Imagining India: From the Colonial to the Global
IDSEM-UG.1555
Gallatin School of Individualized Study
New York University
Fall 2011

COURSE INFORMATION

Professor Ritty Lukose, Office 715 Broadway (or 1 Washington Place), room 610; email: ritty.lukose@nyu.edu

Course Schedule: Thursday, 9:30am to 12:15pm, Silver, 704.

Office Hours: Mondays, 9-2; Tuesdays, 9-12 and 2-4. For the Tuesday 2-4 slot, I will have a sign up sheet for office hours outside my door. Please sign up by Monday afternoon. Otherwise, you can drop by the other times.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Nationalisms and the complex ways in which nations are imagined are one of the most dynamic, important, and fraught aspects of our contemporary world and India embodies its vagaries in acute, compelling and revealing ways. This course works at two levels: 1) to introduce students to the broad outlines of the history, culture, economy and politics of India and 2) to explore the processes by which nations are imagined within our contemporary world.

We begin with histories of pre-colonial and colonial South Asia, focusing on historical dynamics and imaginations and representations in and through which the region has been understood. We focus on the emergence of anti-colonial nationalisms as an important moment in the construction and assertion of “India” within the modern period. However, we move beyond a narrow political understanding of nationalism, to examine how nationalism as a cultural project re-shapes ideas of self, religion, community, family, gender and kinship. We then move on to examine the moment of independence, examining the fraught and violent experience of Partition, war and dislocation in and through which “India” came into being. Finally, we examine culture, politics and economy within the post-independence period. Here, we attend to discussions about the peculiarities of Indian democracy, the rise and fall of the Nehruvian vision of India, the emergence of Hindu nationalism, and the impact of globalization. It will become clear that we cannot grasp the project of imagining India without critically examining how questions of inequality and difference are shaped by and in turn challenge the nation-state and by understanding how nation-state formation is profoundly shaped by larger forces such as imperialism and globalization.
REQUIRED TEXTS
Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy by Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal
Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India by Bernard Cohn
A Passage to India by E.M. Forster
Hind Swaraj by M.K. Gandhi (Cambridge University Press texts in modern politics)
Makers of Modern India edited by Ramachandra Guha
Shadowlines by Amitav Ghosh
Power and Contestation: India Since 1989 by Nivedita Menon and Aditya Nigam

All books are available through Shakespeare and Company Booksellers, 716 Broadway at Washington Place (212-529-1330). Other reading materials will be available through the course blackboard website (BB) which everyone MUST be able to use.

Also, this syllabus is a work in progress. There might be occasions during the course of the semester when readings might change and/or additional materials added and assignments shifted as well. While I don’t anticipate this happening very frequently (and of course, I will give you notice), I would like the course to be open to our evolving conversation. I will also be providing links to original documents (speeches, writings) and supplementary materials (maps, etc) that will aid your reading and understanding. In addition, we will screen one to two films and/or documentaries during the semester. I will let you know the details as they become available.

COURSE PROCEDURES AND ASSIGNMENTS
This is a seminar course. Therefore, punctuality, regular attendance and participation are important for this class to work well. Arrival in a timely way and regular attendance is a requirement. If, due to illness or other emergency, you must miss class, please let me know via email. MISSING MORE THAN ONE CLASS WILL JEOPARDIZE YOUR GRADE.

Three 3-5 page discussion papers will be due (see course schedule). These short papers (typed, double-spaced, 12 point) correspond with the last session of a thematically organized section of the syllabus. In these papers, you should pull out a specific concept, an issue, or a question that enables an entry point into a meaningful and vigorous set of reflections that compare, contrast, and synthesize the readings of that section of the syllabus. The goal here is a well conceived, substantive discussion paper. It will therefore be important to balance breadth and depth in choosing authors to compare. Each of these papers must include discussion of at least 2 but no more than 3 of the authors that were assigned for that section. ESSAYS ARE DUE THE DAY BEFORE CLASS.

A final paper, 8-10 pages in length (again, typed, double-spaced, 12 point) will be due at the end of the course. This paper is an opportunity for you to explore and elaborate on a theme or issue in the class that is of particular interest to you. You must use at least 3 academic resources (book, chapter in an edited book, article) not included in the syllabus.

Note about Blackboard: This class makes use of the Blackboard course platform. All students are required to know this program and use it. I have created a discussion forum on blackboard for use by the class. I encourage you to use it and supplement our in-class discussions. I am not requiring that you post to the forum, but your participation on this forum will be incorporated into your participation grade if you do and I will be monitoring the forum to see what kinds of issues come up. Also, all written work must be submitted electronically via blackboard. Please only use the “assignments” tab on the left hand bar and not “digital dropbox”.
Breakdown of grade: 30% participation, 40% discussion papers, 30% final paper.

Plagiarism is an increasingly important and difficult issue in college teaching that I take very seriously. If you have any questions about plagiarism, there are many guides about plagiarism and how to avoid it. If you have any questions about this, please contact me.

COURSE SCHEDULE

September 8 – Introduction

Colonial “India”: Knowledge, Representation and Rule

September 15
Chapters 1 through 10 in Bose and Jalal (pp. 1-85)

* A Passage to India by E.M. Forster

September 22
Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge by Bernard Cohn

Also, read Macauley’s “Minute on Education” (BB)

September 29
Read “On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India” and “The Prose of Counterinsurgency” by Ranajit Guha (BB)

“Can the Subaltern Speak?” Gayatri Spivak (BB)

Discussion Essay due via Blackboard on September 28th

Imagining the Nation in British India

October 6
Read Chapters 11-15 in Bose and Jalal (pp.86-134)

Read selections from *The Nation and Its Fragments* by Partha Chatterjee (BB)

We will screen the film *Gare Bhaire* (Home and the World) by Satyajit Ray

October 13
Read “Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India” (BB)

Faisal Devji, “Gender and the Politics of Space: The Movement for Women’s Reform, 1857-1900” (BB)

Also read packet of articles on the debate surrounding Roop Kanwar’s sati (BB)

October 20
*Hind Swaraj* by M.K. Gandhi

Read Shahid Amin, “Waiting for Mahatma” (BB)
Also, Emma Tarlo, “Gandhi and the Recreation of Indian Dress” and “Is Khadi the Solution?” (BB)

October 27  
*The Annihilation of Caste* by B.R. Ambedkar and exchange with Gandhi on the caste system (BB)

Read Dilip Menon, “Caste and Colonial Modernity: Reading Saraswativijayam” (BB)

Discussion Essay Due via Blackboard on October 26th

Partition, Violence and Memory

November 3  
Bose and Jalal, chapters 16, 17

Read Saadat Hasan Manto, “Toba Tek Singh” (English trans). (BB)

Veena Das, “The Figure of the Abducted Woman: The Citizen as Sexed” (BB)

Selection from Borders and Boundaries: Women in India’s Partition by Menon and Bhasin (BB)

The Postcolonial Nation-State

November 10  
Selections from the writings of Jawaharlal Nehru (BB)

*Makers of Modern India* (chapters 15)

Other selections to be announced.

November 17  
*Makers of Modern India* (chapter 11) – E.V Ramaswami

Other selections to be announced.

November 24  
No Class, Thanksgiving Break.

December 1  
*Shadowlines* by Amitav Ghosh

December 8  
*Power and Contestation: India Since 1989* (selections) by Menon and Nigam

Articles on the Hindu Right (selections are forthcoming)

Screening selections from “Father, Son and Holy War” by Anand Patwardhan

December 15  
*Power and Contestation: India Since 1989* (selections) by Menon and Nigam
“‘Very Bombay’: Contending with the Global in an Indian Advertising Agency” by William Mazzarella

“Crossbreeding Institutions, Breeding Struggle: Women’s Empowerment, Neoliberal Governmentality and State (Re)formation in India” by Aradhana Sharma

Discussion Essay due via Blackboard on December 14th.

December 19 (Monday) Final Papers due by 12pm.