

# Anticolonial Sociology: BR Ambedkar Between Contagion and Solidarity

This lecture traces how B.R. Ambedkar, a leading Dalit ('untouchable') activist, drew on his early academic training in sociology to articulate new forms of political imagination throughout his career.

At the time that Ambedkar received his degree, sociology had yet to fully develop its own social scientific protocols necessary for disciplinary autonomy, and therefore revealed in a heady blend of empiricism, psychology, anthropology, vitalism, political theory, pragmatism, and metaphysics as the foundations to this *fin de siècle* social thought. I argue that the discipline of sociology emerged in conversation with modernist textual experimentation in both the North Atlantic world as well as across Africa and Asia.



I therefore foreground a curious term found scattered throughout Ambedkar's writings and trace its circuitous path through early twentieth-century sociology that Ambedkar was to inherit, adapt, and, most crucially, render politically potent in India. The term, 'endosmosis', was borrowed from biological sciences by John Dewey, William James, and Henri Bergson for use in philosophy, political theory, and social theory. By tracing his interest in 'endosmosis', I argue that Ambedkar drew out the political and aesthetic stakes of early sociology across the postcolonial world.

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**Speaker: Dr. J. Daniel Elam, University of Toronto**

**Date: 23 Feb 2018 (Friday)**

**Time: 4:30 pm**

**Venue: Room 4.04, Run Run Shaw Tower,  
Centennial Campus, HKU**

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