

Draft Syllabus – Subject to Change
HR4003: From Colonialism to Tourism: Early Photography in Asia
Semester 1 AY2026-27

Course Code: HR4003

Course Title: From Colonialism to Tourism: Early Photography in Asia

Pre-requisites: Nil / DD1004 Introduction to the Histories of Art II or HR2001 Introduction to the Histories of Southeast Asian Art, or permission of instructor

No. of AUs: 4

Contact Hours: 52

Course Coordinator: Sushma Griffin, PhD

Email: sushma.griffin@ntu.edu.sg

Office Location: HSS (SHHK) 03-30

Office Hours: By appointment.

Course Aims

This course introduces you to the relationship between nineteenth-century photography, colonialism and tourism in Asia. Maintaining focus on visual travel narratives, we will examine how early photography was mobilised as an essential apparatus for naturalising and legitimising colonial relations and imperial power. We will interrogate a diverse range of images produced by western and local photographers that document and interpret Asia. Analysing the work of key Asian photographers between the 1880s and the 1940s, we will explore how their images can differ in certain instances from the English Picturesque landscape tradition. Turning to the present, we will consider how tropicalising tropes and stereotypes, often deconstructed in contemporary Asian art, are however reused by postcolonial governments in their concerted efforts to attract mass tourism. Through museum and archival visits and conversations with photographers and curators, you will develop and refine skills in fieldwork research in preparation for your final-year project.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO)

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

1. Discuss the diverse visual and socio-historical contexts of early photography in South and Southeast Asia.
2. Apply visual, contextual, and theoretical analyses as a means of investigating early Asian photographic imagery in academic writing and presentation.
3. Develop and sustain arguments from original research in academic writing and presentation.
4. Present your research findings, claims, and conclusions about early photography in Asia in a coherent and concise manner in academic writing and in presentation.
5. Participate actively and knowledgeably in reading workshops, peer review sessions, and fieldwork on early Asian photographic imagery.

Course Content

This critical-inquiry based course examines the relationships between nineteenth-century photography, colonialism, and tourism in South Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Asia.

Structured as a series of case studies and accompanied by critical readings, we will explore how photographic images participated as discursive objects in various colonial contexts. We will have the opportunity to examine diverse forms of early photographic media such as albums, photographic prints, posters, postcards, *cartes-des-visite* and stereoscopic cards that were produced and intentioned for assorted audiences and purposes. We will study a wide range of images produced by western and local photographers of peoples and places in Asia. Through museum visits to study objects in person and discussions with experts, you will be introduced to various archives in Singapore and develop fieldwork-related research proficiency in preparation for your final-year project. Framed as seminar-style discussions, this course emphasises visual examination, acquisition of knowledge through reading and fieldwork, and expressing ideas, concepts and analyses through effective written communication.

Course Requirements and Expectations

- Students are expected to attend the weekly seminars and make efforts to participate fully in class discussion and other activities.
- Students are expected to read the assigned prescribed readings prior to class in preparation for the weekly topic.
- The use of generative AI writing software such as ChatGPT, Writesonic, Copy.AI, Microsoft Copilot and any AI-powered writing assistants must be disclosed.
- Plagiarism of any material will be penalised and will result in failure in the course. Plagiarism includes self-plagiarism. Assignments plagiarising other assignments that you may have written or prepared as class presentations for other courses are not acceptable and will be penalised and may result in failure in the course.
- Please email me to arrange a consultation appointment. I welcome the opportunity to discuss your queries in person or via Zoom / Teams.

Course Policies and Student Responsibilities

(1) General

You are expected to take all scheduled assignments and tests by due dates. You are expected to take responsibility to follow up with course notes, assignments and course related announcements for any seminar sessions that you may have missed.

(2) Punctuality

You are expected to be punctual for all classes. If you are more than 30 minutes late, you will be deemed as absent and will not be able to sign on the attendance register.

(3) Absenteeism

Absence from class without a valid reason will affect your overall course grade. Valid reasons include falling sick supported by a medical certificate and participation in NTU's approved activities supported by an excuse letter from the relevant bodies.

If you miss a lecture, you must inform the course instructor via email prior to the start of the class.

Assessment (includes both continuous and summative assessment)

Component	ILOs Tested	Graduate Attributes	Weighting	Team/ Individual
Continuous Assessment: 2 x Response Papers: 20% (10% each)	1, 2, 3	Cognitive Ability, Competence	20%	Individual
Continuous Assessment: Presentations: 20%	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	Cognitive Ability, Competence	20%	Individual
Final Project: Research Project: 40% – Research 20% – Writing 20%	1, 2, 3, 4	Cognitive Ability, Character, Competence	40%	Individual
Continuous Assessment: Participation	1, 5	Cognitive Ability, Character, Competence	20%	Individual
Total			100%	

See Appendix 1 for Course Assessment Criteria

Approach	How does this approach support you in achieving the learning outcomes?
Lecture	Short lectures will introduce you to a topic and various case studies each week.
Critical Response Paper	You will learn to respond to images critically by undertaking a visual analysis of selected images and discussing the image by reframing it within ideas, concepts and theories from the course's prescribed readings.
Presentations	In collaboration with your peers, you will create a presentation on a case study, connecting it to a related weekly prescribed reading.
Research Project	Your final submission can take the form of a research paper (2500-3000 words). For this assessment task, you will learn to critically

	analyse photographic images by framing a argument and utilising visual, contextual, and theoretical analysis skills.
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Reading and References:

Allana, Rahaab and Davy Depelchin, *Unveiling India: The Early Lensmen 1850–1910*. Ahmedabad: Mapin Publishing and The Alkazi Collection of Photography, 2013.

Batchen, Geoffrey, *Burning With Desire: The Conception of Photography*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997.

Bourne, Samuel, and Hugh Ashley Rayner, *Photographic Journeys in the Himalayas: Comprising the Complete Texts of His Letters to the British Journal of Photography, Originally Published between 1863 and 1870; Together with a Catalogue of His Indian Photographs and the Texts of Two Other Earlier Lectures on Photography*. 3rd ed. Bath: Pagoda Tree Press, 2009.

Chaudhary, Zahid R, *Afterimage of Empire: Photography in Nineteenth-Century India*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012.

Cody, Jeffrey W. and Frances Terpak, eds. *Brush and Shutter Early Photography in China*. Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Trust, 2011. TR101.B78 2011

Dehejia, Vidya. *India Through the Lens Photography 1840-1911*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 2000. TR103.I53 2000

Dewan, Deepali and Debra Hutton. *Raja Deen Dayal: Artist-Photographer in 19th-Century India*. 2013. Ahmedabad: Alkazi Collection of Photography in association with Mapin Publishers. TR103.D515

Falconer, John. *India: Pioneering Photographers. 1850-1900*. London: The British Library, 2001. TR103. F35 2001

Falconer, John. *A Vision of the Past: A History of Early Photography in Singapore and Malaya. The Photographs of G. R. Lambert & Co., 1880-1910*. Singapore: Times Editions, 1987. TR113. S53F182

Hight, Eleanor M. and Gary D. Sampson, eds. *Colonialist Photography: Imag(in)ing Race and Place*, London: Routledge, 2002. TR652.C719

Lacoste, Anne, *Felice Beato: A Photographer on the Eastern Road*. Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2010.

Lau, Grace. *Picturing the Chinese: Early Western Photographs and postcards of China*. Hong Kong: Joint Publishing (H. K.) Co. Ltd., 2008. DS709.L366

Luther, Narendra. *Raja Deen Dayal: Prince of Photographers*. Creative Point, 2003. TR103.L973

Pelizzari, Maria Antonella. *Traces of India: Photography, Architecture, and the Politics of Representation, 1850-1900*. Montreal and New Haven: Canadian Center for Architecture and Yale Center for British Art, 2003. TR103.T759

Rousmaniere, Nicole Coolidge and Mikiko Hirayama, eds. *Reflecting Truth: Japanese Photography in the Nineteenth Century*. Amsterdam: Hotei, 2004. TR105.R44 2004

Toh, Jason, *Singapore Through 19th-century Photographs*. Singapore: Editions Didier Millet, 2009. DS610.5

Vergara, Benito M. Jr. *Displaying Filipinos: Photography and Colonialism in early 20th century Philippines*. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1995. DS685.V494

Worswick, Clark. *Princely India: Photographs by Raja Deen Dayal 1884-1910*. New York: Knopf, 1980. DS479.1.k57. D38 1980

Planned Weekly Schedule

*Subject to adjustment by the instructor according to the teaching situation, students' progress, holidays and unforeseeable circumstances. A revised schedule will be issued to students when changes are made.

Required weekly readings will be posted to the course BlackBoard site approximately one week before each class meeting.

Week 1 | 12 August 2026 | Course Introduction

- Introductory lecture to the course contents including an overview of the planned weekly schedule of learning activities and course assessment items and requirements. Assessment: One Critical Response Paper with visual analysis and theoretical framing (600-800 words due in Week 7); Group Presentations (Each group: 10-15 minutes [in total] in Weeks 12 and 13), and Research assignment with argument (2500 Words, due in Week 14)
- Q&A on aspects of the course

Week 2 | 19 August 2026 | Photography's Inventions

An introduction to nineteenth-century history of photography covering major issues, discourses and debates governing the appearances of photography in Asia.

Prescribed Reading: Douglas R. Nickel, "Notes Towards New Accounts of Photography's Inventions", *Photography and its Origins* (Routledge: New York, 2015), 82-93.

Week 3 | 26 August 2026 | Reading Across Colonial Images and Texts: The Colonial Photographic Picturesque and Travel Writing from the Colonies

Prescribed Reading:

James S. Ackerman, "The Photographic Picturesque." *Artibus et Historiae* 24, no. 48 (2003): 3-94.

Prescribed Reading: Mary Louise Pratt, "Introduction", *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 1-12.

Week 4 | 2 September 2026 | Field Visit to the National Heritage Board: to view the National Collection of Singapore with conservation and heritage talk by Esther Ng, Curator at the Heritage Board of Singapore (tbc, return transportation from NHB to campus provided).

No readings

Week 5 | 9 September 2026 | Photographers on the Eastern Road: Photography as a Transnational Medium

Case studies of photographic images by the following photographers for discussion: Felice Beato, Samuel Bourne, G.R. Lambert, John Thomson and Baron Raimund von Stillfried.

Prescribed Reading:

Wong Hong Suen, "Picturing Burma: Felice Beato's Photographs of Burma 1886-1905", *History of Photography* 32.1 (2008):1-28.

Prescribed Reading:

Gary D. Sampson, "The Success of Samuel Bourne in India", *History of Photography* 16, no. 4 (1992): 336-347.

Prescribed Reading:

Nathan K Hensley, "Curatorial Reading and Endless War", *Victorian Studies*, 56.1 (Autumn 2013): 59-83.

Week 6 | 16 September 2026 | Field Trip to the Exhibition: Hiroshi Sugimoto: Form is Emptiness at the Singapore Art Museum (tbc) with a curator's tour of the show

Prescribed Reading: *Hiroshi Sugimoto: Form is Emptiness*, Exhibition Catalogue, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore, 2026.

Week 7 | 23 September 2026 | Mid-Semester In-Class Assessment

Critical Responses to Photographic Materials including Visual Analysis and References to Readings from the Course (2 images, responses of 300-400 words each)

****RECESS WEEK****

Week 8 | 7 October 2026 | Lala Deen Dayal's Countervailing Photo-Aesthetics: Tracing Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Philosophies of Vision in Colonial Photography

Prescribed Reading:

Deborah Hutton, "Raja Deen Dayal and Sons: Photographing Hyderabad's Famine Relief Efforts", *History of Photography*, 31.3 (2007): 260-275.

Recommended Reading:

Deepali Dewan and Deborah Hutton, "Introduction", *Raja Deen Dayal: Artist Photographer in 19th-Century India* (Ahmedabad: Mapin Publishing and Alkazi Collection of Photography, 2013).

Week 9 | 14 October 2026 | Colonialism, Travel and Women Photographers: Class and Race in Julia Margaret Cameron's Photography

Prescribed Reading:

Jordan Bear, "The Silent Partner: Agency and Absence in Julia Margaret Cameron's Collaborations", *Grey Room* 48 (Summer 2012), 78-101.

Week 10 | 21 October 2026 | Photography and the Anthropological Gaze

Prescribed Reading:

Christopher Pinney, "What's Photography got to do with it?" in *Photography's Orientalism: New Essays on Colonial Representation*, eds. Luke Gartlan and Ali Behdad (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2013).

Week 11 | 28 October 2026 | Contemporary Photography and the Significance of the Archive – Guest Lecture by Contemporary Singaporean Artist Wei Ling Tay (tbc)

Prescribed Reading: tbc

Recommended Reading:

Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive", *October* 39 (Massachusetts: MIT Press, Winter, 1986): 3-64.

Week 12 | 4 November 2026 | The Persistence of the Photographic Picturesque in Contemporary Art and Tourism Media Campaigns

Prescribed Reading:

Krista Thompson, "Introduction: Tropicalization: The Aesthetics and Politics of Space in Jamaica and the Bahamas", *An Eye for the Tropics: Tourism, Photography and Framing the Caribbean Picturesque* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 1-26.

Week 13 | 11 November 2026 | STUDENT PRESENTATIONS (15-20 min) and Course Wrap-Up

Week 14 | 18 November 2026 | End-of-Semester Final Research Essay (research paper of 2500-3000 words) due 23:59 Via TurnItIn