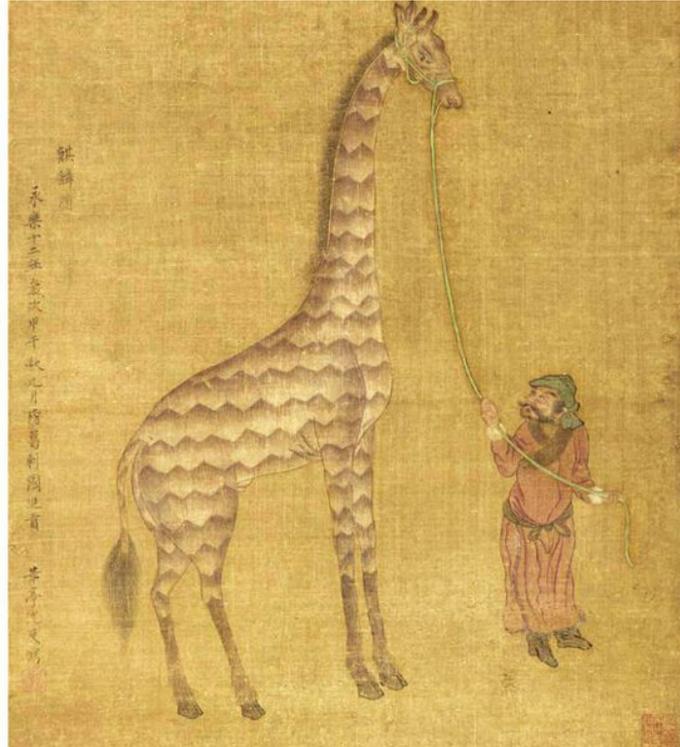


Oceans as Method  
25 November-December 6 2019  
Jamia Millia Islamia University

Course Outline



A painting depicting a tribute giraffe and a handler sent to China in the 15th century. (Philadelphia Museum of Art)

**Course level:** Advanced Undergraduate/ Postgraduate

**Instructor:** Prof Dilip M Menon, Mellon Chair in Indian Studies, University of Witwatersrand

**Contact details:** [saarah.jappie@wits.ac.za](mailto:saarah.jappie@wits.ac.za)

**Lecture hours:** Week 1: Monday – Thursday 10 am – 12 pm.

Week 2: Monday – Thursday 10 am – 12pm

**Course Description:**

This course continues on from the earlier one taught by Dr Jaapie and raises questions of methodology. Through a thematic exploration of some of the central concerns of social sciences and history, it explores the possibility of an alternative to a historiography centred on land, states and empires. What does it mean to think with fluvial geographies and the idea of space as determined by the movement of people rather than thinking about space as territories within which people move i.e. nations, regions etc. The oceans

press on our consciousness particularly given the alarming prospects of global warming and rising waters. We need to think with the ways that humans have engaged with the sea and the ocean in order to escape the incarceration of our terrestrial imaginations.

This course tries to chart a new post colonial history through working against nation centred thinking on historical processes as also questioning the dyad of colonisation that structures an understanding of change. How do we think the histories of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean together through the connections they have always had through commerce, religion, and the movement of capital and unfree labour, and not least, the circulation of ideas? Both the spaces and times of history writing need to be rethought. Is it sufficient to think the history of India or South Africa under the rubric of pre colonial, colonial and post colonial alone? Or indeed through the maps drawn by colonialism reflecting competing understandings of territory between colonial powers which paid little attention to the territories created by the movement of people? If we think about the connections generated by the movement of people and the circulation of ideas we are forced to think about connected histories that preceded, sat alongside and continue beyond the colonial and national.

The course consists of 16 contact hours, which run over two weeks (November 25 to December 6 2019). Instruction is based on an inclusive teaching model, in which students are active participants in the learning process. Each meeting will consist of a short lecture in which the instructor introduces the day's topic, situating the readings within a broader bibliographic landscape. The lecture will be followed by student-led discussion. The final day of the course will focus on student presentations and a general discussion.

### **Learning Outcomes:**

At the end of this course students will demonstrate:

- An understanding of a paradigm of thinking history with the oceans at the centre of analysis.
- Competence in the analysis of secondary sources, including identifying and evaluating their central arguments.
- Greater fluency and coherence in both oral and written communication.
- A basic ability to adapt historical methods and frameworks to original research.

### **Requirements:**

#### *Readings*

Readings form the core learning materials and students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the assigned texts. Readings will be pre-circulated via a shared Dropbox folder in the weeks before the class.

### *Seminar presentations & response papers*

Students are expected to choose one seminar theme, for which they are to provide a 5-10 minute presentation that draws out key themes and questions for class discussion. In addition to the presentation, students will submit a 500 – 750-word written response to the readings for that seminar. Responses should be submitted in hardcopy to the instructor.

A roster will be pre-circulated for students to sign up for their seminar of choice.

### *Final Presentations*

One of the aims of this course is to encourage students to think about how oceanic frameworks, methods and concepts might influence their own research. To encourage this, students will give 10-15 minute presentations on a proposed paper that integrates the course's themes into their research. They will then submit a 1000 word paper abstract, based on the same topic, by 6 December, 2019. Successful proposals will be selected for inclusion in the "Cosmopolitan Cultures and Oceanic Thought: Thinking through history across the Waters" conference, to be held in 2020.

## **Meeting Schedule**

The class meets for two-hour seminars three times a week, and an extended seminar on the 8<sup>th</sup> and final day of the course.

### **Day 1: Modernity, the ocean and the global south**

#### *Readings*

Enrique Dussel, "Europe, modernity and eurocentrism", *Nepantla: views from the South*, 1, 3 (2000), pp.465-78

Wang Hui, "An interview concerning modernity: a conversation with Ke Kaijun", in Wang, *The end of revolution: China and the limits of modernity* (London: Verso Books, 2009), pp.69-104

Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "North Atlantic Universals: Analytical Fictions, 1492-1945," *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 101.4. (Fall 2002): 839-858

### **Day 2: Oceans as Method**

#### *Readings*

Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Verso, 2002), chapter 1

Jeremy Prestholdt, *Domesticating the World: African Consumerism and the genealogies of Globalization* (University of California, 2008), chapter 3

Jace Weaver, *The Red Atlantic: American Indigenes and the Making of the Modern World, 1000-1927* (University of North Carolina Press, 2017), chapter 1

Renisa Mawani, *Across Oceans of Law: The Komagata Maru and Jurisdiction at the Time of Empire* (Duke University Press, 2018), chapter 1

### **Day 3: Slavery**

#### *Readings*

Megan Vaughan, *Creating the Creole Island: Slavery in the Eighteenth-Century Mauritius* (Duke University Press, 2005), chapters 1 and 8

Marina Carter, "Slavery and Unfree Labour in the Imperial Mode," *History Compass* 4/5 (2006): 800-813

Saidiya Hartmann, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (Navayana, 2011), chapter 1

### **Day 4: Race**

#### *Readings*

Jonathon Glassman, *War of words, war of stones: racial thought and violence in colonial Zanzibar* (Indiana University Press, 2011), chapter 1

Paul Gilroy, "Modernity and inhumanity", in Gilroy, *Against race: imagining political culture beyond the color line* (Harvard University Press, 2000), Chapter 2

Achille Mbembe, "The thing and its doubles", in Mbembe, *On the postcolony* (University of California Press, 2001), chapter 4

Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Duke University Press, 2015), chapter 2

### **Day 5: Gender**

#### *Readings*

Tejaswini Niranjana, *Mobilizing India: Women, Music and Migration between India and Trinidad* (Duke University Press, 2006), chapter 1

Gaiutra Bahadur, *Coolie Woman: The Odyssey of Indenture* (Chicago University Press, 2014), chapter 5

Shalini Puri, "Race, Rape and Representation: Indo-Caribbean Women and Cultural Nationalism," *Cultural Critique* 36 (Spring, 1997): 119-163

Hortense J Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book", *Diacritics*, 17, 2, 1987, 64-81

## **Day 6: Law, Piracy**

### *Readings*

Jatin Dua, "Hijacked: Piracy and Economies of Protection in the Western Indian Ocean", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 61, 3, 2019, pp. 479-507

Lakshmi Subramaniam, *The Sovereign and the Pirate: Ordering Maritime Subjects in India's Littoral World* (Oxford University Press, 2016), chapter 3

Johan Mathew, *Margins of the Market: Trafficking and Capitalism Across the Arabia Sea* (University of California Press, 2016), chapter 3

Sebastian R Prange, "A Trade of No Dishonour: Piracy, Commerce and Community in the Western Indian Ocean, Twelfth to Sixteenth Century", *American Historical Review*, 116, 5, 2011, 169-1293

## **Day 7: Global South**

### *Readings*

Walter D. Mignolo, "On Gnosis and the imaginary of the Modern/Colonial world system", in Mignolo, *Local histories/global designs: coloniality, subaltern knowledges, and border thinking* (Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 3-43

Jean and John L. Comaroff, "Theory from the South", in Comaroff and Comaroff, *Theory from the South Or, how Euro America is evolving toward Africa* (Paradigm Publishers, 2012), pp. 1-50

Dilip M Menon, "Thinking about the Global South: affinity and knowledge", in Russell West-Pavlov ed. *Cambridge History of the Global South* (Cambridge University Press, 2018)

## **Day 8**

Student presentations