

Affective Publics - Lecture Series

Prof. Subarno Chattarji, DPhil

“GOOKS, go home!”

Vietnamese in the United States

AFFECTIVE SOCIETIES

Friday, 25th June

09.30 am

online

[Meeting Link](#)

[\(Click here\)](#)

After the fall of Saigon in April 1975 more than half a million Vietnamese arrived in the US. While the politics of the Cold War shaped US government policy, and refugees were welcomed since they were fleeing Communist persecution, ordinary Americans were less enthusiastic about the aliens in their midst. Racist language and violence were a facet of everyday life for the newly arrived. The paper will attempt to outline two related threads. It will trace a genealogy of racial perceptions and receptions of alien others dating back to Native Americans and the Chinese, to highlight the affective linguistic registers that justify verbal and actual violence against these others, and their moral and political economies. There is thus not only an ideological underpinning of America as white, Anglo-European but racial typologies that sustain the everyday othering of Asians. Following this genealogy, the paper will propose a link between the usage of racist language regards Asians (and Vietnamese Americans, specifically) and the emotions acceptable in public events such as the January 6 2021 Capitol riots. While the Capitol riots were a spectacular mediatized event, Vietnamese American lives are emblematic of less dramatic, everyday negotiations with(in) racial “zones of contact”. A brief analysis of Lan Cao’s novel, *Monkey Bridge*, will conclude the paper to think about “the ache of unrecoverable dreams,” the processes of exclusion and silencing, belonging and home.



Subarno Chattarji is Professor in the Department of English, University of Delhi. He has also taught in Japan and Wales. He studied at the Universities of Delhi and Oxford.

© Image: Subarno Chattarji