

AREA STUDIES AND ITS DISCONTENTS

2018 MESAAS GRADUATE
STUDENT CONFERENCE

22 -23 FEBRUARY

KNOX HALL // COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

KEYNOTE LECTURE by **SIMON GIKANDI**

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Department of Religion

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Department of Middle Eastern, South Asian and African Studies

registration

No formal registration is required. Program materials as well as identification badges for conference presenters may be picked up in the lobby on the first floor of Knox Hall.

keynote lecture

**Thursday, 22nd February, 2018
6:30 pm - 8:00 pm, Location: 509 Knox Hall
Simon Gikandi, Princeton University
“On Utopian Thinking: The Case for a Postcolonial
Future”**



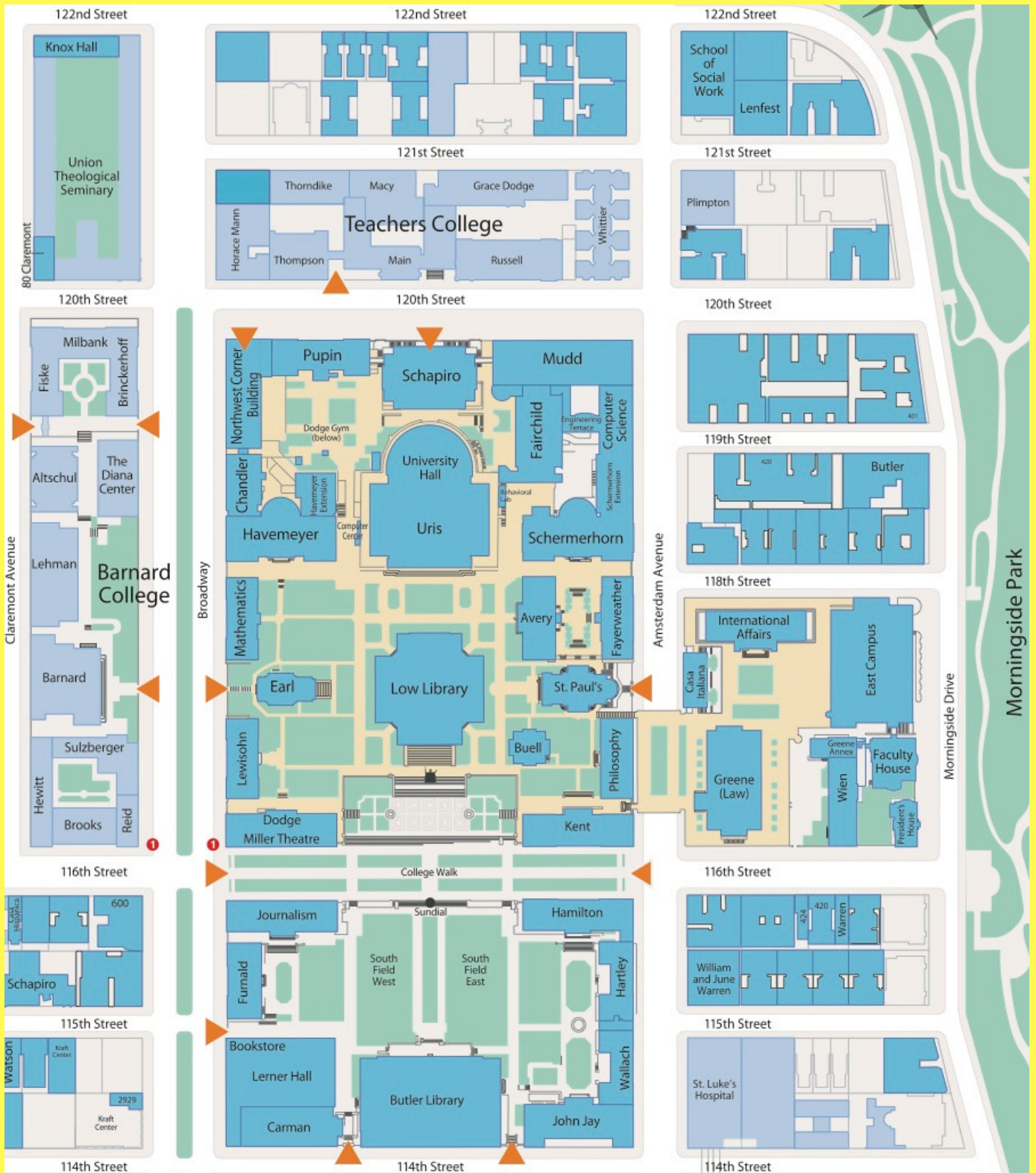
general information

For the ninth consecutive year, graduate students from the Department of Middle Eastern, South Asian and African Studies (MESAAS) invite you to attend a two-day conference, with keynote speaker Professor Simon Gikandi on February 22nd and 23rd, 2018.

In 2010, the conference was entitled “Interdisciplinary Graduate Student Conference on the Middle East, South Asia, and African Studies.” In 2011, it was “Imaginary Geographies,” in 2012, “Sites of Modernity” and in 2013 “Paradigmatic Conflict and Crisis.” For 2014, the conference had no theme but was organized around original work that spoke to the areas of study of the department. This approach was repeated in 2016, under the broad heading “Beyond Boundaries.” In 2017, the conference was entitled “(De)Stabilizing Disciplines, (Re)Imagining Regions,” and sought to problematize modern disciplinary divisions and their epistemological underpinnings.

This year our conference is entitled “Area Studies and its Discontents” and asks if it is possible to constitute the study of Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia in a manner that exceeds the sum of its ‘area study’ parts and around what set of theoretical questions such an integration can be attempted. Panelists will discuss the terms on which we may compare and contrast conceptual vocabularies sourced from these three regions and how colonial structures and rubrics intervene in our scholarship. We have sought ideas and research which can help build a repertory of integrative modes of researching these regions that transcends the orthodox model of area studies.

map



directions

The main campus of Columbia University is located in Morningside Heights, upper Manhattan, at 535 West 116th Street.

knox hall

Knox Hall is located on 122nd street between Broadway and Claremont Avenue. Rooms 207 and 208 are on the second floor, and room 509 is on the fifth floor. All rooms can be accessed by staircase or elevator.

program of events

thursday, 22 february

10:30 am -	□	Translation and its Dilemmas with Taoufik Ben Amor	207
12:00 pm		Time and its Modalities with Gil Hochberg	208
		lunch 12:00 pm - 1:15 pm	
1:15 pm -		Claim Making in South Asia with Sudipta Kaviraj	207
2:45 pm			
3:00 pm -		Islam/s and Modernity/ies with Brinkley Messick	208
4:30 pm			
4:00 pm -		Genealogies of Social Categories with Gil Anidjar	207
5:30 pm			
		refreshments 5:30 pm - 6:15 pm	
6:30 pm -		Keynote Lecture "On Utopian Thinking: The Case for a	509
8:00 pm	□	Postcolonial Future" with Simon Gikandi	

program of events

friday, 23 february

plenary session

10:30 am - 12:30 pm - **The Anthropologist as Reader: A Discussion on
Brinkley Messick's Shari'a Scripts with Brinkley
Messick** 208

panel one

translation and its dilemmas

synopsis

How are concepts used to translate one life world into another? What are the methods and problems of employing concepts that have emerged in one part of the world to make sense of lifeworlds in the regions that we study? What are the limits of trying to capture a concept with the languages of modern social sciences?



discussant

Professor Taoufik Ben Amor, MESAAS, Columbia University

moderator

Thaer Al-Sheikh Theeb, MESAAS, Columbia University



"Text (Granthikam), World (Vyavaharikam) and the Common: Debating Telugu in the Twentieth Century"

Sravanthi Kollu, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

"Edebiyat: Naming the Literary, the New, and the Secular in Ottoman Modernity"

Mehtap Ozdemir, University of Massachusetts-Amherst

"Social Media and Dilemma of Translation: Problematic of Feminism in Pakistan"

Shandana Waheed, New York University

panel two

time and its modalities

synopsis

This panel is an attempt to seek a way out of the modern categories and epistemes through interrogating the very notions of time and history on which they rest. Embracing Benjamin's critique of history and sketch of a renewed historiography, in *One Thousand Years, One Day*, Edmond Amran El Maleh, a Moroccan novelist, proposes a literary allegory of Benjamin's historiography, in which history unfolds in dialectical images, trespassing geographical and historical frontiers, depicting a picture of Modernity and its theology of progress, as a unified catastrophe, from Morocco, to Palestine. Tackling the understanding of time, "Straddling Worldly Time And The Afterlife: Conflicting Temporalities among Mappila Muslims in South India" proposes to explore the struggles of Mappila Muslims in South India as they navigate the dual temporality inscribed in Islamic cosmology.

discussant

Professor Gil Hochberg, MESAAS, Columbia University

moderator

Jared Sacks, MESAAS, Columbia University

"One Thousand Years, One Day, from Morocco to Palestine: A Novelistic Postcolonial Allegory of Benjamin's Critical History"

Fatima-Ezzahrae Touilila, MESAAS, Columbia University

"Straddling Worldly Time And The Afterlife: Conflicting Temporalities among Mappila Muslims in South India"

Mohammed Swalih Eratta-Parambil, Freie University Berlin

panel three

claim making in south asia

synopsis

Given that the dominant language of political modernity in the West is not easily translatable to societies elsewhere, how do we study claims made on institutions, communities and polities in South Asia? In what ways, and to what effect, have colonial legal categories and logics been dislocated, transformed, or de-received in the modern postcolony? The papers on this panel engage nationhood and the politics of religious exclusion in the aftermath of the first declaration of martial law in Pakistan; the Indian political scenario during the Partition of India in 1947 through the lens of statesmanship; and the erosion of constitutionally mandated autonomy in Kashmir in light of its geostrategic importance.

discussant

Professor Sudipta Kaviraj, MESAAS, Columbia University

moderator

Shaunna Rodrigues, MESAAS, Columbia University

"Disturbance, Agitation, Riot: Authority, Law and Order in the 1953 Lahore Riots"
Meher Ali, University of Chicago

"Role of Article 370 in explaining regional dependency in Kashmir: A Political Economy Approach"
S. Babur Hussain, ISEC, India and Elizabeth Mariam, JNU

panel four

islam/s and modernity/ies

synopsis

Are modern categories adequate tools for studying “Islamic” concepts? How might an approach which is critical of the Orientalist substitution of analogy for analysis study “Islamic” discourses? Do “Islamic” concepts acquire a different meaning when mobilized under modern conditions?



discussant

Professor Brinkley Messick, MESAAS, Columbia University

moderator

Fatima-Ezzahrae Touilila, MESAAS, Columbia University



" Is there an Islamic Concept of the Political?"

Dariouche Kechavarzi, INALCO

" The Ethical Framework of Khilafat al-Insan (Vicegerency of the Human)"

Rawan Hammoud, New York University



panel five

genealogies of social categories

synopsis

When we work through abstraction, it is often the case that concepts and categories fail to take into account alternative histories and social realities. These three panelists challenge this rigid approach to social theory. The first talk analyses colonial-national frameworks and the way they underline bias within archaeological work in Palestine. The second presentation tries to rethink the assumption that gay and lesbian identity is compatible with the liberal democratic state. The final talk attempts to redefine Marx's definition of surplus value and rework it into a more open category in light of feminist critiques of orthodox Marxism.

discussant

Professor Gil Anidjar, MESAAS and Religion, Columbia University

moderator

Samyak Ghosh, MESAAS, Columbia University

"(Re)Naming in Jerusalem: An Archaeology of Modern Histories"
B. Lana Guggenheim, London School of Economics

"Rethinking Marx's Surplus-Value: Recentring and rethinking resistance in the Postcolony"
Jared Sacks, Columbia University

"Over the Rainbow: The Dilemmas of a 'Gay and Lesbian and Democratic' State"
Matt Malone, McGill University



THE DEPARTMENT OF MIDDLE EASTERN SOUTH ASIAN AND
AFRICAN STUDIES PRESENTS

**ON UTOPIAN
THINKING:
THE CASE FOR A
POSTCOLONIAL
FUTURE**

**KEYNOTE LECTURE BY
PROF. SIMON GIKANDI
PRINCETON UNIVERSITY**

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY
22ND 2018. 6:30 PM
ROOM 509 KNOX HALL

2018 MESAAS GRADUATE
STUDENT CONFERENCE

PLENARY SESSION

**THE ANTHROPOLOGIST
AS READER: A
DISCUSSION OF
BRINKLEY MESSICK'S
SHARI'A SCRIPTS**

**WITH PROFESSOR BRINKLEY MESSICK,
SOHAIB KHAN, ASEEL NAJIB, JOHN
HALLIWELL, UPONITA MUKHERJEE, PRASHANT
IYENGAR, AND WENDELL H. MARSH**

**FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 23RD
2018. 10:30 AM
ROOM 208 KNOX HALL**

special thanks to

keynote speaker

Simon Gikandi

conference organizers

Basma Radwan and Niyati Shenoy

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Michael E. Fishman, Charles Jester, Jessica Rechtschaffer, Mamadou Diouf, Sudipta Kaviraj, Mana Kia, Gil Hochberg, Gil Anidjar, Brinkley Messick, Taoufik Ben Amor

conference volunteers

Thaer Al-Sheikh Theeb, Fatima-Ezzahrae Touilila, Prashant Iyengar, Shaunna Rodrigues, Sourav Chatterjee, John Halliwell, Jared Sacks, Karim Maged Malak, Samyak Ghosh

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