Instructor: Arvind Rajagopal

Course Description
This course examines concepts of the public sphere and its formation in relation to modernity, visual culture, media formation, and modern subjectivity. We will begin with two distinct but related arguments about the public-private opposition, namely Habermas’s influential formulation drawing on Kant, and Hannah Arendt’s formulation that draws on ancient Greek philosophy. In this course we will consider the problems attending any attempt to construct a theoretical genealogy for the terms public and private, and examine as well specific cultural-political mobilizations and technoinstitutional elaborations of these terms, and some of the implications arising from these definitions, mobilizations and instantiations.

Learner Objectives
Define the genealogies for the concepts of the public, private, and the public sphere
Identify the relationship of concepts of the public and private to modernity and to modern technologies, media, and visual culture
Critique concepts of public and private in relationship to power, gender, class, and citizenship
Analyze the concept of counter publics and alternative publics as means to reconceptualize and reconfigure theories of the public sphere

Course Requirements
Attendance and active participation at weekly seminar is required. You will present a 2-3 pages long response to each week’s readings to me at each class. The responses are not required to be comprehensive overviews; they can respond to specific insights you have, or issues the authors raise, or close readings of particular passages that you feel the need to explore in some depth. These responses will carry 40% of the total grade. There will also be a final exam that is worth 60% of the grade.
Required Readings

Books
Michel Foucault, *The Politics of Truth* (Semiotext(e) / Foreign Agents), 2007.

Other selections will be distributed in pdf.

Weekly Syllabus

**Weeks One and Two: Formulations and Instantiations of the Public and the Private**
Reading:

**Week Three: Mediating the Enlightenment**
Reading:
Michel Foucault, *The Politics of Truth* (Semiotext(e) / Foreign Agents) (Paperback) by. Semiotext(e), 2007.
Week Four: The Popular Before the Ascent of the Bourgeoisie
Reading:

Week Five: The Pre-History of the Bourgeois Public Sphere
Reading:

Week Six: Race, Gender and the Enlightenment
Reading:

Week Seven: Violence and Legitimation
Reading:

Week Eight: Early Cinematic Publics
Reading:

Week Nine: Spectacular Capitalism
Reading:

Week Ten: Communist and Postcommunist public spheres-I
Reading:
Week Eleven: Communist and Postcommunist public spheres-II
Reading:

Week Twelve: Metropolitan Spaces
Reading:
(selections)

Week Thirteen: Mobile Publicities
Reading:

Week Fourteen: Millennial Formations
Reading:
(Selections)