

LEARNING MATERIALS

The Image Complex: Photography, Vision, and Belief in South Asia

Facilitated by Aastha D and Impart

Session 5

‘Ordinary’ Pictures: The Image and the Personal Record

September 3, 2026 | 7:00 pm IST

With Anshika Varma, M Neelika Jayawardane, and Dr Suryanandini Narain

These learning materials are intended to support and enrich your insights and takeaways from the upcoming lecture. They include resources that the co-facilitator and guest speakers may draw upon during the session, as well as recommended readings, and a reflective prompt. While not necessary, we encourage you to engage with these materials prior to the session. For a broader range of references on the themes and ideas we explore throughout this series, scroll down to the ‘Further Resources’ section.

Read

1. Hirsch, Marianne. “Past Lives.” In *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory*. Harvard University Press, 1997.
https://photohistoryandtheory.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/hirsch_past-lives.pdf
2. Narain, Suryanandini. “In the Family: Photographic Archives from India.” In *Photo-Objects: On the Materiality of Photographs and Photo Archives*, edited by Julia Bärnighausen, Costanza Caraffa, Stefanie Klamm, Franka Schneider, and Petra Wodtke. Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, 2019.
<https://www.mpri-series.mpg.de/media/studies/12/7/studies12chap06.pdf>
3. Pinney, Christopher. “Seven Theses on Photography.” *Thesis Eleven* 113, no. 1 (December 2012): 141–156. See esp. section 3.
<https://powerinstitute.org.au/sites/default/files/2023-04/Christopher-Pinney-7-Theses-on-Photography.pdf>
4. Rose, Gillian. *Doing Family Photography: the Domestic, the Public, and the Politics of Sentiment*. Ashgate, 2010.

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5. Varma, Anshika. "The Photography Collectives Telling New Stories Across South Asia." *Aperture*, July 8, 2021.
<https://aperture.org/editorial/the-photography-collectives-telling-new-stories-a-cross-south-asia/>

Watch

1. Polley, Sarah, director. *Stories We Tell*. National Film Board of Canada, 2012.
<https://www.nfb.ca/film/stories-we-tell-spanish-dubbed/>

Listen

1. "Aperture Conversations | Photography and Culture." Posted by Aperture. Youtube Playlist.
<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLvAytXgNgEllIfZ7aw0pinYQjYVqqPDXq&si=r6LYHj2Lo6GB2Sta>

Think

Look closely at a family photograph. Who took the photograph? Who kept it? Who is missing from the frame? Who never appears in family photographs?

Feel free to share your response with the rest of the learning community on our Discussion Forum.

Further Resources

1. Anthony, Theo. "ALL LIGHT, EVERYWHERE - Official Trailer." Posted May 18, 2021, by Super. YouTube, 2:12.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=luHmSqY0Xsk>

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2. Anthony, Theo. "Documentary: All Light Everywhere." Posted August 4, 2025, by Incarcerated Nation Network INC Media. YouTube, 01:55:43.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IEY2MHvDMcY>
3. Azouley, Ariella. Introduction to *The Civil Contract of Photography*. Zone Books, 2008.
<https://jpgenrgb.blog/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/ariella-azoulay-the-civil-contract-of-photography.pdf>
4. Azouley, Ariella. "Citizens of Disaster." In *The Civil Contract of Photography*. Zone Books, 2008.
<https://jpgenrgb.blog/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/ariella-azoulay-the-civil-contract-of-photography.pdf>
5. Berger, John. "Ways of Seeing by John Berger." <https://www.ways-of-seeing.com/>
6. Berger, John, and Mike Dibb. "John Berger / Ways of Seeing, Episode 1 (1972)." Posted July 27, 2020, by Enlight Studies. YouTube, 30:04.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P-4LwAuTw7k>
7. Campt, Tina. "Imagine Otherwise: Tina Campt on Listening to Images." Interview by Cathy Hannabach. Posted May 16, 2018. Ideas on Fire, 27:10.
<https://ideasonfire.net/63-tina-campt/>
8. Campt, Tina. "The Sound of Defiance." Interview by Brian Wallis. *Aperture*, October 25, 2017.
<https://aperture.org/editorial/tina-campt-conversation-brian-wallis/>
9. Edwards, Elizabeth, and Janice Hart. "Introduction: Photographs as Objects." In *Photographs Objects Histories: On the Materiality of Images*. Routledge, 2004.
[https://yale.imodules.com/s/1667/images/gid6/editor_documents/yacol/ycba_readings/week_6_elizabeth_edwards_and_janice_hart_introduction_to_photographs_objects_histories.pdf?sessionId=853c3754-3ece-442a-92ec-f75cb01e1bc9&cc=](https://yale.imodules.com/s/1667/images/gid6/editor_documents/yacol/ycba_readings/week_6_elizabeth_edwards_and_janice_hart_introduction_to_photographs_objects_histories.pdf?sessionId=853c3754-3ece-442a-92ec-f75cb01e1bc9&cc=1)

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10. Edwards, Elizabeth, and Janice Hart. "Mixed Box: The Cultural Biography of a Box of 'Ethnographic' Photographs." In *Photographs Objects Histories: On the Materiality of Images*. Routledge, 2004.
11. "Keynote: The Rise of Techno-Authoritarian Control - Safiya Noble in Conversation with Gina Neff." Posted April 25, 2025, by Minderoo Centre for Technology and Democracy. YouTube, 31:58.
<https://youtu.be/Y9tydzKE2lE?si=bExDgOcFR8WVd1>
12. Paglen, Trevor. "Invisible Images (Your Pictures Are Looking at You)." *The New Inquiry*, December 8, 2016.
<https://thenewinquiry.com/invisible-images-your-pictures-are-looking-at-you/>
13. Papa, Stephanie. "Stories Behind Revolutions." *Magnum*, April 3, 2026.
<https://www.magnumphotos.com/newsroom/the-stories-behind-revolutions/>
14. "PARI - People's Archive of Rural India." PARI. <https://ruralindiaonline.org/>
15. Pinney, Christopher. Prologue to *Camera Indica: The Social Life of Indian Photographs*. University of Chicago Press, 1997.
https://books.google.co.in/books?id=CVzqAOAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false
16. Sekula, Allan. "The Body and the Archive." *October* 39 (Winter 1986): 3–64.
https://monoskop.org/images/6/65/Sekula_1986_The_Body_and_the_Archive.pdf
17. Steyerl, Hito. "In Defense of the Poor Image." *e-flux Journal* 10 (November 2009).
<https://www.e-flux.com/journal/10/61362/in-defense-of-the-poor-image>

This document is part of the lecture series 'The Image Complex,' facilitated by Aastha D and Impart. Click [here](#) to start learning.

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