

University of Hawaii at Manoa

Sociology Department Colloquium Presents

Co-sponsored by the Rama Watumull Collaborative Lecture Series, Centre for South Asian Studies

De-Nationalizing the Transnational, Historicizing the Global: Methodological Issues in Migration and Diaspora Studies



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Radhika Mongia is Associate Professor of Sociology and faculty with the graduate programs in Sociology, Gender, Feminist and Women's Studies, Political Science, and Social and Political Thought at York University, Toronto. Her research is situated at the intersection of history, law, and political theory and explores the makings of the global modern. Among other venues, her research has appeared in journals such as *Public Culture*, *Gender & History*, *Cultural Studies*, and *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. Mongia is the author of *Indian Migration and Empire: A Colonial Genealogy of the Modern State* (Duke University Press and Permanent Black Press, 2018).

Abstract: Whether alarmist or optimistic, pronouncements in the 1990s regarding the decline, if not the impending demise, of the nation-state were premised on a willful blindness to crucial aspects of domains such as migration. In this domain, the continuing salience of the nation-state was patently evident in a state monopoly over the regulation of mobility, writ large in, for instance, the technology of the passport. This talk explores the contemporary state in relation to migration with two aims: First, it seeks to historicize the nation-state in relation to migration control. This historicization reveals how the emergence of the nation-state, as an entity encasing a fixed territory and a fixed population understood in specifically national terms, is itself enmeshed in a complex history of a racialized regime of global migration. In this regime, nationality functions as an alibi for race. Second, the talk addresses the vexed issue of the distinction between the colonial state and the modern state. Though they are coeval formations, the former is characterized by differentiated legal regimes, most notably for the colonizer and the colonized. The hallmark of the latter is the production of formally equal and equivalent subjects (i.e., liberal citizens). The paper argues that the differentiated legal regimes that subtend the citizen/migrant distinction, now normalized across the world, constitute the generalization, or globalization, of the colonial state. In other words, the very form of the modern state is now indistinguishable from the colonial state. To make these arguments, the paper draws on archival materials and debates concerning state regulation of Indian migration in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a rich array of theoretical literatures, and the incontrovertible evidence from varied contemporary state formations.

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