



Azim Premji University Colloquium Series

presents a lecture

"Between the Law and the Street: Political Publicity in Tamil News Media"

Speaker

Francis Cody

Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Toronto

Date: April 21, 2016 (Thursday)

Time: 2.00 pm to 3.30 pm

Venue: 10th Floor Auditorium, Pixel A, Azim Premji University

Watch the live broadcast of the talk by clicking <http://lectures.azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/>. It can be accessed from Android and iOS devices too.

About the Lecture

This talk examines recent events in South India to begin the work of developing an understanding of the political image and its limits in the contemporary age, which has been characterized as that of the "post-public sphere." My focus will be on the newspaper, that organ of public opinion that many have taken to be foundational to the rise of both nationalism and democratic politics, and which remains among the most potent flashpoints in struggles to define the image of political leaders today. Under the larger conceptual umbrella of delineating the logic of political publicity in news media, I narrow the inquiry to concentrate on two important modes through which the contours of what can be published are worked out: the first being the law and cases of defamation in particular, and the second is the street, where violence routinely erupts in connection with political news reporting. I hope to show that there are continuities in the logics of representation and publicity that cut across both domains having to do with the extra-parliamentary sovereignty of political bodies and are at the same time commodity images.

About the Speaker

Francis Cody is an Associate Professor in the the Department of Anthropology and the Asian Institute at the University of Toronto. His research focuses on language and politics in southern India. He first brought these interests to bear on a study of literacy activism, citizenship, and social movement politics in rural Tamilnadu, published as a book called *The Light of Knowledge* (Cornell 2013). Cody's more recent work traces the emergence of populism and transformations of political publicity through news media in Tamil cities and small towns. Taken as a whole, his work contributes to the transdisciplinary project of elaborating critical social theories of mediation in the postcolonial world.