



# Volatility in Finance, Culture, and Politics

**Masterclass with Prof. Ackbar Abbas**  
University of California, Irvine



**DATE : November 13, 2017 (Monday)**  
**TIME : 4:30PM - 6:00PM**  
**VENUE: Rm. 4.36, 4/F, Run Run Shaw Tower, Centennial Campus, HKU**



**Respondent: Prof. Leo Ou-fan Lee**  
Sin Wai Kin Professor of Chinese Culture,  
Chinese University of Hong Kong

**Moderator: Prof. Nicole Huang**  
Chairperson, Department of Comparative Literature



An image from *PINA*

**Volatility** is arguably the chief characteristic of our time, the one aspect that contemporary finance, culture, and politics have in common. We find volatility not when one framework of understanding succeeds another, but only when multiple frameworks overlap and exist simultaneously with one another. In a volatile space, movement loses clear directionality and takes on a kind of randomness; time loses its chronological sequentiality and various kinds of anachronisms take hold; while causality turns into a multiple-choice question with no correct answer, and the world becomes, as Nietzsche wryly observed, an enigma made up of its various solutions.

We cannot think of volatility then as simply speed of movement, or quickness of change, or the flouting of rules; nor can volatility be captured by Futurist images of bullet trains devouring space. This talk will try to suggest some of its paradoxical features by placing volatility in Finance, Cultural Practices (cinema, critical theory, dance), and Politics (Hong Kong's 'Umbrella Movement') side by side with one another.

**Prof. Ackbar Abbas** is professor of comparative literature at the University of California, Irvine/USA. His book, *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance* (published in 1997 by University of Minnesota Press) is a path-breaking work in urban studies and cultural theory. His scholarship spans a range of cultural practices, from cinema to architecture to the visual arts. He has been writing on art and visual culture in China. Before moving to the University of California, Irvine in 2006, he was Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Hong Kong.



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**MALCS**  
Master of Arts in Literary and Cultural Studies



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Abstract:

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Biography:

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Organizers: School of Humanities, Department of Comparative Literature, M.A. in Literary and Cultural Studies (MALCS) and Center for the Study of Globalization and Cultures (CSGC)