



# Indian Culture and Society

**ANTH 3324 / ANTH 5324**

**Spring 2022**

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Office: NAH 322. Office hours:

Wednesday 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Combined lecture and tutorial: location TBD  
(check Blackboard or contact me by email)

Wed 2:30pm – 5:15pm

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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 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

This class meets for an interactive 3-hour slot, with no separate lecture or tutorial. Instead, the learning process will include lectures, news analyses, conversations, documentaries, guest talks, and a fieldtrip. Note that some documentaries are not easily 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 be also available on Blackboard.

Major 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.
- James Staples (2020) *Sacred Cows and Chicken Manchurian: The Everyday Politics of Eating Meat in India*. University of Washington Press

Supplementary books:

- The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism, edited by Gavin Flood, John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2005.
- Smitha Radhakrishnan. *Appropriately Indian: Gender and Culture in a New Transnational Class*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011
- 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

### News analysis

You will need to find a recent news about India (in English or other languages you read), conduct a critical media and anthropological analysis of the news and present it in the class. This means that you will have to critically examine the following elements: 1) credibility of the source: where the news is published, its funding, political affiliation, etc.; 2) the author of the news article, if known; 3) fact-check the content: are there references, trustworthy data, evidence? 4) the rhetoric of the news article: is it nuanced? are there essentialisms? are there charged statements, biases?

### Mid-term exam

This will be an in-class exam, focused on the main concepts and facts about Indian society. The exam will include 60 questions: multiple-choice, true-or-false, and fill-the-gap questions. MA students will have 5 additional short-essay questions. It will last one hour. Unless it is a medical emergency, there will be NO MAKE-UP EXAM. So arrange your plans accordingly

### Final exam

This is an oral exam that will be conducted in class. You will be given a set of 20 questions to prepare in advance (will be posted on Blackboard). These questions will cover the main issues from the class material. On the day of the exam, you will be given random questions (4 for UG students, 5 for MA students) and will have at least 15 minutes to prepare at your desk before answering them to me in a spoken form. I may ask you additional clarifying questions. In other words, the exam will take the form of a conversation.

## Grading scale

Grade	Midterm exam	News analysis and final exam
A	57–60 points (95–100%)	Your analysis and answers demonstrate a nuanced understanding of the material and all concepts; information is factually accurate; arguments are insightful and convincing
A -	54–56 points (90–94%)	Your analysis and answers demonstrate a nuanced understanding of t material and almost all concepts; information is factually accurate; arguments are convincing, even if occasionally contain minor errors
B+	51–53 points (85–89%)	Your analysis and answers demonstrate an overall good understanding of class material but may lack clarity, contain several minor errors
B	48–50 points (80–84%)	Your analysis and answers demonstrate an overall good understanding of class material but may lack clarity, contain many minor errors

B -	45-47 points (75-79%)	Your analysis and answers demonstrate an overall good understanding of class material but lack clarity, contain minor errors and a few major logical flaws
C +	42-44 points (70-74%)	Your analysis and answers show an acceptable level of understanding of class material but it lacks clarity, contains many major factual errors and logical flaws
C	39-41 points (65-69%)	Your analysis and answers show an acceptable level of understanding of class material but it lacks clarity, contains many major factual errors and logical flaws
C -	36-38 points (60-64%)	Your analysis and answers show an acceptable level of understanding of class material but it lacks clarity, contains many major factual errors and logical flaws
D +	33-35 points (55-59%)	Your analysis and answers show minimal understanding of class material. It lacks effort, hard to read and understand, contains major errors, flaws, and biased viewpoints
D	30-32 points (50-54%)	Your analysis and answers show minimal understanding of class material. It lacks effort, hard to read and understand, contains major errors, flaws, and biased viewpoints
F	29 points and below (49% and below)	You did not appear in class for your film analysis and/or final exam

## Weekly class schedule

### Week One. January 12. DIVERSE CULTURES OF INDIA

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

### Week Two. January 19. MAKING THE INDIAN NATION

- 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

### Week Three. January 26. RELIGION AND FESTIVALS

- Joyce B. Flueckiger (2015) *Everyday Hinduism*, select chapters:
  - Introduction, pp. 1-10;
  - Families of Deities, pp. 18-45
  - Festivals, pp. 123-144

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

**February 2. PUBLIC HOLIDAY (no class)**

**Week Four. February 9. SOCIAL DIVISIONS: CASTES AND TRIBES**

- Seven Prevalent Misconceptions about India's Caste System. In *Reader*, pp. 153-155
- Joyce B. Fleuckiger (2015) *Everyday Hinduism: A Note on Caste*, pp. 13-17;

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

**Week Five. February 16. FOOD AND DIET IN INDIA**

- Philip Lutgendorf: *Making Tea in India: Chai, Capitalism, Culture*. Thesis Eleven, 113(1) 11-31
- James Staples (2020) *Sacred Cows and Chicken Manchurian*. Introduction, pp. 3-33

**Week Six. February 23. CLASS AND CONSUMPTION**

- James Staples (2020) *Sacred Cows and Chicken Manchurian*. Chapter 1, pp. 34-52
- Meredith McGuire: "How to Sit, How to Stand": Bodily Practice and the New Urban Middle Class. In *Companion*, Chapter 6

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

**Week Seven. March 2. MARRIAGE AND FAMILY**

- Anjani Trivedi: In New Delhi, Women Marry Up and Men are Left Behind. In *The New York Times Blog*
- Jeffrey and Jeffrey: Allah Gives Both Boys and Girls. In *Reader*, pp. 26-39

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

**Week Eight. March 9. FEMININITIES AND MASCULINITIES**

- Smitha Radhakrishnan (2009) Professional Women, Good Families: Respectable Femininity and the Cultural Politics of a "New" India. In *Qualitative Sociology*, 32: 195-212
- Craig Jeffrey (2010) *Timepass: Youth, Class, and the Politics of Waiting in India*. Ch. 1, pp. 1-36

Film: Mardistan / Macholand (2014) by Harjant Gill

**Week Nine. March 16. "THIRD" GENDER AND QUEER POLITICS**

- 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)

<p><b>Week 10. March 23. MIGRATION, TRANSNATIONALISM AND LIFE IN DIASPORA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kathleen Hall: British Sikh Lives, Lived in Translation. In <i>Reader</i>, pp. 448-460</li> <li>• Filippo Osella and Caroline Osella (2000) Migration, Money, and Masculinity in Kerala. <i>Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute</i>, 6: 117-133</li> </ul>
<p><b>Week Eleven. March 30. INDIANS IN HONG KONG</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How Indians Helped to Build Hong Kong</li> <li>• 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. <i>Asian Ethnicity</i>, 7(3): 267-284</li> </ul> <p>Guest lecture</p>
<p><b>Week Twelve. April 13. PUBLIC HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• James Staples (2020) <i>Sacred Cows and Chicken Manchurian</i>. Chapter 5, pp. 119-139</li> <li>• P. P. Karan: Environmental Movements in India. <i>Geographical Review</i>, 1994, 84(1): 32-41</li> </ul> <p>Film: "Killing Ladakh"</p>
<p><b>Week Thirteen. April 20. CONCLUSION AND REFLECTIONS</b></p> <p>Fieldtrip</p>

## 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 Saturdays and Sundays.

### 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/academicintegrity/Eng.htm#files\\_2013-14/p06.htm](http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academicintegrity/Eng.htm#files_2013-14/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 PowerPoint slides to be posted to Blackboard, no tutorial discussions will be recorded. To ensure the 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 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>