

The Center for Multilingual & Intercultural Communication

The College of Arts and Sciences Sir Run Run Shaw Lecture Series

The MIC Distinguished Lecture Series

Decolonizing the Mobility Turn: Toward Non-Western Traditions of Spatial Linguistics for the Anthropocene

Friday, April 30, 1:00 – 2:00 pm through Zoom

Registration is required. Please click [here](#).

The present health, environmental, and economic crises have inspired a reexamination of dominant academic paradigms for their role in the human condition. What scholars have celebrated as the “mobility turn” or “mobilities paradigm” has also contributed to this crisis. Canagarajah will examine the tropes that have constituted the mobility turn since 14th century European modernity. They are: Mobility is a new normal; Mobility is progress; Mobility is individuality against tradition; Mobility is resistance against control; Mobility expands horizons (both geographically and intellectually); Mobility conquers space in favor of time; Geographical mobility is social mobility; and The end of mobility is the ownership of new and permanent homes. Canagarajah will demonstrate that these tropes have also influenced a linguistics based on genealogical and temporal foundations (i.e., privileging peoplehood and teleological progress). In their place, he will articulate a spatial orientation based on land-based Non-Western epistemologies, including his in South Asia. This spatial paradigm promotes a vision of relationality and dependency between human and nonhuman beings, and communication through embodied semiotic resources, complementing the nonlinear mobilities of space and time. To balance this broad strokes approach across vast historical spans and philosophical discourses, Canagarajah will narrate how he himself has traveled through the dark side of mobility as a refugee from Sri Lanka—and yet benefitted from the resilient habitus from his ancient heritage to engage in resistant scholarship, translingual communication, and diasporic “placemaking” during the global lockdown.



Suresh Canagarajah

Suresh Canagarajah is the Edwin Erle Sparks Professor of English, Applied Linguistics, and Asian Studies at Pennsylvania State University. He teaches courses in World Englishes, Language Socialization, Rhetoric/Composition, and Postcolonial Studies. Canagarajah comes from the Tamil-speaking northern region of Sri Lanka. He taught earlier in the University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka, and the City University of New York. He was formerly the editor of the *TESOL Quarterly* and President of the American Association of Applied Linguistics. His edited book *Routledge Handbook on Language and Migration* (Routledge 2017) won the 2020 best book award from the American Association of Applied Linguistics.

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