

The Syllabus

The Cosmopolitan #36

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Academic

The Ambiguous Politics of Improvisation: Utopia to Revanchism in Belgrade

Jill Pope | Eurasian Geography and Economics

"...improvisation has predominantly been used to theorize inventive, creative practices of resistance amongst marginalized communities...[in an] implicit designation of improvisation as an emancipatory practice...Two different types of urban improvisation...utopian and revanchist...reveal the practice's political ambiguity as it is used by different groups to pursue radically different visions of Belgrade's future."

Why Muslims Join the Muslim Wing of the RSS

Felix Pal | Contemporary South Asia

"The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) – the paramilitary corps that animates the contemporary Indian Hindu nationalist movement – increasingly relies on its Muslim wing to bolster its denials of extremism...understanding how the RSS does or does not 'win over' India's Muslim communities is necessary groundwork to address the position of minorities in a Hindu nationalist future."

Indigenizing the Cold War in Malaysia and Singapore: Interethnic Decolonization, Developmental Syntheses and the Quest for Sovereignty

Alan Chong | Asian Perspective

"...during the period 1945–1991, political currents on the ground in Malaysia and Singapore were pushing for the establishment of postcolonial authority, social peace, and economic prosperity. The Cold War struggle between 'communism' and 'democratic capitalism' was highly refracted, even distorted... [as part of an] indigenization of the Cold War for local purposes."

Can China Remake Regional Order? Contestation with India over the Belt and Road Initiative

Lai-Ha Chan | Global Change, Peace & Security

"...China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) can be understood via the lens of regional ordering, whereby China attempts...to socialise regional states...in order to have their consent to its leadership...India uses the 'debt trap diplomacy' narrative to delegitimise China's infrastructure investment activities...[and] is networking with other like-minded countries to promote a 'free and open Indo-Pacific'."

Law and Liberal Pedagogy in a Post-Socialist Society: the Case of Poland

Marta Bucholc | Journal of Modern European History

"...the interrelations between law, state, and culture in the design of Polish economic liberalism after 1989...[can be understood through the] notion of 'liberal pedagogy'...The vulnerability of the liberal project...[emerges] as a consequence of the liberals' failure to appreciate the inseparability of the symbolic, epistemic, and organizational facets of the state's institutional functionalities, including law-making."

Rule by Bosses? Criminal Political Economies in South Asia

Michael Levien | Journal of Agrarian Change

"[The book] Mafia Raj provides fascinating ethnographic insight into South Asia's criminal bosses. But is "Mafia Raj" reducible to rule by bosses? And what explains the criminalization of capitalism in South Asia? While the volume does answer these questions, it illuminates the need for an agrarian political economy of criminal capital."

Passing the Torch: Iran's 2013 Surprise, the Digital Generational Gap, and the Depoliticization of Public Intellectuals

Amirhossein Teimouri | International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society

"Scholars of the sociology of intellectuals have proposed that the decline of public intellectuals is due to...professionalization...[However,] perceptions of regime dynamics...can pave the way for the depoliticization of public intellectuals...[During] Iran's 2013 presidential race...[the] political authority of public intellectuals was challenged by an emergent generation of tech-savvy activists..."

Books

Desired States: Sex, Gender, and Political Culture in Chile

Lessie J. Frazier | Rutgers University Press

"This book challenges the notion that in some cultures, sex and sexuality have become privatized and located in individual subjectivity rather than in public political practices and institutions."

Entrepreneurs and SMEs in Rwanda: Conspicuous by Their Absence

David Poole | Zed Books

"This book deconstructs the myths around SMEs, and reveals how neoliberal approaches towards microcredit and related programs have failed to address the real obstacles to SMEs in countries like Rwanda, effectively setting up these enterprises to fail."

American Slavery and Russian Serfdom in the Post-Emancipation Imagination

Amanda B. Bellows | University of North Carolina Press

"This book argues that these widely circulated depictions shaped collective memory of slavery and serfdom, affected the development of national consciousness, and influenced public opinion as peasants and freedpeople strove to exercise their newfound rights."

Journalism & Essays

Starvation Politics in Honduras

Jared Olson | El Faro

"Invoking the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and reiterating the state's responsibility to provide assistance to the poor, Honduras Solidaria, an emergency response plan ordered by President Juan Orlando Hernández's executive decree on March 28, is intended to help Hondurans at risk of starvation during the COVID-19 shutdown."

Neoliberal Visions: Exploring Gendered Adverts and Identities in the Palestinian West Bank

Polly Withers | LSE Middle East Centre

"...despite this surge in debates on music, art, theatre and film, commentary on commercial culture in general and advertisements in particular remains peculiarly absent."

To Rebuild the Economy, India Needs to Be Atmanirbhar in Ideas

Pulapre Balakrishnan | The Wire

"India has for too long adopted imported ideas such as the recommendations of the Washington Consensus without assessing their intrinsic worth or suitability."

Reports, Dissertations, & Miscellaneous

Gramsci in the Postcolony: Hegemony and Anticolonialism in Nasserist Egypt

Sara Salem | Theory, Culture and Society

"Through an exploration of the Nasserist project in Egypt—the only instance of hegemony in modern Egyptian history—[this work] shows how colonialism and anticolonialism were central to the formation of Nasserist hegemony."

Two Paths to Dominance: Military Businesses in Turkey and Egypt

Zeinab Abul-Magd | Carnegie Middle East Center

"Turkish military businesses began in the 1960s with the creation of a compulsory pension fund to provide capital for its large holding company, Ordu Yardımları Kurumu (OYAK). Today, OYAK controls nearly \$20 billion in assets and dozens of principal and subsidiary firms that invest in iron, steel, and cement, as well as in the automotive, finance, logistics, and energy sectors."

The Rise of the Investor State: State Capital in the Chinese Economy

Hao Chen, Meg Rithmire | Harvard Business School

"...state capital can be deployed strategically, for example to respond to financial crisis or facilitate industrial upgrading, but also generates moral hazard, resulting in corruption and resource misallocation, and international alarm about the intentions of Chinese firms."

Videos

Migration, the U.S. – Mexico Border, and Covid-19

Stefano M. Bertozzi | UC Berkeley Center for Latin American Studies

"This talk discusses, in the light of the COVID-19 crisis, recent draconian changes in U.S. immigration policies, and conditions in Mexico for migrants and asylum-seekers barred from entering or deported by the United States."

Day and Night, Palestinians Are Facing a Settler-Colonial Machinery of Oppression

Vijay Prashad, Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian | NewsClickin

"This talk focuses on the nature of Israeli settler-colonialism, the killing of Iyad al-Hallaq and the various forms of resistance to occupation."

How Is the COVID-19 Pandemic Affecting the Africa-Europe Partnership?

Marianne Hagen | Norsk utenrikspolitisk institutt

"Can Europeans generate enough foreign policy unity at home to engage more strategically in their relationship with Africa, and prove that their undertakings to 'restart' the partnership are not only empty words?"

Podcasts

Guerrilla Marketing: Counterinsurgency and Capitalism in Colombia

Alexander L. Fattal | New Books Network

"The podcast investigates the Colombian government's campaign to turn Marxist guerrilla fighters in the FARC into consumer citizens. How marketing became a tactic of counterinsurgency?"

The Islamic State in Their Own Words

Haroro J. Ingram, Craig Whiteside | Middle East Brief

"A discussion of the Islamic State leadership and organizational aspects in the period after the killing of Zarqawi, but before the group's take over of Mosul."

Eddie Huang, Afro-Asian Solidarity & How a Fistful of Rice Fueled a Democracy

Esther Kim | Meant To Be Eaten

"Discussing the jumeokbap—how this little fistful of rice fueled the South Korean democratic revolution, and is now making a comeback, sustaining those on the COVID frontlines."

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