

Embattled Earth: Commodities, Conflict and Climate Change in the Indian Ocean



Amitav Ghosh

**Thursday,
 November 1, 2018**
 UWM Peck School of
 Arts Music Recital Hall

**Reception: 6 PM
 Lecture: 7 PM**



Amitav Ghosh, one of the most important novelists and essayists of our time, traces the entangled history of commodities, conflict and climate change in the Indian Ocean. Since the time of Vasco da Gama's voyage, the Indian Ocean has been the theatre of intense imperial rivalries over commodities and resources. For centuries the main players in these conflicts were Western colonial powers, but lately the countries of the Indian Ocean rim have themselves become major consumers of resources, and thus, the principal drivers of anthropogenic climate change, an ongoing process that will have catastrophic consequences for the billions of people who live around the Indian Ocean. This lecture explores the continuities between the resource conflicts of the past and the future by focusing on two transformative imperial wars: the Anglo-Dutch spice wars of the 17th century and the 1st Opium War of 1840-42. It also poses a question: are the imperatives of empire and military supremacy among the major drivers of climate change?

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