



Indian Culture and Society

ANTH5324

Fall 2019

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Office: NAH 322. Office hours:
Wednesday 3:00 PM – 6:00 PM
Thursday 12:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Lecture: Tuesday 10:30 AM – 12:15 PM, AIT 212
Tutorial 1: Tuesday 12:30 PM – 13:15 PM, AIT 212
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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 fascinating 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

The learning process will include in-depth reading, discussion sessions, documentaries, and an outdoor learning event. Note that some documentaries are not easily available online or the library, so it is your responsibility to come to class on the scheduled days or request notes from your classmates. 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 categories of India's diversity 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
- explain the impact of India's colonial history on its modern society
- interpret and evaluate the role of popular culture, political processes, and the global economy in the lives of Indians in India and abroad
- formulate and carry out a pilot study of the Indians in Hong Kong

Learning material

Required 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. E-book <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/cuhk-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1402903>
- *A Companion to the Anthropology of India*———Referred to as **Companion** by Isabelle Clark-Decès, ed. John Wiley & Sons, 2011. E-book: <https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.easyaccess2.lib.cuhk.edu.hk/doi/book/10.1002/9781444390599>
- Smitha Radhakrishnan. *Appropriately Indian: Gender and Culture in a New Transnational Class*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011. **You need to purchase your own copy!**

Supplementary books:

- 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. E-book: <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/cuhk-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1977575>
- Joseph Kitagawa, ed. *The Religious Traditions of Asia: Religion, History, and Culture*, 2013. E-book: <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/cuhk-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1382143>

You are welcome to purchase these books, but it is not necessary because the assigned excerpts will be posted on Blackboard.

Several other articles, newspaper pieces, and videos will be also available on Blackboard.

Policies and Support

Educational Technology

This class relies on the use of Blackboard. All class communications, announcements, assignment guidelines, and homework submissions will be done through it. 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 main 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.

Technology and Cell Phones

Although I recognize the value of technology in aiding the learning process, I also understand that it can be a major hindrance to learning, when used inappropriately. Therefore, the use of laptops and mobile phones is not permitted in class (unless it is necessary for class activities). Mobile phones must be kept in your bags, turned off, or on silent mode (NOT on vibrate) as to avoid distracting your peers. E-readers and tablets are allowed only during tutorials when we discuss assigned articles and you need the texts in front of you. Remember, browsing Facebook or any other website during the class distracts not only you but also persons sitting next to you, and such conduct is disrespectful to me and your classmates. Therefore, disruptions caused by phone calls, texting, emailing, or the use of any other communication technologies during a class will result **in the reduction of your final grade**. If you are expecting an important call, you should talk to me before the 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

To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, **you may not record** lectures, discussion and/or activities during the class or tutorials without my permission obtained in advance, 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 come to my office during office hours 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>



Coffee with the Teacher

To facilitate your success in this class, I will organize two informal sessions before the midterm exam and before the finals when you can meet with me to talk about any course-related questions outside the classroom, over coffee. The date and time TBD.

Assessment

Participation: ungraded

Although not required, I strongly encourage you to participate in discussions both during the lectures and tutorials, because the exchange of ideas is the foundation of learning. I am always eager to learn what you think! If you prefer to participate in writing, than speaking, let me know and I will arrange it.

Syllabus quiz: ungraded

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

Mid-term exam: 30%

To ensure that you are familiar with the main concepts and facts about Indian society, we will have an in-class exam which will include multiple-choice, true-or-false, and fill-the-gap questions. The midterm exam will last 40 minutes, and we will continue the class after a break.

October 22 in class. NO MAKE-UP EXAM

India-related event homework: 20%

You will need to attend one event during an ongoing exhibition by N.S. Harsha, an Indian artist from Mysore, India at the Centre for Heritage Arts and Textile in Tsuen Wan. The exhibition *N. S. Harsha: Gathering Delights* runs from 28 July 2019 to 3 November 2019 and the details are available here <https://www.mill6chat.org/event/n-s-harsha-gathering-delights/> You can attend a talk, a workshop, a chat with the artist—anything except my lecture on September 28.

Take a selfie in front of Harsha's painting and submit it along with a short reflection on your visit (maximum 200 words).

Due November 5, 23:59 via VeriGuide

Mapping India homework: 20%

On the first week of class I will distribute a grey map of India and, as the course progresses, you will need to identify and color those states and union territories that we come across either in lectures or assigned readings. By the last day of class, you will have a partially completed map of India. You may add any information that seems significant to you (capitals, rivers, tribal areas, religious composition, languages), but I will only assess the states and union territories.

Due November 26 in class

Essay: 40%

Essay sketch (ungraded): To assist you in developing about your final essay in advance, you will be asked to submit a 400–500-word sketch of your topic, justifying its importance, research sources and procedures. I will provide substantial feedback for your sketch, so that you can develop an excellent final essay. This is an ungraded assignment but if you submit it late, points will be deducted from the final paper grade for each late day, i.e. from A to A–, from A– to B+ and so on.

Due October 29 in class

Final paper (graded): This is a 2500–3000-word essay that addresses a topic related to any aspect of the contemporary Indian society and cultures. The essay will need to incorporate reading materials from the course and your original research on any aspect of Indian culture conducted in Hong Kong or online. The guidelines will be posted on Blackboard.

Due December 10 via VeriGuide

Grading scale

Grade	Course Achievements
A	<i>Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes:</i> your written work and class participation demonstrate a nuanced understanding of the introduced concepts, factually accurate information, and convincing argumentation. All work is original, of required length and format, and submitted on time.
A -	<i>Generally outstanding performance on all (or almost all) learning outcomes:</i> most of your written work and class participation demonstrate a nuanced understanding of the introduced concepts, factually accurate information, and convincing argumentation, even if occasionally contain minor errors. All work is original, of required length and format and submitted on time.
B+	<i>Substantial performance on all learning outcomes, OR high performance on some outcomes which compensates for less satisfactory performance on others:</i> your work and class participation show an overall good understanding of class material but may vary in clarity, contain a lot of minor factual errors, or slightly deviate from required length and format. All work is original and submitted on time.
B	
B -	
C +	<i>Satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes, possibly with a few weaknesses:</i> your work and class participation show an overall acceptable level of understanding of class material but it somewhat lacks clarity, contains major factual errors, and/or often deviate from required length and format. Your written assignments are original but occasionally submitted late.
C	
C -	
D +	<i>Barely satisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes:</i> your work and class participation show a low level of engagement and persistent distraction by the use of mobile phones or other technology. Your written assignments are original, but they show minimal understanding of class material, lack of clarity, major factual errors, considerably deviate from required length and format, and/or are submitted late.
D	
F	<i>Unsatisfactory performance on most learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specified assessment requirements.</i> Most of your assignments are submitted late or not submitted at all, they are extremely short, factually incorrect, and/or contain instances of plagiarism.

Weekly class schedule

Week One. September 3. THE 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
- Sunil Khilnani (1997) Introduction: Ideas of India. In *The Idea of India*, Penguin Books India, pp. 1–14

Week Two. September 10. MAKING THE INDIAN NATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Required readings:

- Urvashi Butalia: The Voices from the Partition. In *Reader*, pp. 314–327
- Jeffrey Gettleman, Suhasini Raj, Kai Schultz and Hari Kumar: India Revokes Kashmir's Special Status, Raising Fears of Unrest. *The New York Times*, August 5, 2019
<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/05/world/asia/india-pakistan-kashmir-jammu.html>
- Jeffrey Gettleman and Hari Kumar: India Plans Big Detention Camps for Migrants. Muslims Are Afraid. *The New York Times*, August 17, 2019.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/17/world/asia/india-muslims-narendra-modi.html>
- Philippa Williams: Hindu-Muslim Relations and the “War on Terror.” In *Companion*, Chapter 13

Week Three. September 17. PRACTICING RELIGION

Syllabus quiz today!

Required readings:

- Joyce B. Flueckiger: Introduction. In *Everyday Hinduism*, John Wiley & Sons, 2015, pp. 1–10
(This is just an introduction, but you may read other chapters in this book, for example, on “Temples” or “Festivals”)
- Shashi Tharoor: Introduction. In *Why I Am a Hindu*. Scribe Publications, 2018
Read this introduction or watch a talk on YouTube where Shashi Tharoor reads excerpts from his books and describes some of Hinduism's philosophical concepts:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IfRlu8t9Jbc&list=PLhr9IC4PGspZc1Se8oQWjPTi19UnmY41G&index=3>
- Luis O. Gomez: Buddhism in India. In *The Religious Traditions of Asia: Religion, History, and Culture*, ed. Joseph Kitagawa, Routledge, 2013, Chapter 2
- Alf Hiltebeitel: Hinduism. In *The Religious Traditions of Asia: Religion, History, and Culture*, ed. Joseph Kitagawa, Routledge, 2013, Chapter 1
- Matthew Schmalz: Christianity: Culture, Identity, and Agency. In *Companion*, Chapter 15

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

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

Required readings:

- Seven Prevalent Misconceptions about India's Caste System. In *Reader*, pp. 153-155
- Robert Deliege: Caste, Class, and Untouchability. In *Companion*, Chapter 2
- The Guardian: 'A violence no autopsy can reveal': the deadly cost of India's campus prejudice https://www.theguardian.com/inequality/2017/jul/02/a-violence-no-autopsy-can-reveal-the-deadly-cost-of-indias-campus-prejudice?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other
- Alpa Bedi: India Burning: The Maoist Revolution. In *Companion*, Chapter 18
- Arundhati Roy: *The Doctor and the Saint*, pp. 1-20

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

Week Five. October 1. PUBLIC HOLIDAY, NO CLASS

Required readings:

- Ornit Shani: The Politics of Communalism and Caste. In *Companion*, Chapter 16
- Smitha Radhakrishnan: *Appropriately Indian*—Introduction, pp. 1-23.

Week Six. October 8. CLASS

Required readings:

- Sara Dickey: Anjali's Alliance: Class Mobility in Urban India. In *Reader*, pp. 192-205
- Meredith McGuire: "How to Sit, How to Stand": Bodily Practice and the New Urban Middle Class. In *Companion*, Chapter 6
- C. J. Fuller: The Modern Transformation of an Old Elite: The Case of the Tamil Brahmins. In *Companion*, Chapter 4
- Smitha Radhakrishnan: *Appropriately Indian*—Chapter 1: Privilege, pp. 25-52

Week Seven. October 15. NEW ECONOMY, NEW SUBJECTIVITIES

Required readings:

- Rachel Dwyer: Bollywood's India: Hindi cinema as a guide to modern India. *Asian Affairs* 2010, vol. 41 issue 3
- Purnima Mankekar: Dangerous Desires. In *Reader*, pp. 421-435
- Craig Jeffery: Great Expectations: Youth in Contemporary India. In *Companion*, Chapter 3
- Tulasi Srinivas: Adventures in Modern Dwelling. In *The Cow in the Elevator: An Anthropology of Wonder*, pp. 34-57
- Smitha Radhakrishnan: *Appropriately Indian*—Chapter 2: Global/Indian, pp. 53-86

Film in class: Mardistan / Macholand (2014) by Harjant Gill

Week Eight. October 22. MARRIAGE

! In-class Midterm Exam today!

Required readings:

- 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>
- Smitha Radhakrishnan: *Appropriately Indian—Chapter 4: Individuals*, pp. 115–144

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

Week Nine. October 29. FAMILY

Essay Sketch due!

Required readings:

- Cari Kapur: *Rethinking Courtship, Marriage, and Divorce in an Indian Call Center*. In *Reader*, pp. 50-61
- Jeffry and Jeffry: Allah Gives Both Boys and Girls. In *Reader*, pp. 26-39
- Sarah Lamb: Love and Aging in Bengali Families. In *Reader*, pp. 62-74
- Smitha Radhakrishnan: *Appropriately Indian—Chapter 5: Family*, pp. 145–172

Film in Class: Made in India (2010) by Rebecca Haimowitz & Vaishali Sinha

Week Ten. November 5. TRANSNATIONALISM AND DIASPORA

India-related event homework due!

Required readings:

- Filippo Osella and Caroline Osella (2000) Migration, Money, and Masculinity in Kerala. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 6: 117-133
- 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
- BBC: Indian state where a plane on the roof is normal, 8 March 2016 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-35693926>
- Kathleen Hall: British Sikh Lives, Lived in Translation. In *Reader*, pp. 448-460
- Smitha Radhakrishnan: *Appropriately Indian—Chapter 5: Religion*, pp. 173–198

Film: Cast in India by Natasha Raheja

Week Eleven. November 12. “THIRD” GENDER AND QUEER SEXUALITY

Required readings:

- Ina Goel (2016) Hijra Communities of Delhi. *Sexualities*, 19(5–6): 535–546

- Gayatri Reddy: Crossing “Lines” of Difference. In *Reader*, pp. 132–144
- 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)
- Serena Nanda: Life on the Margins: A Hijra’s Story. In *Reader*, pp. 124–131

Week Twelve. November 19. GENDER, LOVE, AND POLITICS

Required readings:

- Tarini Bedi: Violence, Aggression, and Militancy: Reexamining Gender, and Neoliberal Politics. In *Companion*, Chapter 17
- Kalyani Menon: Living and Dying for Mother India: Hindu Nationalist Female Renouncers and Sacred Duty. In *Readers*, pp. 343–353
- Veena Das (2010) *Engaging the Life of the Other: Love and Everyday Life*. In *Ordinary Ethics: Anthropology, Language, and Action*, Edited by Michael Lambek, pp. 376-399
- Smitha Radhakrishnan: *Appropriately Indian—Conclusion*, pp. 199–206

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

Week Thirteen. November 26. PUBLIC HEALTH, MIGRATION, AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

Mapping India homework due!

Required readings:

- Cecilia Van Hollen: *India Responds to the HIV/AIDS Pandemic: Unintended Consequences of Global Health Initiatives*. In *Companion*, Chapter 25
- Radhika Govindrajan: Monkey Business: Macaque Translocation and the Politics of Belonging in India’s Central Himalayas. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* Volume 35, Number 2, 2015
- Nikhil Anand: Toward an Anthropology of Water in Mumbai’s Settlements. In *Companion*, Chapter 23.
- Yaffa Truelove and Emma Mawdsley: *Discourses of Citizenship and Criminality in Clean, Green Delhi*. In *Companion*, Chapter 22

Video clips from “Wastelands: The Story of Garbage”

December 10. FINAL ESSAY DUE