

Short Term Course on

The Futural Critical Constellations: The Cultural Politics of the Neo-Empire

3 -7 September, 2012

“ Every single empire in its official discourse has said that it is not like all the others, that its circumstances are special, that it has a mission to enlighten, civilize, bring order and democracy, and that it uses force only as a last resort. And, sadder still, there always is a chorus of willing intellectuals to say calming words about benign or altruistic empires, as if one shouldn't trust the evidence of one's eyes watching the destruction and the misery and death brought by the latest mission civilizatrice.”

Edward Said, 2003



Course Outline:

It indeed isn't that “old world” in which our elders lingered, the world of industrial revolutions, a world in which we either reviled against the mechanized world view or upheld it, with the hope that the possibilities it engendered would transport us into some “futural promiseral space”. Indeed, it is no longer what we call a modern world, with dualisms, binaries or embattled Hegelian dialectical opposites, eager to collapse into a synthetical paradigm, 'the futural absolute'. Ours, we are told, is a world of 'post-postmodern globalization'. It is a world where the radicalities perhaps stand normativized. It is here that the realization that what we call the normative, putative or foundational no longer refers to stabilities, self enclosed totalities or firm anchorages to the juridical or the veridical, comes across as a non-performative, dysfunctional irony.

It is, in fact, a world of swiftly multiplying paralogies, the (im) potent in-betweens, the 'threshold spaces', where the ontic yields space to a new complex of interactions—arising out of an unending sequence of repositionings of our priorities, interests and goals—with the rhizomicity of the geo-political and economic network or as one might say with the dizzying flow of the capital. It is a world that Negri prefers to call the “empire”, comfortably ensconcing what critics like Leslie Sklair call the “transnational capitalist class”, “a transnational lumpenproletariat” romancing the “trans-national consumerist culture ideology”. It is a world that does not stage the striated, constricted or dialectically patterned antagonistic divide, between the bourgeois and the proletariat of the Marxian world. Rather it stages the “mad performance” of the antagonism between the “included and the excluded” (in the context of capital-labour market), between the comprador class, the institutional spin doctors, the market strategists and what Agamben calls the *Homo Sacers*, a subversively ironic assemblages / reconfiguration of the faceless, homeless, placeless and stateless subjectivities, exposing the dualisms, the contradictions, the dialectics that the neo-pragmatic postmodernist had laid to rest. However, this isn't a world that stands as an embodiment of the backlash to what both Derrida and Habermas identified while signing a joint manifesto as the “history of subordinate inclusion of colonized societies into structures of global capitalism”. On the contrary, the world in which we live today is one that floods the socio-cultural spaces with market driven ideological pacifiers, with a dangerous potency to sedate the restless pockets of resistance, indicative of what Žižek call the “real” and preparing for what Žižek calls the “act”. It is not merely the exploitative confrontation then between the local and the global that one must put to rest in this world—for such confrontation would always ensure the operability of the dialectics, the performative alliance

with the old world view that contradictions are valid and must prevail. Rather, the need of the hour is to offset the lacerating, murderous antagonisms between the excluded and the included, between the ever expanding pacified conformists and the disgruntled *Homo Sacer*s. The question at this stage is whether a way can be found to etherize these murderous antagonisms. Since the postmodern tools of critical inquiry with its playful and apolitical ethics of differentiability have failed miserably to transcend its a-historical paradigm one needs to explore new ways of formulating the critical lens to address these times of media induced terror, insurgency and *Homo Sacer*.

On the one hand, critics like Alain Badiou have proposed the idea of countering the hegemonic forces of domination with the vision of “performative unity”: “we must affirm the existence of the single world right from the start, as axiom and principle. The simple phrase, 'there is only one world', is not an objective conclusion. It is performative: we are deciding that this is how it is for us.”

On the other, Hardt and Negri's reading of biopolitics, have produced new “hybrid production of subjectivity” and affects, which escapes the capitalist form of value extraction and has therefore challenging ideological possibilities to the formulations of the neo-empire. In fact, in this universe of “productive linguistic networks” the very Subject/Object binary calls for new categories of thought, one that constantly engages with the Real Wars, Real economic menaces and political upheavals of our turbulent times ; manipulating the secret reservoirs of the Symbolic praxis to resuscitate the Real of our ontological Space.

That the course **The Futural Critical Constellations: The Cultural Politics of the Neo-Empire**, which we shall hold from **September 3-7, 2012** shall open up an important site for deliberating on the arrival of yet another dialectical, dialogic, ventroloquical episteme—*post postmodernity* to be precise—goes without saying. In fact, the course aims to go beyond performatively engaging with those syntagmatical epistemic reiterations and “strategic ruptures” that the politics of neo-empire foregrounds. The course shall equally emphasize on what it prefers to see as the third world, in particular Indian—if at all such terms stands valid—responses and epistemic formulations that the politics of the old and the new empire engenders. In other words it shall foreground what it prefers to call the “negotiated epistemic advancement” that India had been having till and alongside the arrival of the cultural politics of the neo empire while providing a discursive space for reflecting and mobilizing the newer strategies to explore our contemporary world where everything seems pregnant with its contrary.

Course Content:

I

Politics of the “Old Empire”: the *un*-dialectical Indian Modernities

- *The Bengal Renaissance : instrumentalising Reason*
- *The Trans-historical Tagore: envisioning the futural dissemiNation*
- *Gandhian Experiments with Truth : rationalizing myths*
- *Sri Aurobindo's cultural self-affirmation: re-inventing Enlightenment*
- *J. Krishnamurti's negation of self: contesting the monolithical Empire*

II

Politics of “Postizing”: laying down the Contours of the Neo-Empire

- *Lyotard and his paralogical discourse: Globalizing the Third world episteme*
- *Derrri/terror/izing the world: re-colonizing Third world episteme*
- *Michel Foucault's Power/Knowledge : politicizing the trans-political*
- *Deleuze and his rhizomic interconnections: (de)(re)validating the Empire*

III

Politics of the (G) local: normativizing the Subaltern episteme

- *Institutionalizing Mimicry: Bhabha and his Mimic Men*
- *Consolidating Subalternity : Spivak and her practical Marxist Feminist Deconstructionist hantological world-view*
- *Occidentalizing the Orient: Edward Said and his “Orient Express” on the Foucauldian tracks.*

IV

Politics of Resistance: Consolidating the fractures within the over-arching Globality

- *Emmanuel Levinas's “Othering the other”: reconfiguring the Occidental self*
- *Frederic Jameson's Valences of the Dialectic: normativizing the Western episteme*
- *Habermas's Intersubjective Communicative paradigm: repositioning the Enlightenment Dialectic*

Politics of the Neo-Empire: new (mis)directions and (im) possibilities

- *Derrida Habermas alliance: fetish/episteme/izing the 9/11*
- *Žižek's Real acts, revolt and revolutions: empowering postcoloniality in the Third world order.*
- *Agamben's (im) potencies, Homo Sacer: Appadurai's Deep Democracy and horizon of politics.*
- *Negri's Empire and Multitude: Dipesh Chakravarty, transit labour and the hole in the Globosphere.*
- *Badiou's Truth Being and Event: Separationist micro-politics of the Third World Maoism and Jihad.*

Note

Each module will be followed by an interactive Session. These sessions would last for 20-25 minutes. Participants are expected to be creative in their responses and engage with the discourses in a productive fashion.

Participants

The course aims to attract Faculty members as well as Research Scholars from Institutions of repute within India, preferably Central universities, State Universities, Centres of Excellence in Research, other IITs and AICTE approved Technical and Management colleges across India. Apart from academicians, we will be happy to accommodate literary critics/creative writers, especially those with keen interest in critical theory and discourse analysis. **The course would also make way for short paper presentations** and interested participants can contact either **Dr. Saswat Das** or **Debarati Dutta** to this end. The course aims to accommodate approximately 50 participants.

Resource Persons

We take pleasure to include the following eminent Speakers, who have kindly obliged to address this Workshop. This is a tentative list.

- Prof. Prafulla C.Kar, Former HOD, Department of English, MS University, Baroda, Director of Centre for Contemporary Thought, Baroda
- Prof. Mrinal Miri, Editor, ICPR, New Delhi
- Prof. Franson Manjali, Department of Philosophy, JNU
- Prof. Saugata Bhaduri, School of literature and language, JNU
- Prof. Pramod.K.Nayar, Central University Hyderabad
- Prof. Simi Malhotra , School of language, literature and Media Studies, Jamia Milia Islamia
- Prof. Prasenjit Biswas, Department of Philosophy, NEHU
- Prof. Sukalpa Bhattacharya, Department of English, NEHU
- Prof. Soumyabrata Choudhury, Department of Philosophy, JNU

How to Apply

Interested participants should download the complete application form from the IIT website and submit the hard copy to the coordinator at the mailing address mentioned below. Last date for receiving applications: **30th August 2012**. Participants would be intimated about other necessary details as soon as they communicate to us. Accommodation would be provided by the Institute facilities.

Registration Fee

Faculty members of various Universities/ UGC approved colleges/AICTE colleges are required to pay **Rs.5000**. **Research Scholars** and **M.Phil Students** can register with **Rs.4000**. No registration fee from faculty and students of our Institute. Kindly pay the registration fee, through a **Bank Draft** drawn in favour of **CEP-STC, IIT Kharagpur**.

Course Dates:

3 -7 September, 2012

Coordinators:

- **Dr. Saswat. S. Das**
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- **Dr. Bhagirath Behera**
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- **Dr. Anindya Sekhar Purakayastha**
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- **Debarati Dutta**
Institute Research Scholar, Dept. of HSS, IIT Kharagpur
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Location:

IIT Kharagpur is situated 116 km away from Kolkata, and it is the oldest and the largest amongst all the IITs. Kharagpur is an important junction in the south Eastern Railways, and is well connected to all major cities in India. The IIT is about 5 km from Kharagpur railway station, and is accessible by rickshaws, autos, and taxis from the station.

Application Form:

Short Term Course on Futural Critical Constellations: The Cultural Politics of the Neo-Empire 3 -7 September, 2012

Name: _____

1. Designation: _____

2. Name of the Institute/University: _____

3. Address for Communication: _____

4. Highest Academic Qualification: _____

5. Phone No.: _____ (M) _____ (R)

6. Email: _____

8. Details about the demand draft: _____

Bank name, Draft number and Date	Amount (In Rupees)

Date:

Signature of Applicant

Approval for Candidates

We approve the above applicant as a candidate for the STC on **Futural Critical Constellations: The Cultural Politics of the Neo-Empire** at IIT Kharagpur.

Date:

Signature and Seal of
Approving/Sponsoring Authority