

## **The Midwest Faculty Seminar**

### **Alternative Modernities**

**April 5-7, 2012**

For most of the last two centuries, the conceptual categories of Western modernity have been deployed without alteration as a framework for grasping political, economic, technological, and cultural change in societies outside the West. Increasingly, however, historians, social scientists and others have begun to challenge the universality of the West's account of modernity with the notion of "alternative modernities"—diverse and culturally-specific manifestations of modernity and modernization. This seminar will draw on perspectives from the humanities and social sciences in order to think about what modernity means across the global South and about the effects that the notion of alternative modernities has had on our understanding of the sites in question. Of particular interest will be different aesthetic forms that these alter-modernities take and the wide range of cultural and artistic practices that register and reflect upon processes of modernization and different experiences of modernity. The seminar will, however, give attention to the way the alternative modernities thesis has shaped thinking about what terms like "development," "history," and "politics" mean to contemporary political and social thought as well.