

CTCS 510 – **Comparison as Method in Asian Media**
Spring 2014
M: 2-5:50pm (SCA 216)

Prof. Nitin Govil
ngovil@usc.edu
(o) W:1215-145 (SCA 317)

Teaching Assistant: Branden Buehler (bwbuehle@usc.edu)

Course Description

This graduate seminar explores contemporary “Asian” media by focusing on comparative methods. Comparison is our theme and primary mode of analysis – however, our aim is to denaturalize and “unthink” comparison, locating it within broader intellectual and ideological trajectories across global and local contexts. The present and historical condition of comparison as the categorically modern form will frame our work this semester. Required readings are drawn from a broad tradition of interdisciplinary inquiry but focus on contemporary film and media studies.

Through an investigation of the production and multiple meanings of comparison as a mediated concept, this course engages sites of linkage and tension between “East and West” as well as exploring the possibilities of rethinking (if not transcending) these longstanding binaries. What is the conceptual future of comparison, given frictions between the local, regional and the global? We will focus on how film and media have engaged the imagination of comparison as a way to *reorient* the structuring tenets of media analysis.

As participants in a graduate seminar, you are obliged to come prepared to every session, having read and assimilated the assigned material prior to our discussions. Discussion, presentations, and writing will also be required.

Required Texts

- Anne Allison, *Precarious Japan*. Duke, 2013
- Roland Barthes, *Travels in China*. Polity, 2013
- Lotte Hoek, *Cut-Pieces: Celluloid Obscenity and Popular Cinema in Bangladesh*. Columbia, 2013
- Felicidad Lim, *Translating Time: Cinema, the Fantastic, and Temporal Critique*. Duke, 2009
- William Mazzarella, *Censorium: Cinema and the Open Edge of Mass Publicity*. Duke, 2013
- Glen Mimura, *Ghostlife of Third Cinema: Asian American Film and Video*. Minnesota, 2009
- Daisuke Miyao, *Aesthetics of Shadow: Lighting and Japanese Cinema*. Duke, 2013
- Jack Qiu, *Working Class Network Society: Communication Technology and the Information Have-less in Urban China*. MIT, 2009
- Rita Felski and Susan Stanford Friedman, eds. *Comparison: Theories, Approaches, Uses*. Johns Hopkins, 2013

- All other required readings will be made available on course Blackboard site

Assessment

One 15-minute in-class presentation:	10%
Six short responses (300-500 words), posted to Blackboard:	6 x 5% = 30%
One position paper/project (abstract + 3000 words or equivalent):	30%
Active class participation/discussion:	30%

Course Schedule

Session 1 – January 13

Introductions

****NO CLASS: January 20 – MLK Birthday****

Session 2 – January 27

Comparison 1

Read: Felski and Friedman, *Comparison*: Introduction, chapter 1 (Radhakrishnan), 2 (Friedman), 5 (Shih), 6 (Mignolo), 7 (Shohat and Stam)

See: *Chung Kuo, China* (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1972): Parts 1 and 2, 150m

Session 3 – February 3

Comparison 2

Read: Felski and Friedman, *Comparison*: chapter 3 (Longxi), 8 (Loomba), 9 (Cheah), 13 (Spivak), 16 (Gordon)

See: *Chung Kuo, China* (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1972): Part 3, 53m

Professione: reporter (*The Passenger*, Michelangelo Antonioni, 1975) clip

L'Inde fantôme: Reflexions sur un voyage (*Phantom India*, Louis Malle, 1969): "The Impossible Camera"

Session 4 – February 10

Luminous Historiography

Read: Miyao, *Aesthetics of Shadow*

See: *Tokyo boshoku* (*Tokyo Twilight*, Yasujiro Ozu, 1957) 141m

****NO CLASS: February 17 – President's Day****

Session 5 – February 24

Affective Publics

Read: Mazzarella, *Censorium*

See: *Bombay* (Mani Ratnam, 1995) 138m

Session 6 – March 3

Comparative Digital Divides

Read: Qiu, *Working Class Network Society*

See: *Hai Shung Chuan Qi* (*I Wish I Knew*, Jia Zhangke, 2010)

Session 7 – March 10

Comparison in Practice 1

Read: 1. Hito Steyerl, "In Free Fall: A Thought Experiment on Vertical Perspective." *The Wretched of the Screen*. Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012. 12-30. BB will post

2. Michael Taussig, *What Color is the Sacred?* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009. 3-25.

3. Mustapha Chérif and Jacques Derrida, *Islam and the West*. Trans. Teresa Lavender Fagan. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008. Selection

See: *Beirut Outtakes* (Peggy Awesh, 2007)

****NO CLASS: March 17 – Spring Recess****

Session 8 – March 24

Uncertainty and the National

Read: Allison, *Precarious Japan*

See: *Hotaru no haka (Grave of the Fireflies, Isao Takahata, 1988)* 89m

Session 9 – March 31

Textual Travel: Semiosis as Journey

Read: Barthes, *Travels in China*

See: *Kyojin to gangu (Giants and Toys, Yasuzo Masumura, 1958)* 95m

Session 10 – April 7

The Fantastic

Read: Lim, *Translating Time*

See: *Janghwa, Hongryeon (A Tale of Two Sisters, Kim Ji-Woon, 2003)* 115m

Session 11 – April 14

Comparison in Practice 2

Read: Mimura, *Ghostlife of Third Cinema*

See: TBA

Session 12 – April 21

Materiality and the Interstice

Read: Hoek, *Cut-Pieces*

Session 13 – April 28

Roundtable: Comparing Comparisons

Read: Us

See: You