun. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1996.
- Appadurai, Arjun. 'Spectral Housing and Urban Cleansing: Notes on Millennial Mumbai', in *Public Culture* 12 (3) 2000, pp. 627-651.
- Bardan, Pranab. 'The State against Society', in Bose and Jalal
- Bhabha, Homi. *Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994. See, esp, 'Commitment to Theory', Part II.
- Bose, Sugata and Ayesha Jalal eds. *Nationalism, Democracy and Development: State and Politics in India*. OUP, 1998. See Introduction and essays by Sen and Bardhan.
- Breckenridge, Carol A. ed. *Consuming Modernity: Public Culture in Contemporary India*. Delhi, OUP, 1996. Introduction, essay by Appadurai.
- Burton, Antoinette. ed. *Gender, Sexuality and Colonial Modernities*. Routledge, 1999. See Introduction, essay by Sinha.
- Chakraborty, Dipesh. *Provincializing Europe*. Princeton UP: 2000.
- Chakraborty, Dipesh. *Habitations of Modernity*. University of Chicago, 2003.
- Chatterjee, Partha. 'Talking about our Modernity in Two Languages', in *The Partha Chatterjee Omnibus*. New Delhi, OUP, 1999.
- Chatterjee, Partha. *The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004; Chaps 1-3, pp. 3-78, 'The Nation in Heterogeneous Time;' 'Populations and Political Society'; 'The Politics of the Governed' and 'Are Indian cities becoming bourgeois at last?'
- Chatterjee, Partha. *The Nation and its Fragments*. OUP, 1994. Chapters 2, 3, 6, 11 (included in Omnibus)
- Chaudhuri, Maitrayee. ed. *Feminism in India*. New Delhi: Women Unlimited and Kali for Women, 2004. Essays by Chitnis, John, Bhagwat.
- Cohn, Bernard S. *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India*. Princeton UP, 1996.
- Das, Veena. *Critical Events: An Anthropological Perspective on Contemporary India*. Delhi, OUP, 1996.
- Deshpande, Satish. *Contemporary India*. New Delhi: Penguin/Viking, 2003. Chapters 2, 5, 7.

- Dhareshwar, Vivek. “‘Our Time’: History, Sovereignty and Politics’, *Economic and Political Weekly*. 30(6), 1995.: 317-24.
- Dhareshwar, Vivek. ‘Postcolonial in the Postmodern; or the Political after Modernity’, *Economic and Political Weekly*. 30(30), 1995.: PE 104-PE 112.
- Gandhi, M. K. *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings*. Ed. Anthony J. Parel. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997.
- Gupta, Dipankar. ‘India’s Unmodern Modernity,’ in Thapar.
- Guru, Gopal. ‘Dalits in Pursuit of Modernity,’ in Thapar.
- John, Mary. ‘Feminism in India and the West: Recasting a Relationship,’ in Chaudhuri.
- Khilnani, Sunil. *The Idea of India*. London, Penguin, 2003.
- Khilnani, Sunil. ‘Nehru’s Faith’, *Economic and Political Weekly*; rpt in *New Republic* May 24, 2004. Available online.
- Kumar, Udaya. ‘Early Malayalam Novel and Some Questions of Visibility’, in Meenakshi Mukherjee, ed. *Early Novels in India*. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2002.
- Lal, Vinay. Ed. *Dissenting Knowledges, Open Futures: The Multiple Selves and Strange Destinations of Ashis Nandy*. Delhi: OUP, 2000.
- Nagaraj, D. R. *The Flaming Feet: A Study of the Dalit Movement in India*. Bangalore, South Forum Press, 1993. Chapters 2, 3 and esp 6.
- Nandy, Ashis ed. *Science, Hegemony and Violence: A Requiem for Modernity*. Tokyo: UN University, 1988; Delhi: OUP, 1990.
- Nandy, Ashis. *Time Warps: The Insistent Politics of Silent and Evasive Pasts*. NJ: Rutgers UP, 2002.
- Nehru, Jawaharlal. *Discovery of India*. Penguin, 2004 (1946). See, esp, chapter 8, ‘The Congress becomes a dynamic organization’, ‘The Congress and Industry’; chapter 10.
- Nigam, Aditya. *The Insurrection of Little Selves: The Crisis of Secular Nationalism in India*. New Delhi, OUP, 2006. See esp chapter titled ‘Secularism, Modernity, Nation: Epistemology of the Dalit Critique’, also in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 25 November 2000, pp. 4256-68.
- Niranjana, Tejaswini, P. Sudhir and Vivek Dhareshwar eds. *Interrogating Modernity: Culture and Colonialism in India*. Calcutta: Seagull, 1993. Essays by Paddikal, Kapur, Rajyadaksha, Habib and Raina.
- Prakash, Gyan. ‘The Urban Turn’, *Sarai Reader 2002: The Cities of Everyday Life*, available at www.sarai.net/journal/02PDF/03morphologies/02urban_turn.pdf
- Pollock, Sheldon. Ed. *Forms of Knowledge in Early Modern South Asia*. Introduction rpt in *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24: 2, 2004. Available online.
- Rao, Anupama ed. *Gender and Caste*. New Delhi: Kali for Women, 2003. Essays in section 3, by Anandhi, Chakravarti, V. Geetha, Zelliott.
- Rudolph, Lloyd I. and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph. *The Modernity of Tradition: Political Development in India*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1967.
- Sangari, Kumkum and Sudesh Vaid eds. *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*. New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1989. See Introduction and essays by Chatterjee, Banerjee, Talwar.

- Sarkar, Sumit. *Critique of Colonial India*. Calcutta: Papyrus, 1985. Ch.1, 'Rammohun Roy'; Ch. 4, 'The Radicalism of Intellectuals'; and Ch.5, 'The Women's Question in 19th-c Bengal'.
- Sarkar, Tanika. *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation: Community, religion and Cultural Nationalism*. 2001, Chapters 6 and 7.
- Sen, Amartya. 'On Interpreting India's Past,'; in Bose and Jalal.
- Sen, Amartya. 'Secularism and its Discontents' in *The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian Culture, History and Identity*. Penguin, 2005. See also chs. 6, 13.
- Sinha, Mrinalini. 'Suffragism and Internationalism: The Enfranchisement of British and Indian Women under an Imperial State', in Antoinette Burton ed. *Gender, Sexuality and Colonial Modernities*. Routledge, 1999.
- Subrahmanyam, Sanjay. *Explorations in Connected History*, Volume I, 'On the Window that was India' (Introduction). OUP, 2005.
- Sunder Rajan, Rajeswari. *Real and Imagined Women: Gender, Culture Postcolonialism*. Routledge, 1993. See chapter on 'Real and Imagined Women'.
- Thapar, Romila ed. *India: Another Millenium*. Delhi: Viking, 2000. Essays by Gopal Guru, Dipankar Gupta
- Uberoi, Patricia ed. *Social Reform, Sexuality and the State*. Sage, 1996. Essays by Whitehead, Ram

Other contexts

- Abu-Lughod, Lila ed. *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998.
- Appiah, Kwame Anthony. *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*. London: Methuen, 1992.
- Asad, Talal. *Formations of the Secular*.
- Asad, Talal. On religion, modernity and Islamism: Interview with Saba Mahmood, *Stanford Humanities Review* (1996). Available online on: http://www.islamamerica.org/articles.cfm/article_id/102/
- Barlow, Tani. 'Theorizing Woman', reprinted in Angela Zito and Tani Barlow, eds., *Body, Subject, and Power in China*; in Joan Scott, ed., *Feminism and History*. Oxford University Press 1996.
- Barlow, Tani ed. *Formations of Colonial Modernity in East Asia*. Durham: Duke UP, 1997
- Burton, Antoinette. ed. *Gender, Sexuality and Colonial Modernities*. Routledge, 1999.
- Chow, Rey. *Woman and Chinese Modernity*. Oxford: University of Minnesota Press, 1991.
- Comaroff, John and Jean. *Modernity and its Malcontents: Ritual and Power in Postcolonial Africa*. Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1993.
- Dussel, Enrique. 'Europe, Modernity, Eurocentrism,' *Nepantla: Views from South* Vol. 1:3 (2000): 465-478
- Gikandi, Simon. 'Globalization and the Claims of Postcoloniality', *South Atlantic Quarterly* 100:3, Summer 2001: 627-58.
- Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. London, Verso, 1993.

