

Wednesday Seminars

LECTURE SERIES IN SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

17.06.2026 | 5 p.m. | @ Übungsraum IKSA | NIG, 4th floor

Neha Vora (American University of Sharjah)
***Multispecies Ecologies of Migrant Homemaking
in the United Arab Emirates***



Neha Vora is Professor of Anthropology in the Department of International Studies at the American University of Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates. Her research and teaching interests include diasporas and migration, citizenship, globalized higher education, gender, liberalism, political economy, and human-nonhuman encounters, primarily in the Arabian Peninsula region. She is the author of *Impossible Citizens: Dubai's Indian Diaspora* (Duke University Press, 2013) and *Teach for Arabia: American Universities, Liberalism, and Transnational Qatar* (Stanford University Press, 2018). She has also published a co-authored book with Ahmed Kanna and Amelie Le Renard, *Beyond Exception: New Interpretations of the Arabian Peninsula* (Cornell University Press, 2020). Her current research project approaches Dubai and other UAE cities as sites of entangled precarities between humans and non-humans, paying particular attention to informal stray cat care by immigrants and the place-making practices of cats themselves.

What does it mean to inhabit urban space with others, and how is home-making a multispecies project? This paper explores how human residents of UAE cities, the vast majority (90%) of whom are not able to settle permanently, produce home alongside and through their interactions with cats, birds, plants, and each other, within the context of ever-changing urban landscapes. I explore, through “cat walks” and other movements within urban space, stray cat placemaking in the UAE’s urban neighborhoods. I focus in particular on what I call the “micro-architectures of care” through which urban residents, human and nonhuman, create relationships with each other and stake claim to the city. Cat care not only produces human-nonhuman kinship but also becomes a site to transgress as well as reproduce existing gendered, classed, and raced social stratifications. More broadly, the talk uses the Gulf context to encourage a rethinking of what homemaking means, and an unsettling of binaries between migrant and non-migrant experiences of precarity and (non)belonging.

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