

# Religion and performance in Java and Bali

Spring 2008

HREL 49600  
Wed 3:00-5:50pm  
Swift Hall Room 208

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Office Hours: Thurs. 12:30-2:30pm

This course examines the relationship between religion and performance through an analysis of theatrical and related traditions of Java and Bali. In addition to classical forms of masked drama, dance opera and shadow theatre, we will also consider more recent developments in popular music and television with a special emphasis on their importance for our understanding of religion, power and the nation. Although focused primarily on materials from Java and Bali, this course is explicitly directed to a broader series of pressing theoretical issues for scholars working in the history of religions. With this end in mind, a set of opening questions have been provided for each session that focus both on the specific materials in question, as well as on their more general import for the historical study of religion and performance.

## Course requirements

- Complete and careful reading of all course material.
- Regular attendance and active participation in discussion.
- At least two in-class presentations, each with a discussion paper of approximately 1000 words.
- One paper of approximately 3000 words; details TBA.
- All work **must** be submitted on time; no incompletes will be granted for this course, except on grounds of major life disruption.

## Course books available at the Seminary Cooperative bookstore

- Emigh, J. (1996) *Masked performance: The play of self and other in ritual and theatre*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Geertz, C. (1980) *Negara: The theatre state in nineteenth century Bali*. Princeton: PUP.
- Keeler, W. (1987) *Javanese shadow plays, Javanese selves*. Princeton: PUP.
- Sears, L.J. (1996) *Shadows of empire: Colonial discourse and Javanese tales*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.
- Spies, W. & B. de Zoete (2002 [1938]) *Dance and drama in Bali*. Singapore: Periplus editions.
- Vickers, A. (2005) *Journeys of desire: A study of the Balinese text Malat*. Verhandelingen Van Het Koninklijk Instituut Voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde. Leiden: KITLV.

## Additional course materials available through CHALK website and on library reserve

- Becker, A.L. (1979) 'Text-building, epistemology and aesthetics in Javanese shadow theatre'. In A.L. Becker & A.A. Yengoyan (eds.) *The imagination of reality: essays in Southeast Asian coherence systems*. Norwood, N.J.: Ablex.
- Excerpts from Heimarck, B. (2003) *Balinese discourses on music and modernization: Village voices and urban views*. New York & London: Routledge.
- Frederick, W.H. (1982) 'Rhoma Irama and the *dangdut* style: Aspects of contemporary Indonesian popular culture'. *Indonesia*. Vol. 34: 102-130.
- Hobart, M. (2000) 'Cabbages or kings? Balinese rulers as articulators of worlds'. *After culture: Anthropology as radical metaphysical critique*. Denpasar, Bali: Duta Wacana University Press.
- Hobart, M. (2006) 'Entertaining illusions: How Indonesian élites imagine reality TV affects the masses'. *Asian journal of communication*. 16(4): 393-410.

- Hobart, M. (2007) 'Rethinking Balinese dance'. *Indonesia and the Malay world*. 35(101): 107-28.
- Hobart, M (n.d.) *The prince of Nusa Penida redeems his vow; A prèmbon*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Moerdowo, R.M. (1977) *Reflections on Balinese traditional and modern arts*. Denpasar: Udayana University.
- Transcript of *Topeng Pajegan*, 'Mpu Kuturan'.
- Weintraub, A.N. (2006) 'Dangdut soul: Who are 'the people,' in Indonesian popular music?' *Asian journal of communication*. 16(4): 411-31.
- Weintraub, A.N. (forthcoming) 'Dance drills, faith spills': Islam, body politics, and popular music in post-Suharto Indonesia. *Popular Music*, 27(3).
- DVD: *BaliVision*.
- DVD: *Dewa Ruci: A shadow puppet performance by Ki Manteb Soedharsono*.
- DVD: *Gambuh: The ancient dance drama of Bali*
- DVD: *Karaoke Dangdut Ngebor, Inul!*
- DVD: *Topeng Pajegan, 'Mpu Kuturan'*.
- YouTube: *Goyang gossip / Goyang Gosip*.

#### **Selected background reading on the study of theatre and performance**

- Artaud, A. (1958) *The theatre and its double*. Trans. M.C. Richards. New York: Grove Press.
- Austin, J.L. (1975) *How to do things with words; The William James Lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955*. (Second edition.) Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bell, C. (1992) *Ritual theory, ritual practice*. Oxford: OUP.
- Brandon, J.R. (1967) *Theatre in Southeast Asia*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Brecht, B. (1964) *Brecht on theatre*. New York: Hill and Wang.
- Butler, J. (1999 [1990]) *Gender trouble; Feminism and the subversion of identity*. (Tenth Anniversary Edition.) New York and London: Routledge.
- Fabian, J. (1990) *Power and performance; Ethnographic explorations through proverbial wisdom and theater in Shaba Zaire*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Goodman, N. (1976) *Languages of art: An approach to a theory of symbols*. Indianapolis & Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, Inc.
- Jackson, S. (2004) *Professing performance: Theatre in the academy from philology to performativity*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Lauter, P., ed. (1964) *Theories of comedy*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Nietzsche, F. (1872 [1967]) *The birth of tragedy*. In *The birth of tragedy and The case of Wagner*. Trans. W. Kaufmann. New York: Random House.
- Pfister, M. (1988) *The theory and analysis of drama*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Savarese, N. (2001) 'Antonin Artaud sees Balinese theatre at the Paris Colonial Exposition'. *The drama review*. 45(3): 51-77.
- Schechner, R. (2003 [1977]) *Performance theory*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Shepherd, S. & M. Wallis (2004) *Drama/Theatre/Performance*. New York: Routledge.
- Turner, V. (1982) *From ritual to theatre: The human seriousness of play*. New York: PAJ Publications.
- Zarilli, P.B. (1986) 'Towards a definition of performance studies', Parts I & II. *Theatre Journal*. October & December: 372-6; 493-6.

### **Selected background reading on religion, culture and performance in Java and Bali**

- Bandem, I.M. & F.E. de Boer (1995) *Balinese dance in transition: Kaja and kelod*. Kuala Lumpur & New York: Oxford University Press.
- Barth, F. (1993) *Balinese worlds*. Chicago: UCP.
- Beatty, A. (1999) *The varieties of Javanese religion: An anthropological account*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Covarrubias, M. (1986 [1937]) *Island of Bali*. New York etc.: Kegan Paul.
- Dibia, I.W. & R. Ballinger (2004) *Balinese dance, drama and music*. Singapore: Periplus Editions.
- Errington, J.J. (1985) *Language and social change in Java: Linguistic reflexes of modernization in a traditional royal polity*. Athens, OH: Ohio University, Center for International Studies.
- Fox, R. (2005) 'Plus ça change... Recent developments in Old Javanese studies and their implications for the study of religion in contemporary Bali'. *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, 161(1).
- Geertz, C. (1976 [1960]) *The religion of Java*. Chicago: UCP.
- Hefner, R. (1985) *Hindu Javanese: Tengger tradition and Islam*. Princeton: PUP.
- Hobart, M. (2000) *After culture: Anthropology as radical metaphysical critique*. Yogyakarta, Indonesia: Duta Wacana University Press.
- Hobart, M. (2002) 'Live or dead: Televising theater in Bali'. In: F. Ginsberg, L. Abu-Lughod & B. Larkin (eds.), *Media worlds: anthropology on new terrain*. Berkely, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press: pp. 370-382.
- Hunter, T. (1988) 'Balinese language: Historical background and contemporary state'. Unpublished dissertation, University of Michigan.
- Koentjaraningrat (1985) *Javanese culture*. Singapore: Oxford University Press.
- Mrázek, J. (2005) *Phenomenology of a puppet theatre: Contemplations on the art of Javanese wayang kulit*. Leiden: KITLV.
- Pemberton, J. (1994) *On the subject of 'Java'*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Picard, M. (1996) *Bali: Cultural tourism and touristic culture*. Singapore: Archipelago
- Robson, S.O. (1972) 'The Kawi classics in Bali'. *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*. 128: 308-29.
- Schulte Nordholt, H. (1996) *The spell of power: A history of Balinese politics 1650-1940*. Leiden: KITLV.
- Sumarsam (1992) *Gamelan: Cultural interaction and musical development in central Java*. UCP.
- Vickers, A. (2005) *A history of modern Indonesia*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Wallis, E.H. (1980) *The voice as a mode of cultural expression in Bali*. Unpublished Dissertation, University of Michigan.
- Woodward, M. (1989) *Islam in Java: Normative piety and mysticism in the sultanate of Yogyakarta*. Tuscon, AZ.: University of Arizona Press.
- Zoetmulder, P.J. (1974) *Kalangwan; A survey of Old Javanese literature*. The Hague: Nijhoff.
- Zurbuchen, M.S. (1987) *The language of the Balinese shadow theater*. Princeton: PUP.
- Zurbuchen, M.S. (1989) 'Internal translation in Balinese poetry'. In: *Writing on the tongue*, ed. A.L. Becker. Michigan papers on South and Southeast Asia, number 33. USA: University of Michigan, Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies.
- Zurbuchen, M.S. (1991) 'Palmleaf and performance; The epics in Balinese theater'. In: *Boundaries of the text; Epic performances in South and Southeast Asia*, eds. J.B. Flueckiger and L. Sears. USA: University of Michigan, Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies.

## SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

### **1. Pamabah: Course introduction**

Wednesday, 2 April 2008

### **2. Spies and de Zoete: A (romantic) introduction to *Dance and Drama***

Wednesday, 9 April 2008

#### Reading:

- Spies, W. & B. de Zoete (2002 [1938]) *Dance and drama in Bali*. Singapore: Periplus editions.

#### Opening questions:

- Is theatrical performance inherently religious? Is religion inherently performative? And, critically speaking, why might it matter?
- To what are we referring when we use the terms *ritual*, *theatre*, *dance* and *performance*? And how are these terms related to our use of the term *religion*?
- What are some of the key regularities between the different kinds of performance discussed by Spies and de Zoete? And how might they be compared with broadly Euro-american theatrical traditions?

### **3. Topeng: Religion and the subject of performance**

Wednesday, 16 April 2008

#### Reading:

- Emigh, J. (1996) *Masked performance: The play of self and other in ritual and theatre*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Transcript of *Topeng Pajegan*, 'Mpu Kuturan'.

#### Viewing:

- DVD: *Topeng Pajegan*, 'Mpu Kuturan'.

#### Opening questions:

- What is an 'actor'? What is a 'mask'? And how are these things related?
- How is theatrical performance related to other aspects of social life?
- What is the underlying theory of religion in Emigh's account of Topeng?
- How is power exemplified through the performance of 'Mpu Kuturan'? And does this square with Emigh's understanding of Balinese theatre?

#### **4. Negara: Cabbages or kings?**

Wednesday, 23 April 2008

##### Reading:

- Geertz, C. (1980) *Negara: The theatre state in nineteenth century Bali*. Princeton: PUP.
- Hobart, M. (2000) 'Cabbages or kings? Balinese rulers as articulators of worlds'. *After culture: Anthropology as radical metaphysical critique*. Denpasar, Bali: Duta Wacana University Press.

##### Opening questions:

- Were Balinese rulers 'cabbages' or 'kings'? And how might one know?
- How is theatre related to kingship on Geertz's account? And on what grounds does Hobart take issue with this understanding of state power in Bali?
- What precisely is the 'Babad Nusa'? And in answering what sorts of questions might it potentially provide evidence?

#### **5. Prembon: Articulating the world**

Wednesday, 30 April 2008

##### Reading:

- Hobart, M (n.d.) *The prince of Nusa Penida redeems his vow; A prembon*. Unpublished manuscript.

##### Opening questions:

- What is a 'prembon'?
- How do text, language and translation figure in this performance? And in the representation of this performance to an Anglophone readership?
- What is involved in transcribing and translating a theatrical performance? And what are the implications of the improvisational nature of Balinese theatre?
- Why are the *penasar*, or clown-servants, such important characters in the play? And what broader significance might this have for our understanding of Balinese society and polity?

#### **6. Malat: Of princes and power**

Wednesday, 7 May 2008

##### Reading:

- Vickers, A. (2005) *Journeys of desire: A study of the Balinese text Malat*. Verhandelingen Van Het Koninklijk Instituut Voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde. Leiden: KITLV.

##### Viewing:

- DVD: *Gambuh: The ancient dance drama of Bali*

##### Opening questions:

- Is the *Malat* a text? What is a 'text'? And how is it related to 'performance'?
- What kinds of power figure in the *Malat*?
- How might Vickers account of Balinese history be compared to that of Geertz and Emigh? To that Hobart? And the 'Babad Nusa'?

## **7. Seni: The state of the art (and the art of the state)**

Wednesday, 14 May 2008

### Reading:

- Moerdowo, R.M. (1977) *Reflections on Balinese traditional and modern arts*. Denpasar: Udayana University.
- Hobart, M. (2007) 'Rethinking Balinese dance'. *Indonesia and the Malay world*. 35(101): 107-28.
- Chapters 4-6 from Heimarek, B. (2003) *Balinese discourses on music and modernization: Village voices and urban views*. New York & London: Routledge.

### Viewing:

- DVD: *BaliVision*.

### Opening questions:

- What is 'Balinese tradition'? And why has it mattered? To whom? When? And with what consequences?
- Where do popular understandings of Balinese 'religion' and 'art' come from? And how are they mediated institutionally?
- Does this week's reading have any implications for how we read Spies and de Zoete, Geertz, Emigh and others?
- Critically speaking, is 'Bali' (or, for that matter, 'Java') a viable frame of reference?

## **8. Wayang: The worlds of Javanese shadow theatre**

Wednesday, 21 May 2008

### Reading:

- Keeler, W. (1987) *Javanese shadow plays, Javanese selves*. Princeton: PUP.
- Becker, A.L. (1979) 'Text-building, epistemology and aesthetics in Javanese shadow theatre'. In A.L. Becker & A.A. Yengoyan (eds.) *The imagination of reality: essays in Southeast Asian coherence systems*. Norwood, N.J.: Ablex.

### Viewing:

- DVD: *Dewa Ruci: A shadow puppet performance by Ki Manteb Soedharsono*.

### Opening questions:

- What is a *dalang*?
- What is the nature of the relationship between past and present in Javanese *wayang kulit*?
- Is *wayang* a form of theatre? Ritual? Both? Neither? And why might it matter?
- How might Javanese *wayang* be compared with the Balinese performative traditions we have already discussed?
- Is shadow theatre inherently conservative? Anti-hegemonic? Both? Or, perhaps, neither?

## **9. Didalangan: History, complexity, power**

Wednesday, 28 May 2008

### Reading:

- Sears, L.J. (1996) *Shadows of empire: Colonial discourse and Javanese tales*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.

### Opening questions:

- How is colonialism relevant to our understanding of contemporary religious and theatrical traditions in Java and Bali?
- What does it mean to write *historically* about religion and performance?
- Is it possible to tease out various religious, cultural and other elements evident on the contemporary scene without reifying and/or substantializing them?
- What is the object of historical inquiry? And what purposes does it serve?

## **10. Dangdut: Islam and ‘the people’**

Wednesday, 4 June 2008

### Reading:

- Frederick, W.H. (1982) ‘Rhoma Irama and the *dangdut* style: Aspects of contemporary Indonesian popular culture. *Indonesia*. Vol. 34: 102-130.
- Weintraub, A.N. (2006) ‘Dangdut soul: Who are ‘the people,’ in Indonesian popular music?’ *Asian journal of communication*. 16(4): 411-31.
- Weintraub, A.N. (*forthcoming*) ‘Dance drills, faith spills’: Islam, body politics, and popular music in post-Suharto Indonesia. *Popular Music*, 27(3).
- Hobart, M. (2006) ‘Entertaining illusions: How Indonesian élites imagine reality TV affects the masses’. *Asian journal of communication*. 16(4): 393-410.

### Viewing:

- *Goyang gossip / Goyang Gosip* on YouTube.
- DVD: *Karaoke Dangdut Ngebor, Inul!*

### Opening questions:

- Are ‘the people’ of Indonesia religious? (And to what does this question refer?)
- Who or what are the Indonesian ‘masses’? Through what media do they become intelligible as an object of commentary? And what are the implications for an historical approach to Indonesian religion, society and polity?
- How does attention to performance—as a critical frame of reference—transform both scholarly and popular understandings of religion, media and nation?

**\*Final essays (approx 3000 words) due no later than 3pm Tuesday, 10 June 2008. Details TBA.**