

# QUEER FORMS IN SOUTH ASIA

GNDR\_ST 390

WINTER  
2024



Is there a particular form—of representation/of politics/of language—specific to queer desire? Or does queerness emerge precisely in those moments when forms (or genres) start to break down? These two questions will guide us in our exploration of queerness, gender, and sexuality in the South Asian subcontinent across the modern, colonial, and postcolonial period. Focusing on a particular geographical site—the typical domain of an “area studies” department—will allow us to

see how desire and gender are mediated through “the convoluted densities of geopolitics” (Anjali Arondekar and Geeta Patel). Rather than simply affirming the existence of queer and trans\* lives in South Asia, we will follow how histories of empire, caste, religion, and nation organize and hierarchize sexualities and gendered bodies. We will then attend to processes of translation and specificities of medium in reading how particular social and cultural forms stage everyday desire, pleasure, and violence. This course will go through nineteenth century Urdu poetry, twentieth century progressive short stories, contemporary Indian and Pakistani documentaries and cinema, music videos, as well as novels. Traversing these forms will help us enquire to what extent is “queer” a helpful category of analysis for understanding the myriad modes of non-heteronormative desire in South Asia.

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TTh 9:30-10:50am  
Kresge 2-335