In this talk, I draw on several years of intensive ethnographic fieldwork in call centres in Bangalore to examine how the affective regimes generated by the labour practices of call centre workers generate forms of alienation and intimacy that are co-implicated rather than in opposition to each other. Extending Marx’s theorization of alienation, I wish to rethink conceptions of intimacy predicated on assumptions of authentic selfhood (Marx 1978; Berlant 2000). My objective is to raise the following questions. What are the consequences of untimely work for establishing relations of intimacy? How does the affective labour of call centre workers provoke us to problematize assumptions about intimacy based on spatial and temporal contiguity and, equally, about the relationship between intimacy and capitalism? I join scholarly conversations about the cultures of capitalism by pointing to how intimacy and capital are co-constructed: just as intimate relations have been recast by capital (Giddens 1992), so too is the production of capital refracted by relations of intimacy (Wilson 2004, Yanagisako 2002).

Abstract
In this talk, I draw on several years of intensive ethnographic fieldwork in call centres in Bangalore to examine how the affective regimes generated by the labour practices of call centre workers generate forms of alienation and intimacy that are co-implicated rather than in opposition to each other. Extending Marx’s theorization of alienation, I wish to rethink conceptions of intimacy predicated on assumptions of authentic selfhood (Marx 1978; Berlant 2000). My objective is to raise the following questions. What are the consequences of untimely work for establishing relations of intimacy? How does the affective labour of call centre workers provoke us to problematize assumptions about intimacy based on spatial and temporal contiguity and, equally, about the relationship between intimacy and capitalism? I join scholarly conversations about the cultures of capitalism by pointing to how intimacy and capital are co-constructed: just as intimate relations have been recast by capital (Giddens 1992), so too is the production of capital refracted by relations of intimacy (Wilson 2004, Yanagisako 2002).

Event Details
Wednesday, 11 September 2013
3.00pm to 4.30pm
Malay Studies Seminar Room
AS7 #04-13
Kent Ridge Campus
National University of Singapore

About the Speaker
Purnima Mankekar is an associate professor in the Departments of Gender Studies and Asian American Studies at UCLA. Her areas of research are: the anthropology of media; transnational cultural studies; feminist anthropology and ethnography; theories of neoliberalism and subjectivity; South Asian studies; South Asian American studies. She is the author of Screening Culture, Viewing Politics: An Ethnography of Television, Womanhood, and Nation in Postcolonial India and the co-editor of Caste and Outcast (with Gordon Chang and Akhil Gupta) and Media, Erotics, and Transnational Asia (with Louisa Schein). She has just completed a book titled Unsettling India: Affect, Temporality, and Transnational Public Cultures. She is currently engaged in ethnographic field research on the business process outsourcing (BPO) industry in Bangalore, India and is working on a book titled The Practice of Television in Everyday Life.