

The Ferguson Centre for African and Asian Studies
The Open University

About The Ferguson Centre for African and Asian Studies

A presentation by Dr David Richards
Director

The Ferguson Centre for African and Asian Studies

- established by the Faculty of Arts to promote interdisciplinary research into the cultures of Africa and Asia.
- fosters cultural diversity in academic study and practice by developing and sustaining national and international networks and interdisciplinary collaborative projects which create new forms of scholarship and critical inquiry.

The Centre's interdisciplinary research programme

- ***Discourses: theories, terms and definitions*** - to explore the adequacy of available academic discourses in aesthetic and critical theory, and in cultural and social studies, in defining postcolonial African and Asian cultures.
- ***Histories: transcultural legacies and representations*** - to explore and question received cultural histories, and to consider the consequences of historical narratives for contemporary ideologies.
- ***Idioms: language, image, sound*** - to investigate new forms of cultural production which emanate from Africa and Asia. We will focus on specific cultural expressions, but will also raise wider theoretical issues concerning the intersections between word and image, speech and text, 'migrant' and 'host' populations.
- ***Praxis: cultural politics and identity*** - to explore the politics of 'postcoloniality' manifest in issues of nationality, religion, ethnicity, 'marginality', class, and gender.
- ***Sites: migrant cultures and locations*** - to explore the relationships between migrant communities and locations and to examine how local cultural identities, in the process of transformation, are displayed in cultural productions.

Research is ongoing in the fields of:

Mediterranean Studies;
translation (English, Arabic and French);
social movements;
South Asian history;
popular literature in the 19th and 20th centuries;
Hindi film history;
South Asian religions in the 19th and 20th century;
democratic practice in literary reading;
information outsourcing services;
the characteristics of imperial globalisation;
the history of commodities in the modern era;
cosmopolitanisms in literatures of diaspora;
the Uganda Railway;
on G. V. Desani's *All About H. Hatterr*;
anthropology and archaeology in modernism;
imaginary or 'fantastic' voyages';
the body, issues of identity and representation;
clothing and identity in the South Asian diasporas;
the thought of Nishida Kitaro.

Arab, African and Indian Literatures;
issues of memory and cosmopolitanism;
globalization and cultural development;
film history; visual cultures;
the history of the Theosophical Society;
global cultures of early cinema;
ideas of democracy in international/transnational domains;
the transmissions and rewritings of the Faust myth;
modern colonial cities;
the history of 'development';
relationships between imperial Glasgow and Bombay;
the early history of the journal *Transition*;
early newspaper publication in East Africa;
the use of the 1001 Nights in Indian literature in English;
the representation of the Maghreb;
South Asian popular visual culture
post colonial urban history in India;
the comparison of aesthetic concepts in philosophical systems;

Ferguson Centre Staff

Dr Taieb Belghazi

Ferguson Professorial Fellow

and Professeur de l'enseignement supérieur, Department of English, Faculty of Letters, University Mohamed V, Rabat, Morocco.

- Mediterranean Studies, Arab Literatures, translation (English, Arabic and French).
- Current research is engaged with issues of memory and cosmopolitanism, social movements, globalization and cultural development.

Dr Kaushik Bhaumik

Research Fellow

- South Asian history, film history, visual cultures, popular literature in the 19th and 20th centuries
- Current research is engaged with the history of the Theosophical Society, Hindi film history, global cultures of early cinema and South Asian religions in the 19th and 20th century.

Dr Suman Gupta

**Senior Research Fellow and Senior Lecturer
Literature, Principal Coordinator of the
Globalization, Identity Politics and Social
Conflict (GIPSC) Project**

- Literature, cultural studies and politics.
- Current research is engaged with ideas of democracy in international/transnational domains, transmissions and rewritings of the Faust myth, study of information outsourcing services.

Dr Sandip Hazareesingh

Lecturer and Arts Staff Tutor

- Modern colonial cities, the characteristics of imperial globalisation, the history of 'development', the history and impact of commodities in the modern era,
- Current research is concerned with exploring synchronic relationships and connections between imperial Glasgow and colonial Bombay in the late nineteenth century.

Dr Stephanie Jones

Research Fellow

- South Asian East African (Kenyan, Tanzanian, Ugandan) literature in English; Indian diasporic writing; and modernist aesthetics of exile.
- Current research is on the poetics of community and older cosmopolitanisms in literatures of diaspora; the history of the journal *Transition*; on the Uganda Railway and early newspaper publication in East Africa.

Dr David Richards

Director

- Post-colonial literary cultures particularly Africa and the Caribbean; cultural representations in anthropology, art, literature, and critical theory.
- Current research is on the role of anthropology and archaeology in modernism over the period from 1875 to the present; representations of the Maghreb; 'Fantastic Voyages'.

Ms Heather Scott

Research Centre Secretary

- Pursuing a degree in Art & Design
- The Ferguson Centre for African and Asian Studies
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Dr Emma Tarlo

Research Fellow

- Research interests include South Asian popular visual culture with particular reference to art, clothing, textiles, the body, issues of identity and representation; post colonial urban history in India, focusing on issues of marginality, slum politics, violence and the anthropology of the state.
- Current research focuses on issues of clothing and identity in the South Asian diasporas.

Dr Bob Wilkinson

Deputy Director & Arts Staff Tutor

- The comparison of aesthetic concepts in western and oriental philosophical systems.
- Current research on the thought of the important Japanese thinker Nishida Kitaro; western aesthetics; the translation of certain key aesthetics texts into Spanish.

Collaborations

The Centre Collaborates with:

- Globalization, Identity Politics, and Social Conflict: Contemporary discourses and Texts (GIPSC Project), The Open University
- Classical Studies Department, The Open University
- Faculte des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines, Mohammed V University, Rabat, Morocco
- St Xavier's College, Calcutta
- Cheik Anta Diop University, Dakar, Senegal
- University of Ibadan, Nigeria
- University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
- London Metropolitan University
- University College, Dublin
- The British Empire & Commonwealth Museum, Bristol

Past Events

“Conquests, commodities, and cultures”: Open Door Seminars

October 2003 to June 2004

at the British Empire & Commonwealth Museum, Bristol

- This seminar series was jointly organised by The Ferguson Centre and the British Empire and Commonwealth Museum, Bristol. The theme for the first series was 'Conquests, Commodities, and Cultures' and 15 seminars were hosted by the Museum from October 2003 to June 2004, on subjects ranging from 'smallpox eradication in India', and 'Imperialism and Music in Shanghai's International Settlement', to 'the construction of London and India for the British reading public' and 'Cotton, steamships, and the identification of new trade routes'.

“Classics in Post-Colonial worlds”

**Held on 19-20 May 2004 at
The Open University, Harborne, Birmingham**

This interdisciplinary conference was organised by the Department of Classical Studies and The Ferguson Centre for African and Asian Studies to mark the increasing importance of research on the reception of classical texts and images in the varied histories of colonial and post-colonial societies.

The conference, through its plenary and work-in-progress sessions, promoted debate on current work and sought to advance further cross-disciplinary contacts and collaborations in the study of relevant aspects of material or literary culture: literary and theatre studies, art history, translation studies, architectural history, cultural studies, and the history of education.

Current Events

June – October 2004

"The new orders of difference: The Cultural Discourses & Texts of Economic Migration"

**Held 14-16 July 2004 at Froebel College,
Roehampton University of Surrey**

- An International Conference organised in collaboration with the Globalization, Identity Politics and Social Conflict (GIPSC) Project.
- Contributions to this workshop will approach the theme of economic migration with a particular focus on cultural texts and discourses which will focus on specific migrant groups in specific contexts or on particular aspects of the migration process in specific contexts.

"Imperial globalisation? Trade, technologies, and Transnationalities within the British Empire c.1800-2000

**Held Friday 10 - Saturday 11th September 2004,
at the British Empire and Commonwealth Museum, Bristol**

- This interdisciplinary conference, which will explore for the first time the concept of globalisation in a historical context, is being organised by The Ferguson Centre and the British Empire & Commonwealth Museum.

"Urban generations: Post-colonial cities"

**Held on 1-3 October 2004
at Mohammed V University, Rabat, Morocco**

- This international conference, which will explore the concept of the Post-colonial city, is being jointly organised by the Ferguson Centre, GIPSC Project, Faculte des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines, Mohammed V University Rabat, and the British Council in Morocco.

Future events

October 2004 – September 2005

NEW: Open Seminar series

**October 2004 to June 2005
at the British Empire & Commonwealth Museum, Bristol**

- The next seminar series is currently being planned and is likely to focus on comparative perspectives on European empires and colonies in the twentieth century. If you would like to submit a paper or for further details please contact Dr Sandip Hazareesingh.

"Self and Subject: African and Asian Perspectives"

20 - 23 September 2005

Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh

- Call for Papers for an international conference.
- This conference proposes a double questioning of the subject. It seeks to foreground recent innovative reflections on the status of the individual subject through a questioning of different subject or disciplinary approaches, working on the assumption that as individual lives are formed in increasingly complex "trans-national" contexts, so our methodologies for approaching the subject require re-thinking within and across cultural and disciplinary boundaries.

In prospect: A conference on Postcolonial Spiritualities

For more information please visit our website or contact us.

(Accompanied by a picture of George Bush and the Dalai Lama)

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