

SPRING 2015 COLLOQUIA SERIES

Date: Wednesday, April 15

Time: 3:15 – 5PM

Location: Social Sciences 1, room 261



Dr. Juned Shaikh

Assistant Professor,

Department of History, UC Santa Cruz

Revolutionary Desires, Spatial Entanglements: Dalit Literature and Bombay City, 1950-1982

Marathi Dalit literature produced a Dalit public and articulated a Dalit identity in the 1960s and 70s. By the end of the 1970s, Dalit literature was recognized as a distinctive category of Marathi literature; newspapers and magazines devoted special supplements to discuss it and the Marathi literature Department of Bombay University hired faculty teaching Dalit literature. Three recurring themes of Marathi Dalit literature suggest the spatial entanglements that produced it: a) the revolutionary transformation of the self and society, a theme that borrowed from and resonated with the desire for revolutionary change across the world in the 1960s and 70s b) the depiction of housing as a symbol of Dalit marginality which this paper puts in the context of the urban transformation of Bombay city in which slums were an eyesore, but a political-economic necessity c) the representation of villages and Dalits in villages as the subject of backwardness that needed to be transformed with the raising of political consciousness. The themes of revolution, urban built environment, and rural/agrarian transformation also reflect the entanglements of spatial scales - global, regional/national, and urban/rural that shaped Dalit lives in Bombay city. In other words, the paper argues that the social space of Dalit literature in this period was shaped by events and processes that had different temporalities that were articulated in the city at the time of significant projects of urban transformation and regional and global political-economic change. I elucidate this point through the study of literature, housing reports, newspapers, and pamphlets.