New Ecotones pre-conference seminar
June 10, 2015 17.30 pm
Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier
Site Saint-Charles, Salle des colloques n°2

Amitav Ghosh: The Challenge of Globalization, Genre and the Classroom

A seminar run by Gaurav Desai (Tulane University) and John Hawley (Santa Clara University)

This seminar will focus on the writings of Amitav Ghosh, one of the most celebrated contemporary writers from India. Ghosh is the author of eleven major works which include seven novels, three collections of nonfiction essays and one hybrid text that is poised somewhere between the genres of ethnography and travelogue. His debut novel The Circle of Reason was awarded the Prix Medicis Etrangere in 1990, and his next, The Shadow Lines received both the Ananda Puraskar award in Calcutta and the Annual Award of the Sahitya Academy (the Indian Academy of Literature). Ever since the publication of these early works, Ghosh has gone on to receive a number of international awards including the Arthur C. Clark award for The Calcutta Chromosome, the Crossword Book Award for both The Hungry Tide and The Sea of Poppies, the Tagore Literary Award for The Sea of Poppies and the Myanmar National Literature award for the Burmese translation of The Glass Palace. The themes raised in his work include colonial/postcolonial transitions, the recovery of lost histories, the ambivalent legacies of European modernity, matters of migration and displacement, the challenges of ecology, human rights, violence, religion as well as questions of literary form and aesthetic value. We anticipate participants to have varying degrees of familiarity with Ghosh’s work. Those less familiar with it will find it useful to browse through the materials on his website at www.amitavghosh.com where interviews, reviews of his books and a blog are archived. Those quite familiar with his work will be invited to engage in a discussion of pedagogical aspects of his work and strategies that best work when teaching his work in the classroom.

Gaurav Desai is Professor of English with a joint appointment in the Program of African and African Diaspora Studies at Tulane University. He is the author of Subject to Colonialism: African Self-fashioning and the Colonial Library (Duke University Press, 2001) and Commerce with the Universe: Africa, India and the Afrasian Imagination (Columbia University Press, 2013) which was a finalist for the Bethwell Ogot Prize offered by the African Studies Association and which won the Rene Wellek Prize awarded by the American Comparative Literature Association. Desai has also edited a number of books and special issues of journals. The book Postcolonialisms: An Anthology of Cultural Theory and Criticism ( Rutgers University Press, 2005) has become a standard classroom and reference text.

John C. Hawley is Professor and past chairman of the English Department at Santa Clara University. He is currently a Fulbright Fellow at Humboldt University in Berlin, working on the literature of migration, and is a former resident at the Rockefeller Research Center in Bellagio. He has served on four executive committees of the Modern Language Association, and is author or editor of 15 books. He is past president of the US chapter of the Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies.

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