

SOAN 257-00 Culture and Politics in India

Spring 2016, Tues. & Thurs. 10:10-11:55am; Laird

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Office Hours: Tues. & Thurs. 12:00-1:00pm; Fri. 12:00-1:00pm & by appointment

Course Description

India is a region of immense contrasts and diversities which, in the Western imagination, include monks, saints, snake charmers, oppressed women, bullock carts, call centers, and slums. What is distinctive about this part of the world where more than one billion people live? This course will explore social structures and institutions in India--through a focus on key areas of everyday life such as systems of stratification (class, gender and caste), economy, governance, family, religion, and protest movements. Close attention will be given to globalization, religious nationalism and militarism as dominant trends affecting contemporary India.

Questions we will consider include: How has India been represented in the Western imagination and why do such representations matter? How is gender imbricated in this western imagination? What impact have these representations had on Indian society? What are the forces of modernity and tradition in India and how do they affect different stratas on Indian society? Is India's population the cause of its problems? What are the similarities and differences in systems of stratification in India and the U.S.? Are Indian women uniquely oppressed? What is globalization and how does it impact different regions and groups of Indian? What is Hindu nationalism and why is it important? Why is militarization on the rise in India? Course materials include, in addition to the academic books and articles, documentaries, Bollywood films, slides, web-based resources, short stories and newspaper cuttings.

Texts and Materials:

1. Somini Sengupta. 2016. *The End of Karma: Hope and Fury among India's Young*. Norton. (hereafter Sengupta bk);
2. Neil DeVotta (ed.). 2010. *Understanding Contemporary India*. 2nd Ed. Rienner Publishers, Colorado (hereafter DeVotta bk);
3. Course Readings – series of articles on Electronic Reserve on the Library website (hereafter ER). Password = soan.

Course Requirements

Attendance & Participation: 30% of your grade

Attendance and participation are critically important. An ability to communicate effectively is an important life skill. My goal is to help you develop good discussion techniques. Therefore, I expect everyone to be an active participant. This means being an attentive listener, addressing the questions asked, and promoting a positive atmosphere. We will strive to create a respectful and friendly atmosphere. I realize that people have different styles of participation. While evaluating your participation, I will consider not just your verbal contributions, but also your willingness to listen to others and your completion of occasional written assignments. You are required to complete the assigned readings for the day before coming to class.

During lecture, I will often summarize current research on the day's topic. You will be reading a representative sample of that research, but the summary will not be in your readings. It will also be difficult to recreate large group discussions we may have from someone else's notes. I want you to

actively engage with the material, so your participation in lecture means more than just being there, but rather contributing your ideas and questions that will push all of us to think harder. Attendance will be graded as follows: 0-1 absence=A; 2 absences=A- ; 3 absences=B+; 4 absences=B; 5 absences=B-; 6 absences =F

2 Map Quizzes – ungraded

You will be required to locate the following on a map: India and its neighboring countries and their capitals in South Asia; all the different states within India; the capital of each state; and the main language spoken in each state. If you do well in these ungraded quizzes, that may positively influence a final border-line grade.

1 Presentation: 10% of your grade

You are required to do one presentation. I believe that every student in this class can master the material and in turn lead a mini-discussion section on it. Those who have a say in how and what they learn, ultimately glean more from the material and enjoy the educational process more. In that vein, each student will summarize the main arguments in the assigned readings and facilitate discussion for 20-30 minutes once during the quarter. S/he will be “extra familiar” with the required reading assignments, arrive with questions or a format prepared, and be responsible for any lagging discussions. You need to email me an outline of your presentation and discussion questions by 9pm of the day before your presentation.

2 Reflection Papers: 30% of your grade (15% each)

In order to foster your critical thinking and analytical skills you are required to write a total of two short reflection papers (5-6 double spaced pages each). In these reflection papers you need to do some critical and careful analysis of the course material, based on the questions below. Although these are not full-fledged, formal essays, you need to engage in depth with the assigned readings. You can draw upon personal experience (which means you can use “I”), but your experience must be analyzed and connected to your analysis of the readings. This means that pure emotional reaction, or journal-like writing, will not serve you well. Papers turned in late will be down-graded for each late day (unless you fall ill or have special needs and have talked to me about alternative arrangements before hand). Hand-out forthcoming.

Required Reflection Paper #1 - Problematizing the Western Lens (approx. 5 -7pgs)

Provide a critical analysis of modern Western conceptions of South Asia. What are the forces that have shaped these views? How does gender feature in these conceptions? (Please note: your paper should address all 3 questions listed above and should engage with the writing of Milton Singer, Amartya Sen, Uma Narayan, and Chandra Mohanty). This paper is important in that it will serve as a building-block for your final paper. When you work on this paper, be sure to take notes on your personal reactions (thoughts, feelings, preconceived notions, unexamined received conceptions) to the readings on western conceptions of India and South Asia. Though, you don't need to include these reactions in this paper, they will come in handy when you write your final paper.

Reflection Paper #2 – approx. 5-7pgs

For your second reflection paper, pick any one of areas from the list below and/or concoct your own topic of interest, generate some conceptual questions (and have them approved by me). Please turn your paper in at the end of the week we cover that topic in class.

Potential Paper Topics

- Family and Gender Relations
- Feminism and the Indian women's movement
- Political institutions and processes
- Indian economy and inequities of class

- Population
- **Comparative Analysis** of any one of the following:
 - o caste and race in the U.S. and India
 - o democracy in the U.S. and India
 - o religious fundamentalism in the U.S. and India
 - o globalization in the U.S. and India

Other Potential Reflection Paper Topics

Caste & Class

Define and describe caste, Varna and Jaati. Why can't caste be reduced to class? Explain why class is useful, and yet insufficient to fully explain caste. Compare and contrast affirmative action policies in India and U.S.A. Be sure to engage with the writings of Gail Omvedt, Ghanshyam Shah, Laura Jenkins, and P. Sainath.

Dalit Movement

What is the Dalit movement? What are its aims, achievements and history? Who was Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar? Please engage with the writings of Eleanor Zelliot, Gail Omvedt, Fisher and Panniah.

Religious Nationalism

What is religious nationalism and how is it different from secular nationalism in the context of South Asia? What was the role of religious nationalism in the 1947 partition of British-India into India, Pakistan and Bangladesh? (Please note: your essay should address all 3 questions and engage with the perspectives of Suvir Kaul, Menon and Bhasin, and Urvashi Butalia.)

Globalization

What is economic globalization in South Asia? What are the roles of the State and of the free markets in globalization? How does globalization impact different groups/strata's of people (such as different classes, castes, women, farmers etc) in South Asia? What are some social movement responses to globalization in South Asia? (Please note that your essay should address all 4 questions and engage with the assigned readings.)

Final Term paper: 30% of your grade

This formal essay should be approximately 15 pages, double spaced. It is due during exam week. Pick either option A or B.

Option A: Research Paper

In it you will have a chance to explore some of the readings in more depth and generate your own argument about it. I will be looking for an arguable thesis that the paper supports well with textual analysis that does not simply restate lecture material. The previous assignments (reflection papers) in the course will should provide you with useful practice for the kind of analytical thinking and writing this paper requires. This formal essay will help you hone your ability to construct a thoughtful, multifaceted argument and express it clearly. I require a one page paper proposal (double spaced, typed) to be approved by me before you start writing your paper.

Option B: Autobiographical paper charting your journey through this course (handout attached).

Grading Distribution: -

Attendance and participation	: 30%
Reflection papers (2)	: 30%
Presentation (1)	: 10%

Final Paper	: 30%
Total	100%

Special Needs

It's important to me that this course be accessible for all students, so please let me know if you need any special accommodations in the curriculum, instruction or evaluation procedures in order to enable you to participate more fully. If you have accessibility concerns or special needs that may affect your work in this course, please talk to me at the beginning of the quarter.

Schedule of Readings

Please bear in mind that unforeseen circumstances may require changes in this schedule from time to time. So keep yourself up to date about daily reading assignments. If you miss class you are responsible for any changes in the syllabus announced during that class

Contours of Diversity in India: Geography, Language & Peoples

Week 1

T., Mar.29, Introduction and Overview of course

Documentary Film: *Made in India* by Madhushree Datta (30 mins) OR
Freedom from the Story of India by Michael Wood (50 minutes) OR
The Day India burned – by the BBC – on YouTube (60 minutes)

Th. Mar.31 - Required Readings:

Sengupta bk – “Introduction: aspiration like water”, pp. 1-24

DeVotta bk,

- Introduction by DeVotta
- India: a Geographic Preface by Dutt

Internet – BBC Time Line on India - <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-12641776>

Optional Reading:

ER - Sekhon, Chap. 1, “The Indian Puzzle”

ER - Sekhon - Chap. 2, The Place, the People and the Past

DeVotta bk, “The Arts” by Lal

ER - Norton, *India and South Asia*, Global Studies, 2005, India section only, pp. 1-48

Map Practice

Orientalism and India: Problematizing the Western Lens

Week 2

T, Apr. 5 - Required Readings:

ER - Milton Singer, “Passage to More than India: A sketch of changing European and American Images”

ER – Amartya Sen, “Indian Traditions and the Western Imagination”

ER – Vijay Prasad, “Of the mysterious East” & “Of the oriental menagerie”

Th., Apr.7 – Gendering Orientalism

Required Reading:

ER - Chandra Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes”

ER - Narayan, “Cross-cultural connections, border crossings and death by culture”

Kavita Krishnan, “Nirbhaya film: solidarity is what we want, not a civilizing mission” - Online

<http://www.dailyo.in/politics/kavita-krishnan-nirbhaya-december-16-indias-daughter-leslee-udwin-mukesh-singh-bbc/story/1/2347.html>

Optional Reading:

ER – Narayan, “Restoring history and politics to “Third World Traditions”

Week 3

T, Apr. 12 – Orientalism contd.

Required Readings:

ER - Chandra Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes Revisited”

ER – Narayan bk, Chap. 5, Eating Cultures: incorporation, identity and Indian food

ER – Narayan, “Through the looking glass darkly”

OVERVIEW OF INDIAN SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Th., Apr.14 – Population & the Demographic Structure of India

Required Readings:

DeVotta bk – “Population, Urbanization, and the Environment” by Sims

ER – Amartya Sen, “Population: Delusion and Reality”

ER – Mary John, “Feminism, poverty and the emergent social order”– read carefully pages 114-120 (about feminist responses to population control).

ER - Saraswati Raju et. al, Excerpts from *The Atlas of Women and Men in India*

Week 4

T, Apr.19 – The Indian Economy & Class Stratification

Required Readings:

Sengupta bk. – “Gates: Keeping out the Lives of Others” pp.57-88

DeVotta bk – “India’s Economy” by Adams

ER - Sekhon bk, Chap. 5, The Economy

ER – Amartya Sen, “Class in India”

ER – Satish Deshpande, “The Nation as an Imagined Economy”

ER - Gail Omvedt, “Women have to do double work...”

ER - Ela Bhatt, “Towards the Second Freedom”

Optional:

ER – Kalima Rose, *Where women are leaders: The SEWA movement in India*, Ch. 1, 2 (skim)

Documentary film (in class): *Kamala and Raji: Working Women of Ahmedabad* (30 mins)

Th., Apr. 21 – Indian Religions: Diversity & Intolerance

Required Readings:

ER – Sekhon, Chap. 3, Religions in India

Devotta bk – Religion by Embree

Week 5

T, Apr.26 - Social Stratification: Caste & Class

Required Readings:

Sengupta bk – Hi-Fi: How to outrun fate”, pp. 25-56

ER - Sekhon, Chap. 4, Social Stratification

ER – Definitions – Caste, Varnas, Jaatis

ER - “Seven Prevalent Misconceptions about India’s Caste System”

ER – Deshpande, “Caste inequalities in India Today”

Th., Apr. 28 – T, May 3 - **Indian Electoral System & Political Institutions**

Required Readings:

ER – Sekhon – Political Institutions and processes

DeVotta bk – “Indian Politics” by Sharma

ER - Mehta, “The state of India’s democracy” (pp. 47-55)

ER - Hassan, “Indian democracy and social inequalities” (127-144)

ER - Robert Hardgrave and Stanley Kochanek, “Indian Politics on the Internet: A Resource Guide” (2pgs)

Internet: The BBC's coverage of the 2014 Indian elections

- Video- “Indian elections: Everything you need to know in two minutes”

(<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-26878181>)

- Video, “India election: 60-second lowdown on biggest vote ever” - <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-26453043>

- “India Election: World’s biggest voting event explained” (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-26847432>)

- India’s colorful Election slogans (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-27018561>)

- Video-India elections day one: Long queues in Assam and Tripura - <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-26919269>

- India Election Train (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8000645.stm)

Optional Reading:

ER - Arundhati Roy, “Introduction: Democracy’s Failing Light” (from *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field notes on Democracy*) – 29 pgs-easy reading

ER - Baxi, “Indian democracy: a critique” (pp. 56-64 in Basrur bk)

ER - Ganguli, “Introduction” in Ganguli et. al (eds.). 2009. *The State of India’s Democracy*, OUP, India.

Week 6

May 2 – Happy Mid-Term Break

Th., May 5 – Family & Gender Relations

Film/s on this topic – to be watched on your own outside of class the previous or the following weekend
Queen by OR

Monsoon Wedding by Meera Nair (feature film about a marriage amongst an upper middle class, Hindu Punjabi family in Delhi)

Required Reading:

Sengupta bk – *Apostates: When they Dared to Love*, pp. 163-184

ER - Sekhon, *Family Diversity and Education*

ER - Sekhon, *Gender Relations*

ER – Stephanie Coontz, *History of Marriage*, excerpts

ER – Madhu Kishwar, “Love & Marriage”

ER – Balmurli Natrajan, “Towards a (Re)arrangement of Love”

Optional Reading:

Devotta bk – *The Role of Women* by Lisa Trivedi

Documentary film (in class): *Arranged Marriages* (60 minutes)

TRENDS (1990s to the present)

Week 7

T, May 10 - Neoliberalism, Globalization & Development

– Required Reading:

Roy bk – “The Greater Common Good” OR “Capitalism: a ghost story”

ER – Dipankar Gupta, *The Caged Phoenix: Can India Fly?* (2009)

Chapter 2 “Connecting the Rich to the Poor” pp. 6-30

Chapter 13 “Against Rolling back the State”, 233-275

ER – Deaton and Dreze, “Poverty & Inequality in India: a reexamination”

ER – Amartya Sen, “Global Inequality and Human Security” (in Nayar bk)

Optional Readings:

ER – Dipankar Gupta, *The Caged Phoenix: Can India Fly?* (2009)

Chapter 3, “Intellectual Capital and Merchant Capital”, pp. 31-48

Chapter 4, “How Merchant Producers Operate”, 49-67

ER – Nayar, “Globalization, Geopolitics and India” (in Nayar bk)

Documentary Film: *Harvest of Hunger* OR *Rumble in Mumbai* (in class if time permits or on reserve in the library)

Th, May 12 - Required Readings:

ER – Vandana Shiva, *Globalization’s New Wars* (excerpts)

ER Assayag and Fuller, “Introduction” to *Globalizing India: perspectives from below*

ER – Vidal, “In search of Basmatisthan...”

ER – Assayag, “Seeds of Wrath”

Optional Readings:

ER – Balachandran & Subramaniam, “On the history of globalization and India”

ER – A. Bhaduri & D. Nayyar, *the intelligent person’s guide to liberalization*, Ch. 1, 2, 3

ER - Vandana Shiva, “Bioterror and Biosafety” (in *Terror-counter terror-women speak out*)

BB – Vandanan Shiva, “The Living Democracy Movement: Alternatives to the Bankruptcy of Globalization” (in *another world is possible*)

ER – Time Magazine articles on globalization in India

ER – article on Ikea in Assayag bk

Week 8

T, May 17 – Dalits, Affirmative Action & the politics of Caste & Class

Required Readings:

ER - Laura Jenkins, “Race, Caste & Justice: Social Sciences categories and antidiscrimination policies in India and the U.S.” (pp. 747-785)

ER – Sered & Fernadpulle, *Uninsured in America* – “Intro: The Death Spiral” (pp.1-20) and “Descent through the death spiral” (163-183)

ER- Elleanor Zelliott, “The Meaning of Ambedkar” (pp. 129-142)

ER - Gail Omvedt, “Ambedkar and after: The Dalit movement in India” (143-159)

ER – Fisher & Panniah, “Discrimination & Intolerance: National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights”

Documentary film : *Jai Bhim, Comrade*

Th., May 19 - Religious Nationalism & Fundamentalisms

Required Reading:

Sengupta bk

- "Strongman: aspiration gets into politics" pp.113-142

- "Facebook girls: speaking up, testing democracy's conscience" pp. 143-162

ER – Gyan Pandey, "The civilized and the barbarian: the new politics of the later 20th century India and the world"

ER – Romilla Thappar, "Syndicated Hindusim"

ER – David Ludden, "Ayodhya: a window to the world" – CUT?

ER – Pankaj Mishra, "Ayodhya, the modernity of Hinduism" (from *The Temptations of the West*)

ER – Meera Sehgal, "Mothering the Hindu nation...."

Optional Reading:

ER – Suvir Kaul, Introduction from *The Partitions of Memory: The Afterlife of the Division of India*

ER – Arundhati Roy, "Democracy: Who's she when she's at home?"

ER – Paola Bacchetta, "All our goddesses are armed"

ER - Paola Bacchetta, "Hindu nationalist women as ideologues"

ER – Amrita Basu, "Feminism inverted: the gendered imagery and real women of Hindu nationalism"

ER – Peter Van Der Veer, "Writing Violence"

ER – Khuswant Singh, "Life's Horoscope" (short story from *Paradise and Other Stories*)

ER – Metcalf Barbara, "Women and men in a contemporary Pietist movement"

ER – Praveen Swami, Articles on Islamic Fundamentalism in India from the *Frontline* magazine

Documentary film: *In the Name of God* by Anand Patwardhan

Week 9

T., May 24 – Feminism & the Indian Women's Movement

Required Reading:

Sengupta bk – "Curse: a father's fears, a daughter's dreams" pp.185-212

ER - Narayan, "Contesting cultures: westernization, respect for cultures and 3rd world feminists"

ER – Kumar, "From Chipko to Sati: the contemporary Indian Women's Movement", pp. 58-86

ER - Bhasin & Khan, "Some questions on feminism and its relevance in S. Asia"

ER - Bradley et. al (eds.), 2009. *Dowry: Bridging the gap between theory and practice*

- Tomalin, "Introduction" (pp. 1-28)

- Palriwala, "The spider's web: seeing dowry, fighting dowry" (pp. 144-176)

- Basu, "Legacies of the dowry prohibition act in India" (177-196)

Film: *Unlimited Girls: a fearless tale of feminism* (94 minutes) (in class if time permits or on reserve in the library)

Th., May 26 – Sexuality & LGBTQ Movements

Required Readings:

ER - Vanita, "Thinking beyond gender in India"

ER – Vanita, "Love's Rites: Same Sex Marriage in India and the West"

Film: Sonali's film –(in class if time permits or on reserve in the library)

Many People, Many Desires

Fire by Deepa Mehta (a feature film about two sisters-in-law in a Hindu joint family in Delhi who fall in love with each other) OR

Week 10

T, May 31 – Last Day of Class

Required Readings:

Sengupta bk - Epilogue

DeVotta bk – Ch. 12 - Trends & Prospects

ER - Roy on Maoist Movements OR Capitalism, a ghost story?

ER – Introduction to Social Movements in India

Final Paper due during Exam Week