



Indian Culture and Society

ANTH5324

Fall 2020

Dr. Venera R. Khalikova

Email: venera.khalikova@cuhk.edu.hk

Office: NAH 322. Office hours:

Wednesday 3:00 PM – 6:00 PM

Lecture: Thursday 2:30 PM – 4:15 PM, NAH 115

Tutorial : Thursday 4:30 PM – 5:15 PM, NAH 11

RA: TBD

Course description

This course is an anthropological exploration of contemporary India: its social life and diverse cultures. India is home to more than a billion people, who look differently, speak different languages, practice different religions, and have distinct rituals, cuisines, and music. India is also one of the world's powers with global economic, political, and intellectual influence. India also holds a prominent historical and cultural place in Asia: along with China, it has significantly contributed to diverse Asian traditions of knowledge—from philosophy and religion to medicine and technology. As a former British colony and a growing modern economy, India provides rich material to learn about colonialism, nation-building, interethnic relations, and Asian connections, including ties with Hong Kong.

In this course, you will learn about India's place both in the world and the Asian region, developing an understanding of the country's diversity and complex social institutions such as family, community, caste, and class. We will discuss pressing issues and theoretical debates related to gender, sexuality, social movements, religious conflicts, public health, and labor, and how these issues have been shaped by post-colonial politics and current transnational processes.

There are no pre-requisites for this course.

Course Format

To minimize the risk of COVID-19 infection, this course will be conducted online until further notice by the University.

The learning process will include lectures, guest lectures, watching documentaries, in-depth reading, and discussion sessions during the tutorials. Note that some documentaries are not readily available online or the library, so it is your responsibility to attend the class on the scheduled days.

Keep in mind that the assigned readings, class activities, and the events schedule may be adjusted in the course of the semester, so make sure to consult Blackboard regularly.

Learning objectives

By the end of the course students will be able to do the following:

- name major Indian communities in terms of region, caste, class, religion, language, gender, and other sociocultural divisions
- identify various schools of philosophy and religion that originated in the Indian subcontinent
- identify some cities, states, and union territories of India on the map
- describe and give examples of the everyday life of Indian people, including women, men, and people who identify differently
- give examples of anthropological studies of India
- explain the impact of India's colonial history on its modern society
- interpret the role of popular culture, political processes, and the global economy in the lives of Indians in India and abroad

Learning material

You are welcome to purchase the textbooks and books listed below, but it is not necessary because the assigned excerpts will be posted on Blackboard. Additional articles, newspaper pieces, and videos will also be available on Blackboard.

Major book: Smitha Radhakrishnan. *Appropriately Indian: Gender and Culture in a New Transnational Class*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011

Supplementary books:

- *Everyday Life in South Asia* (referred to in the schedule as **Reader**) by Diane P. Mines and Sarah Lamb, eds. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press. Second Edition, 2010.
- *A Companion to the Anthropology of India* (Referred to as **Companion**) by Isabelle Clark-Decès, ed. John Wiley & Sons, 2011.
- *The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism*, edited by Gavin Flood, John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2005.
- Lukose, Ritty (2009) *Liberalization's Children: Gender, Youth, and Consumer Citizenship in Globalizing India*. Durham: Duke University Press
- Dave, Naisargi (2012) *Queer Activism in India: A Story in the Anthropology of Ethics*. Durham: Duke University Press
- Pande, Amrita (2014) *Wombs in Labor: Transnational Commercial Surrogacy in India*. Columbia University Press
- Peter Berger, and Frank Heidemann, eds. *The Modern Anthropology of India: Ethnography, Themes and Theory*. Routledge, 2013. Available at University Library UL GN17.3.I4 M64 2013
- Arundhati Roy. *The Doctor and the Saint: Caste, Race, and Annihilation of Caste. The Debate between B.R. Ambedkar and M.K. Gandhi*. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2017
- Shashi Tharoor. *Why I Am a Hindu*. Scribe Publications, 2018
- Shashi Tharoor. *India: From Midnight to the Millennium*, Penguin Books India, 2000
- Tulasi Srinivas. *The Cow in the Elevator: An Anthropology of Wonder*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2018
- Sunil Khilnani. *The Idea of India*, New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 1997
- Joyce Flueckiger. *Lived Religions: Everyday Hinduism*. John Wiley & Sons, 2015.
- Joseph Kitagawa, ed. *The Religious Traditions of Asia: Religion, History, and Culture*, 2013.

Assessment

Syllabus quiz: ungraded

During the third week of classes I will administer a short quiz to assess your understanding of the syllabus and course requirements.

Participation

Participation grade will include two parts:

- General participation: Exchange of ideas is the foundation of learning; therefore, you are required to participate in class discussions both during the lectures and tutorials. If you prefer to participate in writing, rather than speaking, let me know and we will find a way.
- Tutorial facilitation: You will need to lead a discussion during one tutorial, present a summary of the assigned readings, generate discussion questions, and provide relevant examples.

Midterm essay

You will need to submit a 5-page (maximum 2000 words) description of one community / ethnic group from India: their size, region, cultural practices, rituals, cuisine, and place in the Indian society. The list of possible groups will be posted on Blackboard and you must sign up in advance on a first-come-first-serve basis. VeriGuide report must be attached.

Final exam

The take-home final examination will consist of five short-answer questions based on the entire material of the course. Each answer is one page, totally 5 pages. The questions and the guidelines will be handed out on the last day of class and should be submitted via VeriGuide.

Grading scale

Grade	Participation	Written assignments: Midterm essay and Final exam
A	You participate in all classes. Your reading summary and comments demonstrate that you have read the assigned readings, and your discussion questions show an excellent understanding of the class material	Your essay/ exam answers show a nuanced understanding of class material and all concepts; information is factually accurate; arguments are convincing. The writing is original, of a required length and format, and submitted on time
A -	You participate in almost all classes, with one or two classes missed or inactive. Your reading summary and comments demonstrate that you have read the assigned readings, and your discussion questions show a good understanding of the class material	Your answers demonstrate a nuanced understanding of class material and almost all concepts; information is factually accurate; arguments are convincing, even if occasionally contain minor errors. The writing is original, of a required length and format, and submitted on time
B+	You participate in the majority of classes, with three classes missed or inactive. Your summary and comments demonstrate that you have read the assigned readings, and your discussion questions show a sufficient understanding of the course material	Your answers demonstrate an overall good understanding of class material but may lack clarity, contain several minor errors, and / or slightly deviate from required length and format. The writing is original and submitted on time.
B	You participate in the majority of classes, with four classes missed or inactive. Your summary	Your answers demonstrate an overall good understanding of class material but may lack

	and comments demonstrate that you have read the assigned readings, and your discussion questions show a sufficient understanding of the course material	clarity, contain many minor errors, and / or deviate from required length and format. The writing is submitted on time. It is original, although there might be minor problems with citations and attribution
B -	You participate in the majority of classes, with five classes missed or inactive. Your summary and comments demonstrate that you have read the assigned readings, and your discussion questions show a sufficient understanding of the course material	Your answers demonstrate an overall good understanding of class material but lack clarity, contain minor errors and a few major logical flaws, and / or deviate from required length and format. The work is submitted on time. It is original, although there might be minor problems with citations and attribution
C +	You participate in about half of classes, with six classes missed or inactive. Your summary and comments demonstrate that you have read some of the assigned readings, so your understanding of the course material is partial	Your answers show an acceptable level of understanding of class material, but it lacks clarity, contains many major factual errors and logical flaws, and/or often deviate from required length and format. The work is submitted on time or a day late. It is original, although there are major problems with citations and attribution
C	You participate in about half of classes, with seven classes missed or inactive. Your summary and comments demonstrate that you have read some of the assigned readings, so your understanding of the course material is partial	Your answers show an acceptable level of understanding of class material, but it lacks clarity, contains many major factual errors and logical flaws. Your work does not follow the required length and format. The work is submitted on time or a day late. It is original, although there are major problems with citations and attribution
C -	You participate in about half of the classes, with eight classes missed or inactive. Your summary and comments demonstrate that you have read some of the assigned readings, so your understanding of the course material is partial	Your answers show an acceptable level of understanding of class material, but it lacks clarity, contains many major factual errors and logical flaws. Your work does not follow the required length and format. The work is submitted a day or two late. It is original, although there are major problems with citations and attribution
D +	You participate in a small number of classes, with 9-10 classes missed or inactive, or you show a low level of engagement. Your tutorial facilitation and summary are confusing, demonstrating that you have not read the assigned readings, and you do not understand what is being discussed	Your answers show a minimal understanding of class material. It lacks effort, hard to read and understand, contains major errors, flaws, and biased viewpoints. It is original, but citations are absent. It considerably deviates from the required length and format (answers are too short), and/or are submitted a few days late.
D	You participate in a small number of classes, with 11-12 classes missed or inactive, or you show a low level of engagement. Your tutorial facilitation and summary are confusing, demonstrating that you have not read the assigned readings, and you do not understand what is being discussed	Your answers show a minimal understanding of class material. It lacks effort, hard to read and understand, contains major errors, flaws, and biased viewpoints. It is original, but citations are absent. It considerably deviates from the required length and format (answers are too short), and submitted many days late.
F	You almost never participate, you miss all the lectures/tutorials or come unprepared. You have not done the tutorial facilitation	Your work is submitted more than a week late or not submitted at all. The answers are extremely short, factually incorrect, biased, and/or contain instances of plagiarism.

Weekly class schedule

Week One. September 3. DIVERSE CULTURES OF INDIA

Required reading:

- Shashi Tharoor (2002) A Myth and an Idea. In *India: From Midnight to the Millennium*, Penguin Books India, pp. 7–21

Week Two. September 10. MAKING THE INDIAN NATION

Required readings:

- Gandhian Nationalism and the Politics in the 1920s. In *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy*, by Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal
- Urvashi Butalia: The Voices from the Partition. In *Reader*, pp. 314–327

In class: Guest lecture by D. Amrita Shodhan

Week Three. September 17. PRACTICING RELIGION

Syllabus quiz today!

Required readings:

- Joyce B. Flueckiger: *Everyday Hinduism*, John Wiley & Sons, 2015: Introduction, pp. 1–10; A Note on Caste, pp. 13–17; and Families of Deities, pp. 18–45

(This is a great book on Hinduism, you are welcome to read other chapters, for example, "Temples" or "Festivals")

In class: Film *The Roots of Love* (2014), directed by Harjant Gill, 27 mins

Week Four. September 24. SOCIAL DIVISIONS: VARNA, JATI, ADIVASI

Required readings:

- Seven Prevalent Misconceptions about India's Caste System. In *Reader*, pp. 153-155
- Smitha Radhakrishnan: *Appropriately Indian*—Introduction, pp. 1–23.

Film in class: Inside a Lost African Tribe Still Living in India Today

Week Five. October 1. CLASS AND NEW SUBJECTIVITIES

PUBLIC HOLIDAY (class will be rescheduled, or a recorded lecture will be posted online if no alternative timeslot found)

Required readings:

- Smitha Radhakrishnan: *Appropriately Indian*— Chapter 1: Privilege, pp. 25–52
- Smitha Radhakrishnan: *Appropriately Indian*— Chapter 2: Global/Indian, pp. 53–86

Film in class: *The World Before Her* (2012) by Nisha Pahuja

Week Six. October 8. WOMEN AND MEN

Required readings:

- Smitha Radhakrishnan: *Appropriately Indian*— Chapter 3: Merit, pp. 87–114
- Smitha Radhakrishnan: *Appropriately Indian*—Chapter 4: Individuals, pp. 115–144

Recommended:

- Anjani Trivedi: In New Delhi, Women Marry Up and Men are Left Behind. In *The New York Times Blog* <https://india.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/01/15/in-delhi-women-marry-up-and-men-are-left-behind>
- Film: *Mardistan / Macholand* (2014) by Harjant Gill

Week Seven. October 15. MARRIAGE, CHILDREN, AND FAMILY

Required readings:

- Smitha Radhakrishnan: *Appropriately Indian*—Chapter 5: Family, pp. 145–172
- Jeffry and Jeffry: Allah Gives Both Boys and Girls. In *Reader*, pp. 26-39

Film in Class: *Lovesick* (2017) by Ann Kim and Priya Giri Desai

Week Eight. October 22. MIGRATION, TRANSNATIONALISM AND LIFE IN DIASPORA

Required readings:

- Smitha Radhakrishnan: *Appropriately Indian*—Chapter 5: Religion: When the Private is Transnational, pp. 173–198
- Smitha Radhakrishnan: *Appropriately Indian*—Conclusion: Apolitical Politics, pp. 198–206

Week Nine. October 29. INDIANS IN HONG KONG – PART 1: HISTORIES AND IDENTITIES

Required readings:

- Caroline Plüss (2005) Migrants from India and Their Relations with British and Chinese Residents. In *Foreign Communities in Hong Kong, 1840s–1950s*, edited by C. Chu.
- Graham Lock and Champa Detaramani (2006) Being Indian in Post-colonial Hong Kong: Models of Ethnicity, Culture and Language among Sindhis and Sikhs in Hong Kong. *Asian Ethnicity*, 7(3): 267–284

Guest lecture by Vivek Mahbubani

Week Ten. November 5. INDIANS IN HONG KONG – PART 2: CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES

Required readings:

- John Nguyet Erni and Lisa Yuk-ming Leung (2015) *Understanding South Asian Minorities in Hong Kong. Chapter 4: Changing a Culture of Discrimination: A Critical Understanding of Hong Kong's Anti-racism Law*
- Chapter 5: Education of South Asian Youth: The Case of Delia Memorial School. In John Nguyet Erni and Lisa Yuk-ming Leung (2015) *Understanding South Asian Minorities in Hong Kong*.

Guest Lecture by Niru Vishvanath, Equal Opportunity Commission

Week Eleven. November 12. FOOD AND DIET IN INDIA

Required readings:

- Philip Lutgendorf: *Making Tea in India: Chai, Capitalism, Culture*. Thesis Eleven, 113(1) 11–31
- Venera Khalikova: A local genie in an imported bottle: Ayurvedic commodities and healthy eating in North India. *Food, Culture, and Society*, 2020, 23: 173-192

Week Twelve. November 19.

"THIRD" GENDER AND QUEER POLITICS

88th Congregation for the Conferment of Bachelor's Degrees [full-time undergraduate classes suspended]. UG-MA CO-link classes will be rescheduled or a recorded lecture will be posted online if no alternative time found

Required readings:

- Ina Goel (2016) Hijra Communities of Delhi. *Sexualities*, 19(5–6): 535–546
- N.N. Dave (2010) To Render Real the Imagined: An Ethnographic History of Lesbian Community in India. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 35(3)

Week Thirteen. November 26. PUBLIC HEALTH, ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES, AND INDIA'S FUTURE

Required readings:

- P. P. Karan: Environmental Movements in India. *Geographical Review*, 1994, 84(1): 32-41
- Nikhil Anand: Toward an Anthropology of Water in Mumbai's Settlements. In *Companion*, Chapter 23.

Video clips from "Killing Ladakh"

December 3. FINAL EXAM PAPER DUE

Policies and Support

Contacting me

Use your CUHK email (not your personal email), when communicating about class matters.

For most situations, you should write to the Teaching Assistant first—the class TA is very knowledgeable and ready to help you. But feel free to email me as well, if there is something that the TA does not know, or if you want to contact me directly. In line with the convention of academic communication, you can address me as "Dr. Khalikova."

I will do my best to answer your email within 24 hours, with an understandable exception of weekends and public holidays

Educational technology

This class relies on the use of Blackboard and Zoom. All class communications, announcements, assignment guidelines, and homework submissions will be made through Blackboard. Note that it uses the email address assigned to you by the University, so it is your responsibility to have an electronic mail forwarded to your primary email address.

Special accommodation

If you need special accommodations or classroom modifications, you need to notify both me and the University's Wellness and Counselling Center (<https://www2.osa.cuhk.edu.hk/disability/en-GB>) no later than the third week of class.

Academic Integrity

The University has recently updated its policy on Academic Integrity and the penalties for plagiarism and cheating: http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/Eng_hm_files_%282013-14%29/p06.htm Read it carefully: every student is expected to comply with the policy; otherwise, if you are suspected of violating these obligations, you will be subject to the outlined sanctions. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to ask me or your TA about this!

Classroom Recording

Although I will record some of my or guest lectures and will post PowerPoint slides to Blackboard, no tutorial discussions are to be recorded. To ensure free and open discussion of ideas, **you may not record** discussions and/or activities during the class or tutorials without my permission obtained in advance, and only solely for your own private use.

Late Work and Absence

Late or incomplete assignments will be marked down: a grade will be subtracted **for each late day**. Class attendance is not required, but if you miss a class, it is your responsibility to copy class notes and go over the PowerPoint presentations, otherwise, it will most likely result in poor understanding of class material and, ultimately, in a low grade. You are welcome to schedule a personal meeting with me to go over the missed lectures.

Discussion Rules

We will discuss many interesting, important and potentially controversial topics. I expect you to be **polite and respectful** of your classmates' opinions, limit your statements to academic (not emotional) arguments, and not use offensive language or judgmental statements.

Grade Review

If you want to discuss and contest your grade, you can send me an email to set up an appointment during my office hours when we will go over your exam/written work and decide on a grade together. During this process, I can both mark your original grade up, if you demonstrate evidence that you know the material well, or mark it down.

Independent Learning Center

If you need help with communication and learning skills, the University has a great resource for you. You can schedule a consultation or attend workshops on various strategies for improving learning outcomes <https://www.ilc.cuhk.edu.hk/EN/mission.aspx>