Post-colonial modern architecture in South Asia
Instructor: Ishraq Khan
Yale Summer Session
Summer 2022

Course Description & Goals
The course is a critical survey of architecture in the Indian subcontinent from 1940s-1970s and explores questions of modernity, post-colonial identity and development reflected in the arts during this significant post-partition political moment. Within the cold war context of technical assistance programs and ambitious nationalist planning, the course considers the interconnections, contradictions and political subtexts of built work, and the agency of local architects as they negotiate the contours of a new regional architecture.

The course engages with buildings, drawings and writings on architectural projects in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, including the work of architects Balkrishna Doshi, Achyut Kanvinde, Charles Correa, Geoffrey Bawa, Valentine Gunasekara and Muzharul Islam, aiming to expose the historical, economic, political and other complexities that defy a linear telling of their architectural history. It will be taught as a reading seminar, each class beginning with an introductory lecture.

Assignments & Evaluation
1. Class participation and discussions (10% of total grade)
The class is partially in seminar format and students are expected to complete all required readings and to engage to in critical discourses in class bringing sections of the highlighted texts where applicable to guide or lead discussions. 100% attendance is expected.

2. Reading presentation (20% of total grade)
15 min presentation on weekly selection of readings (on selected day), highlighting key themes and questions to lead the class discussion. (Can include slides)

3. Midterm writing assignment (30% of total grade)
A brief historical analysis of a South Asian building from 1940s-60s critically discussing themes and questions introduced in class readings and discussions. 1000 words

4. Final writing assignment (40% of total grade)
A critical paper on a theme or question introduced in the class. Topic to be pre-discussed with instructor and an abstract and brief bibliography will be due during the last week of classes. 2500 words

*All written assignments must be in doubled spaced Times New Roman font, following the Chicago Manual of Style. They must be submitted by email to the instructor.

Academic Integrity Statement

“Academic integrity is a core institutional value at Yale. It means, among other things, truth in presentation, diligence, and precision in citing works and ideas we have used and acknowledging our collaborations with others. In view of our commitment to maintaining the highest standards of academic integrity, the following forms of behavior are specifically prohibited: cheating on examinations, problem sets and all other forms of assessment; falsification and/or fabrication of data; plagiarism, that is, the failure in a dissertation, essay or other written exercise to acknowledge ideas, research, or language taken from others; and multiple submission of the same work without obtaining explicit written permission from both instructors before the material is submitted. Students found guilty of violations of academic integrity are subject to one or more of the following penalties: written reprimand, probation, suspension (noted on a student’s transcript) or dismissal (noted on a student’s transcript).”
Lecture Plan

Week one: Modern architecture & the Indian subcontinent

Session 1: The project of Modern nation building and recurring themes in post-colonies

Discussion topics: The expanded scope of the ideas of Modernism in a post-colonial context, new resolutions in independent South Asian nations to use architecture to project a new independence and to solve problems of infrastructure, industry and housing. The role of independent groups like MARG in India, nationalist initiatives and schemes to modernize and decolonize architectural thinking.

Readings:
   - Frampton, K., “South Asian Architecture: In Search of a Future Origin”, pp. 10-12
   - “India: Problems and Prospects”, in pp. 7-10
   - “Roots and Modernity”, pp. 12-23

Session 2: The work of Louis Kahn & Le Corbusier

Discussion topics: Parliament projects in Chandigarh, Islamabad and Dhaka, and Le Corbusier and Kahn’s projects in Ahmedabad, exposing markers of context and culture as well as contradictions and complexities of political as well as climatic conditions reflected in the designs. The role of architects from abroad in establishing Modernist concepts in the subcontinent.

Readings:

**Week two: Symbolism & Tropicalism**

Session 1: Using cultural symbols

**Discussion topics:** Attempts to decolonize architectural work through the use of cultural or religious symbolism. Indian architects’ use of the mandala or other symbols and tropes to connect to a distant past compared to Pakistani architects’ attempts to represent Islamic motifs and ideas in their work.

**Readings:**
   - BV Doshi, “Social Institutions and a Sense of Place”, pp.13-24

Session 2: Exploring a tropical identity

**Discussion topics:** The use of climatic features and markers in designs, their problematic roots in the colonial study of tropicalism and their reinvention in a post-colonial context using the image of the existential pavilion, permeable walls, parasol roof and courtyards.

**Readings:**
5. Anoma Pieris, “Modernism at the margins of the vernacular: considering Valentine Gunasekara”, in *Grey Room*, No.28 (Summer 2007), pp-56-85

**Week three: Projects of Development**

**Session 1: Institution building**

**Discussion topics:** Projects funded by the influx of foreign development aid or governments looking to expand or redesign national institutions, to discuss the scope of such work and its political implications.

**Readings:**
2. Seminar on Architecture, March 1959, New Delhi, Lalit Kala Akademi, 1959
   
   [https://architexturez.net/doc/az-cf-168611](https://architexturez.net/doc/az-cf-168611)

   Jawaharlal Nehru, inaugural address.

**Session 2: The problem of Housing**

**Discussion topics:** Housing projects by local architects as well as those from abroad, attempting to address issues of mass migrations, growing populations and the reflection of regional styles.

**Readings:**

**Week four: Projects of Independence**
Session 1: Rural development projects

**Discussion topics:** Rural development projects by Constantinos Doxiadis, Albert Mayer and others which explore how developmentalist ideas were decentralized and how architects began to consider rural planning and landscape ideas that reflect regionalist ideas and tropes.

**Readings:**
   3. Inner Democratization
   5. Village Participation

Session 2: New landscapes

**Discussion topics:** New uses and interpretations of landscape ideas to negotiate concepts of independence and identity.

**Readings:**
1. Labib Hossain, Representing Landscape, Mediating Wetness: Louis Kahn at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar (East Pakistan/Bangladesh), in Vikram Prakash, Maristella Casciato and Daniel Coslett eds. Rethinking Global Modernism; Architectural Historiography and the Postcolonial, Routlegde 2022

**Week five: Displaying progress**

Session 1: Architectural exhibitionism

**Discussion topics:** Art and architecture exhibitions and exchanges which served as platforms for displaying new styles and ideas of the post-colonial era. The politics of display and the place of memory and nostalgia in interpreting a regional Modernism. Critical contextualization of the South Asian Architecture exhibition at the MoMa in 2022, *The Project of Independence: Architectures of Decolonization in South Asia*
Readings:
1. Brown, Rebecca, Displaying Time: the Many Temporalities of the Festival of India (Global South Asia), University of Washington Press (2017)
   -1954 International Exhibition of Low-Cost Housing, New Delhi, India, p.47

Session 2: Short student presentations on final paper topics

*The Reading list will later be divided into required and suggested readings.*