

## **Forms of Postcolonial and Postsocialist Time: Eternal Presents and Resurfacing Futures**

Taught by Ksenia Robbe, Sanjukta Sunderason and Hanneke Stuit

Dates: 8 February, 22 February, 8 March, 22 March, 5 April 2022 (10:00-13:00)

Location: Amsterdam (see OSL website)

Open to: PhD candidates and RMA students; OSL members have first access. Interested MA students are welcome to participate, but are not able to receive official credits for the course.

Format: 3-hour seminars with active discussion and participation

This course addresses the ways in which literature and art, in their generic capacity for multi-perspective representation, reimagine place and agency within the eternal present inaugurated by the end of the Cold War at the turn of the 1990s. This global discourse of contemporaneity was meant to deconstruct the linear progressive time of modernity that dominated the 20th century. However, arrested within such perceptions of new spatio-temporal fluidities of “the contemporary” were the heterogeneous temporalities of decolonization and democratization in societies that had been negotiating the impacts and afterlives of empire and ideological conflicts of the Cold War across the long 20th century. Today, we observe a certain “return of history” in calls for decolonization that have come to define militant imperialisms and nationalisms across the globe, as well as activist resistance to nation-statist hegemonies. The war in Ukraine, and continuing conflicts over postcolonial sovereignty across former colonial sites like Hong Kong, Kashmir, or Palestine reveal such circularities of eternal presents and resurfacing futures. These temporalities, while appealing to new calls for liberation, are nonetheless often dominated by nation-state driven essentialist past-orientedness and the wish to preserve the existing hegemony. Our course will foreground the proposition that postcolonial and postsocialist societies of the past three decades can be approached as repositories of braided temporalities of struggle, affirmation, memorialization, and utopian horizons. We can encounter here new and alternate versions of contemporaneity that materialize the spectre of emancipatory history via aesthetic form and develop ways of engaging with the past that “resurface” futurity.

We propose to begin thinking about these questions from the postsocialist and postcolonial contexts of the Global South and the Global East which, despite their key role

in the global transformations of the 1980-1990s, are mostly regarded as recipients rather than producers of theory. We will discuss and envision the ways in which the postcolonial and postsocialist are entwined, and how together, they can be approached as analytical perspectives on past and present, beyond particular geographical locations. More specifically, the course will offer a space for thinking about forms of time in literature, film and visual art that can offer figures for understanding the impasse and reaching beyond this condition.

## **Learning objectives**

Participants will

- become acquainted with theories of temporality from postsocialist and postcolonial perspectives and will practice placing them in a dialogue;
- learn to identify aesthetic forms that shape ideas and perceptions of time and temporality;
- train connecting material that they are not immediately familiar with to their own research interests;
- get an inside view on the work in progress of three scholars working in the fields of art history, memory studies and literary studies.

## **Assignments**

From the beginning of the course, participants will pick ideas/themes/concepts/approaches that connect course materials to their own research interests. They will 'curate' this idea during the course by approaching it from different perspectives of the seminars during the following weeks.

For sessions 2-4, all participants will prepare to discuss the primary sources (films, literary texts, or artworks) by formulating a discussion question or identifying a theme that is related to their project. The discussion of these materials will be student-led and organized around these questions.

During the last session, participants will present their curated projects and receive (peer) feedback. The final essays of 3000-4000 words, due 2 weeks after the end of the course, will put this project into academic writing.

## **Preliminary programme**

8/02: Introduction: Approaches to Postsocialist and Postcolonial Time  
Sanjukta Sunderason, Hanneke Stuit, Ksenia Robbe

22/02: Forms of Implication in Post-Soviet and Post-Apartheid Fictions of Witnessing  
(Ksenia Robbe)

8/03: Beyond Impasses of Queer Pastoral Time? (Hanneke Stuit)

22/03: Shadow-Lines: Postcolonial Aesthetics and the Conjunctural Time of Long  
Decolonization in the 20th Century (Sanjukta Sunderason)

5/04: Conclusions and project discussion  
Hanneke Stuit, Ksenia Robbe, Sanjukta Sunderason