**State Level Seminar**

***Bodies, Spaces and Power*: Perceptions and Contestations**

**29 January 2018**

**Organized by Department of English, Aliah University, Park Circus Campus**

Scrambling for spaces has been an instinctive and primal activity among Human Beings. Even, migrant, nomadic groups fought for best tracts with potential for hunting and later cultivation. In civilized societies this instinct manifested itself as tendencies of colonization since the early modern period and in the contemporary times as gentrification where urban, sophisticated bands intruded and interpolated into comparatively less sophisticated spaces. Such spaces ultimatelyhad undergone a drastic make- over or even a loss of identity in the process. Intrusion into and claiming of spaces has always had an ulterior objective of power which involved subjugation of bodies and beings.The lust for power in modern societies shaped itself into an organized state apparatus which Michel Foucault in his book, *Discipline and Punish*(1975),describes as an historical transformation in the exercise of power. Essentially, power is a relationship between people in which one affects another's actions. Power differs from force or violence, which affects the body physically and psychologically. It involves making a free subject do something that he would not have done otherwise: power therefore involves restricting or altering someone's will. Power is present in all human relationships, and penetrates throughout society. The state does not have a monopoly over power, because power relations are deeply unstable and changeable. Having said that, patterns of domination do exist in society. Henri Lefebvre, argued in *TheProduction of Space* (1971)that spatial patterns are not absolute but are shaped by the social and economic systems dominated by institutions and individuals who wield political power. In most of the societies, men traditionally have exerted the greatest social and economic power and have influenced the spaces around them to meet their needs. Some locations benefit, and others are disadvantaged as a result of these dominant forces. Similarly those individualswithout power like minorities, women and LGBT groups are restricted from using the favored spaces, causing spatial inequality. For Petra Doan this “tyranny of gender” (“The tyranny of gendered spaces – reflections from beyond the gender dichotomy”2010) demonstrates how being gendered is not an innate, essentialized identity. Doan’s work engages not only with how spaces are highly gendered but also how the gender binary is spatialized. The recognition of “intersectionality” reveals the complexity of gendered experiences in tension with race, ethnicity, class,caste, age, or sexuality. We know that experiences of being gendered vary across places, contexts, and political regimes. Gender is continuously being remade at different scales, through national legislation, literary representation and changing life circumstances, thereby presenting different layers of complexity for coherent analysis. Shifting patterns of gender relations also reflect the success of numerous political contestations and social movements to claim greater rights. Despite these evident advances, women, minorities and LGBT groups continue to endure an unequal position in society.

This State Level Seminar seeks therefore to examine gendered human bodies’ and minorities’ interactions with the political and social and cultural spaces in which they operate.

We invite proposals for individual papers, posters, and creative presentations for this seminar. Possible topics for presentations include but are not limited to:

• Colonization, occupation, gentrification: contestation and negotiation

• Intersectionality of oppressions

• Prisons, incarceration, surveillance of bodies, and the modern police state

• Depictions of the body in media and popular culture and Literature

• Modes of self-disciplining, training, or containing the body

• Rape culture, issues of consent, trespass, bodily integrity and boundaries

• Women and minorities in academic spaces

• Postmodern/fluid/plastic/virtual bodies

**All are welcome.**

Those interested in obtaining certificates need to register on spot, with prior intimation to the conveners within January 26, 2018. Registration Fee: Rs.300 (includes certificate, seminar kit, and a working lunch)

**Conveners:**

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