

Aesthetics of Uneven Development



The course traces the cultural history of rapid and uneven development in the modern Asia, predominantly based on the experiences of 19th- and 20th-century Iran. Topics cover a wide range of debates on the constructs of high culture, aesthetic values, archeological policies, colonial rivalry, local resistance, gendered metaphors, racist rhetorics, secular nationalism, and national historiography. The readings and discussions are focused on the following themes: Asia before the birth of the Orient; Imperial structures and the politics of archeological digs in the 1890s; the development of an Aryan theory and its origin in Iran at the turn of the century; Iran's Constitutional Revolution and the invention of a universalistic cultural expressions in the 1910s; the climax of nationalism and the crystallization of Cultural Heritage in the 1920s; the revival of antiquity as a form of political legalization in the 1930s; the pathology of destruction and the appeal to the avant-garde; the arrival of tourism and its impact on conservation tactics of historical sites in the 1940s; state-sponsored racism and the fetish with museums and displays in the 1950s; the Algerian War and the origins of anti-West movement in the 1960s; and feminism as a manifest myth of masculine modernity in the 1970s. The problematic of self-Orientalism that was followed by the Iranian (r)Evolution of 1979 will be central to the inquiries into current events such as postmodern cultural tropes and veiling; fundamentalism and claims to cultural purity; as well as post-9/11 neo-imperialism and its manifestations in western cultural milieus.

The viewing of selected local and western films and the reading of primary sources, as differing (re)presentations of the West/non-West, constitute a critical component of the course. Through a close examination of the built environment and material culture, the course reveals the perils of Iran's rapid modernization and the ensuing social tensions of its modernity. Their investigation hints at the often unbridgeable gulf between how things worked and how they looked in modern Iran. For in 20th-century Iran, aesthetics was not only a mere allegory of modernity, but also the supreme (re)presentation of the image of an unevenly developed modern nation, that would eventually succumb to a popular (cultural) revolution.

- R Aug 25** **Reading . Text**
 McClintock, A. "Post colonialism and the Angel of Progress," *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (NY 1995) 1-17
- T Aug 30** **Third . World**
 Davis, M. "Millenarian Revolutions," *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World* (2002) 177-209
 Kashani-Sabet, F. "Fragile Frontiers: The Diminishing Domains of Qajar Iran," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 29/2 (May 1997) 205-34
- R Sep 1** Film: *Brazil* (Terry Gilliam 1985)
 Said, E. *Culture and Imperialism* (NY 1994) 3-14
 Baudrillard, J. "The Violence of the Global" ["La Violence du Mondial," *Power Inferno* (Paris 2002) 63-83]
- T Sep 6** **Archeology . Imperialism**
 Schnapp, A. "The Invention of Archeology," *The Discovery of the Past* (NY 1997) 275-315
 Abdi, K. "Nationalism, Politics, and the Development of Archaeology in Iran," *American Journal of Archaeology* 105 (2001) 51-76
- R Sep 8** **Universalism . proto-Hybridity**
 Kristeva, J. "Might not Universality Be...Our Own Foreignness?" *Strangers to Ourselves* (NY 1991) 169-92
 McClintock, A. "The Scandal of Hybridity: Black Women's Resistance and Narrative Ambiguity," *Imperial Leather*, 299-328
-
- 1921**
- T Sep 13** **Anxiety . Modernity**
 Nochlin, L. *The Body in Pieces: The Fragment as a Metaphor of Modernity* (NY 2001)
 Escobar, A. "Development and the Anthropology of Modernity," *Encountering Development: the Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton 1994) 3-20
 Grigor, T. "(re)Cultivating 'Good Taste:' the early Pahlavi Modernists and their Society for National Heritage," *Journal of Iranian Studies* 37/1 (March 2004) 17-45
- R Sep 15** **Tourism . Historicity**
 Gamboni, D. "Introduction," *The Destruction of Art* (New Haven 1997) 9-24
 Choay, F. "Historic Heritage and the Contemporary Culture Industry" & "Epilogue," *The Invention of the Historic Monument* (NY 2001) 138-78
- T Sep 20** **Race . Taste**
 Colomina, B. "Museum," *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (MA 2001) 201-29
 Hedayat, S. *Blind Owl* (1935)
- R Sep 22** Film: *Turn Left at the End of the World* (Avi Nesher 2004)
 Fischer, M. "Islam: the Odd Civilization Out?" *NPQ* (Winter 2002)
 Pezeshkzad, I. *My Uncle Napoleon* (Tehran c. 1970)

T Sep 27

Avant-garde . Utopia

Manfredo, T. "Ideology and Utopia," *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development* (MA 1979) 50-77

Wigley, M. "The Emperor's New Paint," *White Walls, Designer Dresses* (MA 2001) 2-33

1953

R Sep 29

Regionalism . Native

hooks, b. "this is the oppressor's language / yet I need it to talk to you": language, a place of struggle," *Between Languages and Cultures* (Pittsburg 1995) 295-301

Colquhoun, A. "The Concept of Regionalism," *Postcolonial Space(s)* (Princeton 1997) 13-24

Serageldin, I. "Shushtar New Town" *The Architecture of Empowerment: People, Shelter and Livable Cities* (London 1997) 99-101

Bakhtiar, L. & N. Ardalan. *The Sense of Unity: the Sufi Tradition in Persian Architecture* (Chicago 1973) skim

T Oct 4

Cinema . Pathology

Friedberg, A. "The Passage from Arcade to Cinema," *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern* (CA 1993) 47-94

Naficy, H. "Islamizing Film Culture in Iran," *Iran: Political Culture in the Islamic Republic* (London 1992) 178-213

R Oct 6

Film: *The Cow . Gaav* (Dariush Mehrjui 1969)

Deleuze, G. "Cinemas," *Negotiations 1972-1990* (NY 1997) 46-67

T Oct 11

Fall Break

R Oct 13

Mid-Term Paper Proposals Due

T Oct 18

Self-Orientalism . Camp

Sontag, S. "Notes on 'Camp'," *Against Interpretation* (1964) 275-92

Lowe, J. *Celebration at Persepolis* (Geneva c. 1971) 33, 41, 95

R Oct 20

Feminism . Myth

McClintock, A. "No Longer in a Future Heaven," *Imperial Leather*, 352-89

Najmabadi, A. "Hazards of Modernity and Morality: Women, State and Ideology in Contemporary Iran," *The Modern Middle East* (London 1993) 663-87

1979

T Oct 25

Film: *Live from Tehran* (ABC 1999)

Nafisi, A. *Reading Lolita in Tehran* (NY 2003)

Dabashi, H. & P. Chelkowski. "From the Myth of Revolution to the Art of Persuasion," *Staging a Revolution: The Art of Persuasion in the Islamic Republic of Iran* (NY 2000) 32-43

R Oct 27

Architecture . (r)Evolution

Buck-Morss, S. "Dream and Awakening," *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West* (MA 2000) 174-211

Afary, J. & K. Anderson. "Foucault and the Iranian Revolution: Gender and the Seductions of Islamism," *New Politics* 10/1 (Summer 2004) 1-9

Abrahamian, E. "Structural Causes of the Iranian Revolution," *MERIP Reports* 87 (May 1980) 21-26

- T Nov 1** **Iconography . Repression**
 Sreberny, A. "The Islamic Republic and the Process of Islamicization," "A New Cultural Atmosphere," & "Epilogue," *Small Media, Big Revolution* (Minneapolis 1994) 163-93
 Ram, H. "Multiple Iconographies: Political Posters in the Iranian Revolution," *Picturing Iran: Art, Society and Revolution* (London 2002) 88-100
- R Nov 3** **unVeiling . disObedience**
 Adelkhah, F. *Being Modern in Iran* (NY, 2000)
- T Nov 8** **Diasporas . Fragmentation**
 Spivak, G. "Culture," *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (MA 1999) as many pages as you can
 Satrapi, M. *Persepolis* (Paris 2004)
- R Nov 10** Film: *Vodka Lemon* (Hiner Saleem 2003)
 Zizek, S. *Iraq: The Borrowed Kettle* (NY 2004)
- T Nov 15** Student Presentations
- R Nov 17** Student Presentations
- T Nov 22** Student Presentations
- R Nov 24** Thanksgiving Recess
- T Nov 29** Student Presentations
- R Dec 1** Film: *The Children of Heaven . Bacheha-ye Aseman* (Majid Majidi 1997)
 Zizek, S. "The Seven Veils of Fantasy," *The Plague of Fantasies* (London 1997) 3-44
- Dec 8-11** **Final Papers Due**

REQUIREMENTS

- Requirements:** 40% Participation; 10% Quizzes, 10% Mid-term project; 40% Final project.
- Readings:** Assigned readings must be done prior to the class.
 A class reader will be available which exclude the readings from required books.
- Assignments:** The mid-term and final projects are due October 13 and December 8-11.
 The mid-term (2-4 pp) and final (20-30 pp) projects, each consists a specific historical and/or sociopolitical critical analysis vis-à-vis the aesthetic and cultural frameworks in/of Iran and/or the non-West.
 Two unannounced quizzes will consist of responses to a specific in-class question.