

Theorising sensory cultures in Asia: Sociohistorical perspectives

Kelvin E.Y. Low
Understanding Asia Colloquium Series
17.06.2019
Time: 16:00-18:00 Room: X-C3-107

Abstract:

Sociocultural meanings of the senses in society have recently received scholarly attention in disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, philosophy, history, and geography. With some exceptions, extant works have mainly focused on Euro-American contexts, or non-industrial societies. This paper ethnographically documents and analyses the sociality of the senses in everyday life historical contexts within Asia. I propose three theoretical themes: sensory models and modalities; sensory moral economies; and sensory transnationalism. These themes exemplify how social actors and institutions employ and accord meanings to the senses which can be located in the fabric of everyday life experiences, spanning different social arrangements and encounters. I examine more closely, indigenous cultural sensoria where sensory practices stemming from different parts of Asia are marshalled as sources of sociocultural theorising. This is a response to and continuation of extant works on sensory cultures in other contexts, raising concurrently, cross-cultural comparisons. These comparisons will also initiate a rethinking of “Asia” through sensory intercrossings and encounters.

About the Lecturer:

Kelvin E.Y. Low is Associate Professor and Deputy Head of the Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore. His research interests comprise sensory studies, migration and transnationalism, social memory, and food and foodways.