

Course Syllabus

[Jump to Today](#)

A6989 HIST

Nature and Infrastructure

3 PTS

M 11 AM – 1 PM 409 AVERY HALL

Ateya Khorakiwala

Email: aak2223@columbia.edu

Office: 3 Claremont Avenue

Office Hours: By appointment

Description of Class

This course pushes back against the notion of infrastructure as a technological elixir or an agent of global capital inserted into landscapes like a *deus ex machina*. Instead, readings approach infrastructure and nature as intertwined theoretical categories as well as material and conceptual systems upon which industrialization and modernization depended. Beginning in the 19th century, readings explore colonial aesthetics of environmental improvement; the political deployment of the sublime and the picturesque, the hygienic modernity of early 20th century architecture; landscape's role in agricultural and industrial development in the new nation-states; 'tropical' modernism of the post-war period; and contemporary discourses around sustainability and ecological infrastructures.

Aims of the class

This course aims to excavate the theoretical and conceptual claims around the themes of, infrastructure, landscape, and nature that are currently emerging from the field of architectural history, while also introducing students to current discourse in South Asian art, architectural, and urban thought. Readings are drawn from multiple disciplinary frameworks and aim to provide the grounds from which to pursue research in architectural history.

Course Requirements

Attendance is mandatory and you are expected to do the required readings as well as participate in discussions in class.

Presentation of reading material for one week of the class.

Paper proposal with a bibliography

Final paper.

Paper Proposal and Bibliography due March 23, 2020

A 2-page paper proposal of a topic of your choice chosen in consultation with the professor. The proposal should state what archival and primary material you plan to use in the paper. It should outline the current literature on the subject and offer possible theses or arguments that you will investigate.

Final Paper due May 6, 2020

Grading:

Class Participation: 10%

Presentation: 20%

Proposal and Bibliography: 20%

Final Paper: 50%

Students with limited experience in writing research papers or writing in academic English are strongly encouraged to seek support at the Columbia College Writing Center:

<http://www.college.columbia.edu/core/uwp/writing-center>Links to an external site.

Students should adhere to standard guidelines regarding academic honesty, such as those described in the GSAS Statement on Academic Honesty, available at:

<https://gsas.columbia.edu/student-guide/research/academic-integrity-and-responsible-conduct-research>Links to an external site.

Course Schedule

(Subject to minor alterations)

January 27

Week 1: Introduction to the class

February 3

Week 2: Nature, snapshots

- Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of judgement*. Translated by James Creed Meredith. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007. [Selections]
- Williams, Raymond. "Ideas of Nature" in *Culture and Materialism: Selected Essays*. Verso, 2005. 67-85.
- Haraway, Donna. "Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin." *Environmental Humanities* 6, no. 1 (January 1, 2015): 159–65. <https://doi.org/10.1215/22011919-3615934> (Links to an external site.).

Deleted: Edmund Burke. *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. Oxford University Press, USA, 1998. [Selections]

Further Reading:

- Biro, Andrew. *Denaturalizing Ecological Politics: Alienation from Nature from Rousseau to the Frankfurt School and Beyond*. Toronto, Ont.: University of Toronto Press, Scholarly Publishing Division, 2005.
- Sheila Jasanoff. *Designs on Nature: Science and Democracy in Europe and the United States*. Princeton University Press, 2011.
- Latour, Bruno. *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy*. Translated by Catherine Porter. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2004.

February 10

Week 3: Infrastructure, interrogated

- Larkin, Brian. "The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 42, no. 1 (2013): 327–43. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-anthro-092412-155522> (Links to an external site.)
[Larkin - 2013 - The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure.pdf](#) 
- Mitchell, Timothy. "Can the Mosquito Speak?" In *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity*, 19–53. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2002.
[Mitchell - 2002 - Rule of Experts Can the Mosquito Speak.pdf](#) 
- Sundaram, Ravi, Post-Postcolonial Sensory Infrastructure, *Journal* #64 April 2015 - e-flux, <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/64/60858/post-postcolonial-sensory-infrastructure/> (Links to an external site.)
- Carse, Ashley. "Nature as Infrastructure: Making and Managing the Panama Canal Watershed." *Social Studies of Science*, April 2, 2012,

0306312712440166. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306312712440166>. (Links to an external site.)

[Carse - 2012 - Nature as Infrastructure.pdf](#) 

February 17

Week 4: Where is the Global South?

- Gramsci, Antonio. "The Southern Question," *Selections from Political Writings* (1921-1926). International Publishers, 1978.
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh. "The Idea of Provincializing Europe" in *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton University Press, 2000.
- Cooper, Frederick. "Globalization" in *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*. University of California Press, 2005.

Further Reading:

- Young, Robert J.C. *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*. 1st ed. Wiley-Blackwell, 2001.

February 24

Week 5: Train and Terrain (The Construction of Colonial Publics)

- Bear, Laura. "An Indian Traveling Public," *Lines of the Nation: Indian Railway Workers, Bureaucracy, and the Intimate Historical Self*. Columbia University Press, 2012.
- Mrázek, Rudolf. "Language as Asphalt," *Engineers of Happy Land: Technology and Nationalism in a Colony*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002.
- Dias, Nélia, "Exploring the Senses and Exploiting the Land: Railroads, Bodies and Measurement in Nineteenth-Century French Colonies" In Tony Bennet, and Patrick Joyce ed. *Material Powers: Cultural Studies, History and the Material Turn*, 2013. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203883877-18> (Links to an external site.).

Further Reading:

- Dutta, Arindam. "Deltas and Deities: Landscapes of the Imperial Picturesque" n.d.
- Guha-Thakurta, Tapati. "The Empire and its Antiquities: Two Pioneers and Their Scholarly Fields," *Monuments, Objects, Histories: Institutions of Art in Colonial and Post-Colonial India*. Columbia University Press, 2004.

- Acciavatti, Anthony. "Constructing the Ganges Water Machine" *Ganges Water Machine: Designing New India's Ancient River*. Applied Research & Design, 2015. 109-210.

March 2

Week 6: The Tropics and Tropes

- Pratt, Mary Louise. "Narrating the anti-conquest" in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. 2nd ed. Routledge, 2007.
- Chang, Jiat-Hwee, and Anthony D. King. "Towards a Genealogy of Tropical Architecture: Historical Fragments of Power-Knowledge, Built Environment and Climate in the British Colonial Territories." *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 32, no. 3 (November 1, 2011): 283-300.
- Legg, Stephen. 2013. "Planning Social Hygiene: From Contamination to Contagion in Interwar India." In *Imperial Contagions: Medicine, Hygiene, and Cultures of Planning in Asia*, edited by Robert Peckham and David M. Pomfret, 105- 22. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Further reading

- Gandy, Matthew. "The Bacteriological City and Its Discontents." *Historical Geography* 34 (2006): 14-25.
- David Arnold. *Colonizing the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth- Century India*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.
- Prashad, Vijay. "The Technology of Sanitation in Colonial Delhi." *Modern Asian Studies* 35, no. 1 (February 1, 2001): 113-55.

March 9

Week 7: Postcolonial Developments

- Ashis Nandy "State" in Sachs, Wolfgang ed. *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*. Zed Books Ltd., 2010.
- Cowen, Deborah. Logistics Cities The "Urban Heart" of Empire *Deadly Life of Logistics, The: Mapping Violence in Global Trade*. Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2014.
- Muzaffar, M. Ijlal, and Aggregate (Group). "Boundary Games: Ecochard, Doxiadis, and the Refugee Housing Projects under Military Rule in Pakistan, 1953-1959." In *Governing by Design: Architecture, Economy, and Politics in the Twentieth Century. Culture, Politics, and the Built Environment*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012.

Further Reading:

- Otto H. Koenigsberger et al, Chapter 8, “Design Aids,” in *Manual of Tropical Housing and Building* (London: Longman, 1974).
- Jazeel, Tariq. “Built Space, Environment, Modernism: (Re)reading ‘Tropical Modern’ Architecture,” in *Sacred Modernity: Nature, Environment and the Postcolonial Geographies of Sri Lankan Nationhood*. 1 edition. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013.
- Vinay K. Gidwani. *Capital, Interrupted: Agrarian Development and the Politics of Work in India*. University of Minnesota Press, 2008.

March 16

Week 8: Spring Break

March 23

Paper proposal and bibliography due

Week 9: The Body and Self

- Nehru, Jawaharlal. “Shirshasana” in *The Essential Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru Volume 1*. Edited by S. Gopal and Uma Iyengar. Vol. 1. 2 vols. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Fanon, Frantz. “The Fact of Blackness” *Black Skin, White Masks*. Translated by Richard Philcox. Revised edition. New York: Berkeley, Calif.: Grove Press, 2008.
- Alter, Joseph S. “Gandhi’s Body, Gandhi’s Truth: Nonviolence and the Biomoral Imperative of Public Health.” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 55, no. 2 (May 1, 1996): 301–22. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2943361> (Links to an external site.).
- Michel Foucault, “Technologies of the Self,” “The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom,” in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, trans. Robert Hurley and others, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 1997).

March 30

Week 10: Expertise and Subjectivity

- Maxwell Fry, and Jane Drew. *Tropical Architecture in the Dry and Humid Zones*. R.E. Krieger Publishing Company, 1982. [Selections]
- LeRoux, Hannah, “The Networks of Tropical Architecture” in *The Journal of Architecture* 8 (Autumn 2003) 337-354

- Martin, Reinhold. "Subjects: Mass Customization," *Utopia's Ghost: Architecture and Postmodernism, Again*. Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2010.
- "Introduction" *Governing By Design: Architecture, Economy, and Politics in the Twentieth Century*. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012.

Further Reading:

- Deshpande, Satish. "Imagined Economies: Styles of Nation-Building in Twentieth Century India." *Journal of Arts and Ideas* 25–26 (1993): 5–35.
- Karim, Farhan. *Of Greater Dignity Than Riches: Austerity and Housing Design in India*. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2019.
- Avermaete, Tom, Maristella Casciato, Yto Barrada, and Takashi Honma. *Casablanca Chandigarh: A Report on Modernization*. Montreal: Centre canadien d'architecture, 2014.

April 6

Week 11: Flows and Inefficiencies

- Khan, Naveeda. "Flaws in the Flow Roads and Their Modernity in Pakistan." *Social Text* 24, no. 4 89 (December 21, 2006): 87–113. <https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-2006-012>.
- Chattopadhyay, Swati. "Flows and Bumpy Roads" in *Unlearning the City: Infrastructure in a New Optical Field*. Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2012. 1-38.
- Sundaram, Ravi. "Death and the Accident" in *Pirate Modernity: Delhi's Media Urbanism*. 1 edition. London; New York: Routledge, 2009. 139-171. <https://www-taylorfrancis-com.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/books/9781134130528>.

Further Reading

- Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," in *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 27–47

April 13

Week 12: Paper Discussions

Students will present their papers and the class will discuss the arguments and ideas that you have put forth.

April 20

Week 13: Paper Discussions

Students will present their papers and the class will discuss the arguments and ideas that you have put forth.

May 6

Final Paper Due

