Call for Papers
16th Annual South Asian Literary Association (SALA) Conference
Jan. 4-6, 2016 - Austin, TX

Cultural Practices in the South Asian Public Sphere

Questions regarding the public - the readership, the audience, and the recipients - are central to the production and the consumption of almost any work of art. As artists produce their art, the potential audience often plays a role in determining the direction of an artwork, as do the market forces at work in our contemporary world. In addition to the well-established importance of the public, this year’s SALA conference will draw attention to the spaces of the production and consumption of public discourses in South Asia and its diasporas. The goal of the conference is to explore, within any form of art, cultural practices in the South Asian public sphere.

Expanding on Jürgen Habermas’s influential theory of the public sphere as developed in The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere – An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society, various theorists have explored the creation of meaning and negotiation of space in the public sphere beyond Europe and North America. Arjun Appadurai’s Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization, for example, discusses cultural productions in the context of globalization; while Graham Huggan’s The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins exposes exoticist discourses within the field of postcolonial studies. More recently, Nancy Fraser and Kate Nash have examined contemporary constructions of the public sphere in Transnationalizing the Public Sphere. It is in light of these theoretical frameworks and beyond that SALA 2016 invites you to submit abstracts for papers that examine the public sphere in relation to South Asian Cultural Practices.

Possible questions to explore include:

What is the South Asian public sphere? How can it be defined?
Who is part of the public sphere?
What are the implications for a public sphere in the postcolonial context?
How does South Asian studies shift ideas of the public sphere offered by theorists such as Jürgen Habermas, Arjun Appadurai, Stuart Hall, Nancy Fraser and Kate Nash, etc.?
What are the spaces of the public sphere?
How does technology enhance or disrupt the public sphere?
What about the digital public sphere?
What role does gender play in conceptualizations of the public sphere?
What influence does the public sphere exert in our contemporary world?
How has the public sphere changed over time?
Is there such a thing as a “global public sphere”?
How do cultural productions fit into or engage with the public sphere?
What role do the arts play within the public sphere?

We call for papers on literature, film, new media, performance, cultural studies, criticism, activism, or any other field of inquiry. Topics to be examined may include, but are not limited to:
-theoretical examinations of the concept of the public sphere in the South Asian context
-analytical papers that examine representations of the public sphere in any form of art
-globalization of the public sphere
-the public sphere and empire
-the public sphere and agency
-the public sphere and identity formation
-the digital public sphere, the Internet, blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and other social media
-censorship and the public sphere
-the public sphere and graffiti as a social space or a means of subversion and appropriation
-paintings, murals, and statues in the public sphere
-contrapuntal theory and painting
-Orientalism and public spaces
-public spaces and cultural dispossession
-interaction between panopticisum/surveillance and art
-gender and/in the public sphere
-the public sphere in relation to LGBTQIA movements
-the public sphere and sexualities
-the public sphere and processes of democratization, examining hegemony through art
-technology and the public sphere
-the public sphere and memory, public monuments, and political demonstrations
-language and/in the public sphere
-diasporic interpretations of the public sphere
-the public sphere and postcolonial semiotics
-film, soundtracks, and movie theaters in the public sphere
-music and performance in the public sphere, concerts, recitals, readings, dance, and theater
-the public sphere and political opinion
-galleries, museums, and other spaces of/in the public sphere
-architecture and the public sphere
-the public sphere and public health
-the public sphere and education, universities, schools
-the city and public means of transportation in relation to the public sphere
-the public sphere and consumer culture, markets, and shopping malls
-religions and places of worship in the public sphere

Please submit your abstract of no more than 250 words, institutional affiliation, and a/v needs online at http://www.southasianliteraryassociation.org/annual-conference/conference-paper-proposals/ by the firm deadline of September 1, 2015. Notification of acceptance/rejection of abstracts will be sent via email by October 1, 2015.

Please note that all accepted participants will be expected to become members of SALA by October 15, 2015. For membership and other details, please visit the SALA website at http://www.southasianliteraryassociation.org/. Conference participants are expected to present their accepted papers in person. SALA does not encourage proxy presentations or Skype presentations.

If you have any questions, please feel free to email the conference co-chairs Dr. Abdollah Zahiri (Seneca College) at abdyzahiri@gmail.com and Dr. Jana Fedtke (American University of Sharjah) at jfedtke@aus.edu.