

Sociology 233
Gender and Power in South Asia
T/Fr 9:50-11
SPRING 2008
PNE 127

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PNE 330

Office Hours: T 4:15pm-5:15pm, Th 10am-11am or by appt.

I. Overview

How do issues of gender continue to figure into the political agendas of contemporary South Asia? In this course, we will address the gendered dimensions of contemporary social, political, and economic debates in South Asia, while coming to grips with changing roles and representations of South Asian women. Topics to be covered will include women's movements, the legal system, contemporary regional politics, the new economy, and popular culture.

This course emphasizes critical reading and writing, so we will learn to work through a wide variety of texts—popular, scholarly, and film—to ask new kinds of questions. Although this is not primarily a theoretical course, we will also be constantly trying to think through how a gender lens changes the ways in which we study politics, the economy, and culture. In this sense, South Asia is just the lab in which we will be exploring a core set of sociological concepts.

II. Course Requirements

Students will be graded according to the following assignments:

- 1) **Weekly reading responses** (<300 words): In these assignments, you will reflect upon the readings for the week and connect them with material covered earlier in the class. These are *not* summaries, but it will be useful for you to state the key concept/contribution of the reading in your response. Mainly, the responses should focus on what stood out to you about the readings and what it made you think about. Each student must post one response to the course conference per week and I encourage you to read one another's responses.
- 2) **Participation/Attendance**: Discussion, exchange, and participation are critical components of this class and classtime will be important in facilitating your understanding of the readings. Therefore, attendance is mandatory. More than two absences during the course of the term will dramatically affect your participation grade. Tardiness is not acceptable; if you are more than 10 minutes late to class, it will count as an absence. If you are consistently late by a few minutes, this will affect your participation grade as well.
- 3) **Mini-Research Presentations**: Each student will be required to choose a date on which to help set a context for the topic that week. A successful presentation should have not only completed the readings ahead of time, but should also conduct research online, in the library, and/or through interviews/fieldwork to provide the class with a context for thinking about the day's readings. Materials

to review may include, but are not limited to: newspaper/magazine articles, films, interviews, and books. Strategies for presentations should be discussed with me in advance. Presentations should last 10-15 minutes and you must hand in either an annotated bibliography or a description of your research/fieldwork, as applicable.

- 4) **2 Thinkpieces** (1250-1500 words or 4-5 pages double-spaced): Thinkpieces flesh out the key themes of the class in the form of short essays. You will respond to prompts to be handed out in class. These papers are formal and must be constructed around a central argument in response to a selected prompt. You are also free to come up with your own topics, but they must be approved in advance.
- 5) **Final Exam:** The exam will include a few short essays (outlining the key aspects of a specific topic in a paragraph), and one longer essay (an analytical question that will ask you to draw upon the readings to analyze a specific issue). Exam questions will always offer choice (i.e. answer 4 of the following 5 short answers or answer 1 of the following two essay questions)

Assignments will be weighted in the final grade as follows:

Participation/Reading Responses: 20%

Presentation: 20%

2 Thinkpieces: 40% (20% each)

Final Exam: 20%

*A note about grading: I grade work according to quality, effort, and a demonstrated understanding of the key concepts of the course/assignment. A grade of “B” indicates *good* work. It means that you have made adequate effort, have shown that you understand the main ideas, and have met the expectations of the class. To get a grade in the “A” range, your work must surpass those expectations. In short, “A’s” are for work at an *excellent* level. Grades of “C” or below indicate that you have not fulfilled the expectations of the coursework, either by not completing the assignment or by not putting in the required time and effort.

III. Course Materials:

Most of the readings for this course are available either through e-reserve or electronically through the Wellesley library. In addition, you are required to purchase the following texts, available at the bookstore and also on reserve at the library:

Jeffrey, Patricia & Amrita Basu. (1997) *Appropriating Gender: Women's Activism and Politicized Religion in South Asia*. New York: Routledge.

Lynch, Caitrin. (2007) *Juki Girls, Good Girls: Gender and Cultural Politics in Sri Lanka's Global Garment Industry*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Puri, Jyoti. (1999) *Woman, Body, Desire in Post-Colonial India: Narratives of Gender and Sexuality*. New York: Routledge.

IV. Course Outline and Readings

Jan 29: Introduction and outline of the course

PART I: Gender and Politics

February 1st-5th: Nationalist Symbols

- Parameswaran, Radhika. 2004. Global Queens, National Celebrities: Tales of Feminine Triumph in Post-Liberalization India. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*. 21:346-370. (available online through Library)
- Chatterjee, Partha. 1989. "Colonialism, nationalism, and the contest in India." *American Ethnologist*. 16 (4) 622-633 (available online from Wellesley Library)
- Sinha, Mrinalini. 2003. *Colonial Masculinities* (selection)

February 8th-12th: Religious/Communal Symbols

- Chowdhry, Geeta. 2000. "Communalism, nationalism, and gender: Bhartiya Janata Party and the Hindu right in India." In *Women, States, and Nationalism*. Rachod-Nilsson, Sita & Mary Ann Tetreault (eds.) London and New York: Routledge. 98-118
- Sarkar, Tanika. 1995. "Heroic Women, Mother Goddesses: Family and Organisation in Hindutva Politics. In Sarkar, Tanika and Urvashi Butalia, eds. *Women and the Hindu Right: A collection of essays*. Pp. 181-215.
- Maunaguru, Sitralega. 1995. "Gendering Tamil Nationalism: The Construction of 'Woman' in Projects of Protest and Control." In Jeganathan, Pradeep & Qadri Ismail, eds. *Unmaking the Nation: The politics of identity and history in modern Sri Lanka*. Pp. 158-175
- Gardner, Katy. 1994. "Women and Islamic Revivalism in a Bangladeshi Community." In Jeffery, Patricia & Amrita Basu (eds.) *Appropriating Gender: Women's Activism and Politicized Religion in South Asia*. Pp 203-220.

February 15th: In-class Film, *Father, Son, and the Holy War*

February 19th-22nd: (Re)Thinking the State

- Sunder Rajan. "Introduction: Women, Citizenship, Law and the Indian State." in *The Scandal of the State*. Pp 1-37.
- Kapur, Ratna and Brenda Cossman. 1999. "On Women, Equality and the Constitution: Through the Looking Glass of Feminism." In Menon, Nivedita. *Gender and Politics in India*. Pp 197-261.
- Hasan, Zoya. 1998. "Gender Politics, Legal Reform, and the Muslim Community in India." In Jeffery, Patricia & Amrita Basu (eds.) *Appropriating Gender: Women's Activism and Politicized Religion in South Asia*. Pp 70-88.

February 26th-29th: Women's movements

- Jahan, Rounaq. 1987. "Women in South Asian Politics." *Third World Quarterly*. Vol. 9, No. 3. July, 848-870.
- deAlwis, Malathi. 1998. "Motherhood as a Space of Protest: Women's Political

- Participation in Contemporary Sri Lanka.” In Jeffery, Patricia & Amrita Basu (eds.) *Appropriating Gender: Women’s Activism and Politicized Religion in South Asia*. Pp 185-201.
- Gandhi, Nandita. 1994. “The Anti-Price Movement.” In Sen, Ilina (ed.). *A Space Within the Struggle*. New Delhi: Kali for Women. Pp 50-81.

March 4th-7th: Violence

- Mani, Lata. 1990. “Contentious Traditions: The Debate on *Sati* in Colonial India.” In *Recasting Women*.
- In class film, *Bandit Queen*
- Gopal, Priyamvada. “Of Victims and Vigilantes: The “Bandit Queen Controversy.” In Sunder Rajan, Rajeswari. (ed.) *Signposts: Gender Issues in Post-Independence India*. Pp. 293-331.
- Thinkpiece #1 Due March 7th

PART II: Gender and Economy

March 11th: Women’s work

- Liddle, Joanna and Joshi, Rama. 1986. *Daughters of Independence*. (selections)

March 14-21st: Women’s work, agency, and the nation

- Lynch, Caitrin. 2007. *Juki Girls, Good Girls*.
- Kabeer, Naila. *Power to Choose*.

April 1st-4th: Microfinance

- Wahid, Abu N.M. 1994. “The Grameen Bank and Poverty Alleviation in Bangladesh” Theory, Evidence, And Limitations.” *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*. Volume 53(1):1-15. (available online through Library)
- Goetz, Anne Marie & Rina Sen Gupta. 1996. “Who takes the credit? Gender, power, and control over loan use in rural credit programs in Bangladesh.” *World Development*. Volume 24(1):45-63. (available online through Library)
- Kabeer, Naila. 2001. Conflicts Over Credit: Re-Evaluating the Empowerment Potential of Loans to Women in Rural Bangladesh. *World Development*. Volume 29, Issue 1, January, Pages 63-84. (available online through library)

April 8th–11th: Communal and Natural Resources

- Agrawal, Bina. *A Field of One’s Own*. (selections)
- Krishnan, Sumi. *Livelihood and Gender: Equity in Community Resource Management*. Sage Publications. (selections)
- Upadhyay, Bhawana. Water, poverty and gender: review of evidences from Nepal, India and South Africa. *Water Policy*, 2003 Vol. 5, No. 5/6, 503-511
- Ray, Isha. 2007. “Women, development and water.” *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*.

PART III: Gender and “Culture”

April 15th-18th: Globalization and Middle-Classness

- Fernandes, Leela. 2000. "Rethinking Globalization: gender, nation, and the middle class in liberalizing India." In *Feminist Locations: Theory/Practice/Local/Global*. M. deKoven (ed.)
- Rajagopal, Arvind. 2001. "Thinking about the new Indian middle class: gender, advertising, and politics in an age of globalization." In *Signposts: gender issues in post-independence India*, ed, R. Sunder Rajan, pp 57-100. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press.
- Maira, Sunaina. 2000. "Henna and Hip Hop: The Politics of Cultural Production and the Work of Cultural Studies." *Journal of Asian American Studies*. Vol 3(3):329-369. (available online through Library)

April 22nd-May 2nd: Sexuality and the Body

- Puri, Jyoti. 1999. *Women, Desire, and the Body in Post-Colonial India*. (selection)
- Mehta, Suketu. *Maximum City*. (selection)
- In-Class Film: *Fire*

Thinkpiece #2 Due May 2nd

May 6th: Review for Final and Wrap-up