

## Race, Immigration and Family

AAS 310 Fall 2018  
MWF 1:00 -2:00PM  
CMA 5.190

Instructor: Natassja Bindu Gunasena  
Office Hrs: F 10:00-1:00pm BUR 562  
natassja.gunasena@gmail.com



**Course Description:** What do we mean when we say “family”? Whom do we include - and exclude - from our understandings of kinship, community and country? How do race, gender and sexuality shape the ways we belong to our families, both blood and chosen? This course will engage these questions by focusing on media and writings by and about south asian families and communities, with a particular focus on Indian and Sri Lankan voices. Throughout the semester, we will interrogate how and why people choose to define “family” and consider what it means to arrive at a definition by ourselves, for ourselves.

### **Objectives:**

- 1) Introduce students to the linkages between nationalism and gender
- 2) Establish how gendered nationalisms intersect with race and sexuality
- 3) Consider how diasporic affiliations and anti-blackness shape south asians’ understandings of themselves

- 4) Think critically about the ways that sexuality and gender impact power structures and relationships in families
- 5) Reflect on our own identities and families in the context of race, gender, nationality, sexuality and immigration status.

### **Required Texts:**

- 1) Shailja Patel, *Migritude*
- 2) Gaiutra Bahadur, *Coolie Woman*
- 3) Shyam Selvadurai, *Funny Boy*

**Online Readings:** Weekly readings will be uploaded to the course Canvas page by the instructor. Any changes/ additions to the readings listed below will be communicated to you by the instructor in a timely manner either in class or via email. Please keep abreast of email updates and messages and don't hesitate to contact me if you need more information.

### **Unit I: Family, Gender and Nationalism**

#### **Week 1:**

**Wednesday, August 29th:** Introductions/ Review of Syllabus

**Friday, August 31st:** Kumari Jayawardene and Malathi De Alwis, *Embodied Violence: Communalising Women's Sexuality in South Asia*, "Introduction"

#### **Week 2:**

**Monday, September 3rd: LABOR DAY HOLIDAY**

**Wednesday, September 5th:** McClintock, Anne. *Imperial leather: Race, gender, and sexuality in the colonial contest*. "Chapter 1: The Lay of the Land: Genealogies of Imperialism."

**Friday, September 7th:** McClintock, Anne. *Imperial leather: Race, gender, and sexuality in the colonial contest*. "Chapter 1: The Lay of the Land: Genealogies of Imperialism."

### **Week 3:**

**Monday, September 10th:** Film viewing: *Before the Rains*, dir Santosh Sivan

**Wednesday, September 12th:** Film viewing: *Before the Rains*, dir Santosh Sivan

**Friday, September 14th: Discussion:** *Before the Rains*, dir Santosh Sivan

### **Week 4:**

**Monday, September 17th:** Kalpana Kannabiran, “Rape and the Construction of Communal Identity”

Sudha G. Tilak, [“‘Bruised Goddesses’ Hurt Indian Feminists”](#)

**Wednesday, September 19th:** Gayatri Gopinath, *Impossible Desires: Queer Diasporas and South Asian Public Cultures*, “Bollywood/Hollywood: Queer Cinematic Representation and the Perils of Translation”

**Friday, September 21st:** Gayatri Gopinath, *Impossible Desires: Queer Diasporas and South Asian Public Cultures*, “Bollywood/Hollywood: Queer Cinematic Representation and the Perils of Translation”

### **Week 5:**

**Monday, September 24th:** Film viewing: *Monsoon Wedding*, dir Mira Nair

**Wednesday, September 26th:** Film viewing: *Monsoon Wedding*, dir Mira Nair

**Friday, September 28th: Discussion:** *Monsoon Wedding*, dir Mira Nair

## **Unit II: Family, Gender and Race**

### **Week 6:**

**Monday, October 1st:** Vijay Prashad, *The Karma of Brown Folk*, “Of Antiracist Racism” and “Of Solidarity and Other Desires”

**Wednesday, October 3rd:** Sana Aiyar, “Anticolonial Homelands Across the Indian Ocean: The Politics of the Indian Diaspora in Kenya”

**Friday, October 5th:** Shihan de Silva Jayasuriya, *African Identity in Asia: Cultural Effects of Forced Migration*, “Chapter 2: The African Presence in Asia” and “Dispersal of Africans Across the Indian Ocean”

**[Film Review Due by 5 pm]**

**Week 7:**

**Monday, October 8th:** Shailja Patel, *Migritude*, Part 1

**Wednesday, October 10th:** Shailja Patel, *Migritude*, Part 2

**Friday, October 12th:** Shailja Patel, *Migritude*, Part 3

Bonnie Zare and Asfar Mohammed, “Burn the Sari or Save the Sari? Dress as a Form of Action in Two Feminist Poems.”

**Week 8:**

**Monday, October 15th:** Nitasha Sharma, *Hip Hop Desis: South Asian Americans, Blackness and a Global Race Consciousness*, “Making Race: Desi Racial Identities, South Asian and Black Relations and Racialized Hip-Hop.”

**Wednesday, October 17th:** Nitasha Sharma, *Hip Hop Desis: South Asian Americans, Blackness and a Global Race Consciousness*, “Flipping the Gender Script: Gender and Sexuality in South Asian and Hip Hop America.”

**Friday, October 19th:** Web Series Viewing, *Brown Girls*, created by: Fatimah Asghar

**Week 9:**

**Monday, October 22nd:** Film viewing, *Mississippi Masala*, dir Mira Nair

**Wednesday, October 24th:** Film viewing, *Mississippi Masala*, dir Mira Nair

**Friday, October 26th: Discussion:** *Mississippi Masala*, dir Mira Nair

**Week 10:**

**Monday, October 29th:** Gaiutra Bahadur, *Coolie Woman: the Odyssey of Indenture*, “Preface: the C-Word” and “Part One. Embarking”

**Wednesday, November 31st:** Gaiutra Bahadur, *Coolie Woman: the Odyssey of Indenture*, “Part Two. Exploring: The Women’s Quarters, Into Dark Waters” and “Her Middle Passage”

**Friday, November 2nd:** Gaiutra Bahadur, *Coolie Woman: the Odyssey of Indenture*, “Color Plates”, “Beautiful Woman Without a Nose” and “Surviving History”

**Unit III: Family, Gender and Sexuality**

**Week 11:**

**Monday, November 5th :** Film Viewing, *Fire*, dir. Deepa Mehta

**Wednesday, November 7th:** Film Viewing, *Fire*, dir. Deepa Mehta

**Friday, November 9th: Discussion:** *Fire*, dir. Deepa Mehta

**Week 12:**

**Monday, November 12th:** Web Series Viewing, *The Other Love Story*, dir. Roopa Rao

**Wednesday, November 14th:** Web Series Viewing, *The Other Love Story*, dir. Roopa Rao

**Friday, November 16th: Discussion:** *The Other Love Story*, dir. Roopa Rao  
[Film Review due by 5 pm]

**Week 14:**

**Monday, November 19th: NO CLASS**

**\*THANKSGIVING BREAK\***

**Week 13:**

**Monday, November 26th:** Shyam Selvadurai, *Funny Boy*

**Wednesday, November 28th:** Shyam Selvadurai, *Funny Boy*

**Friday, November 30th:** Shyam Selvadurai, *Funny Boy*

**[Film Review due by 5 pm]**

**Week 15:**

**Monday, December 3rd:** Family Narrative: Workshop Part 1

**Wednesday, December 5th:** Family Narrative: Workshop Part 2

**Friday, December 7th:** Writing Day **NO CLASS**

**Week 16:**

**Monday, December 10:** Wrap Up/ Final Paper Due

**\*\*\*\***

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

### **Class Participation:**

This is a seminar style class, which means that everyone is expected to read *all* material prior to

class and actively participate in discussions. The topics of our discussions will be determined mostly by the readings for that day, but your intellectual, social and personal interests will also guide them. The expectations for this course are that you attend class, discuss assigned readings, art, films or relevant cultural texts, listen actively during discussion, initiate discussion topics, and complete all in class writing exercises and in class learning activities. Keeping up with the reading material is crucial to success in this course.

In a successful learning community, we will all be learners and teachers at some point. Here are some suggestions for creating greater opportunities for participation:

- As you read and make notes on your readings keep a list of running questions you would like to ask. Listen carefully for openings to bring them into discussion or ask them of me outside of class (office hours are perfect for this).
- Even if you are uncomfortable in a large group setting, take the lead during small group discussions. You may find others have similar questions, which you can then bring back to the larger discussion.
- If you do not understand what someone has said, ask for clarification from the speaker. or, if you do not know how the person arrived at their conclusion, ask them to explain their thought process, reasoning or argument more fully.
- If you disagree with someone's point, but do not want to confront them, or state an opposing view, try to determine the underlying assumptions of what they have said and ask a question about the assumption.
- If you feel you have been particularly silent on a certain subject, try putting your ideas down on paper. We have a course discussion board on Canvas, which is exactly the place to pose questions, add analysis and continue discussions if you feel you better engage via writing.

Please be mindful of respecting your peers in the following ways:

- Listen actively when someone is speaking
- Avoid talking when a peer is speaking
- Refrain from interrupting or cutting people off
- DO ask questions, with due respect and sensitivity

Laptops, tablets and electronic reading devices are allowed in class at the instructor's discretion. If you appear distracted by your device, I will ask you to put it away in order to more fully participate in the discussion.

**Assignments:**

**Reading Responses:** Once a week, students will post a short response to a reading of their choice on the course Canvas page. Your response should be a minimum of 100 words. 3 times throughout the semester you will also post a response to one of your classmates. This exercise is intended to make you comfortable with engaging theoretical concepts, ask questions and foster learning community with your peers. Do use this forum as a space to air your questions, concerns, doubts and ideas.

**Film Reviews:** Students will submit a short analysis of 3 of the films viewed in class (one review for each film). Your review should discuss how each film depicts femininity and female sexuality, as well as how it approaches (or whether it does so at all) the issues of race, class/caste, immigration, family, diaspora and nation. Please refrain from summarizing the plot of the film or narrating the story, instead look closely and thoughtfully at a relevant theme. You must cite at least two class readings to support your analysis. **2-3 pages, double-spaced, 12pt font.**

**Family Narrative:** For this cumulative assignment, students will draw on key themes and discussions from throughout the semester to craft a **5-8 page** narrative about how family has shaped their identity. In your narrative you must situate you and your family as subjects constituted by race, gender, sexuality and nationality; that is, your narrative must examine how these and other factors shape your family history and your own status in your family. Your style can be creative or academic or both. You must cite a MINIMUM of 3 class readings in your narrative.

### **Grading Breakdown**

**Weekly Reading Responses: 10%**  
**Attendance and Participation: 10%**  
**Film Review 1: 15%**  
**Film Review 2: 15%**  
**Film Review 3: 15%**  
**Topic Paper: 35%**

### **Course Policies and Expectations:**



**Attendance:** You are expected to attend every class session unless previously discussed with me or specified as a no-class day on the syllabus. If your absence is medical-related, please furnish a doctor's note to ensure you don't lose attendance points.

**Respectful Learning:** In this course we will often cover difficult and sensitive topics, and I ask that you come to class willing to listen and engage your peers. There are no debates in this class, only dialogue and discussion from which we will all hopefully come away enriched and informed. What I mean by this is that your goal for class discussion should not be to "win" arguments but to deepen the conversation, ask questions and consider things from various perspectives. Not only the frequency but the manner of your engagement with class discussion will be counted towards your participation grade.

**Late Work:** Late work will not receive a grade unless you have previously approached me about difficulty completing the assignment and we have negotiated an acceptable timeframe for submission.

**Special Accommodations:** Any student with a documented disability who requires academic accommodations should contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 471- 6259 (voice) or 512- 410- 6644 (Video Phone) as soon as possible to request an official letter outlining authorized accommodations.

**Other Accommodations:** College is a stressful and challenging environment, and I am sympathetic to the fact that various unforeseen obstacles might hinder your ability to meet course requirements including but not limited to: mental illness, trauma, physical/ chronic illness and financial difficulty. To this end I am (within reason) willing to provide flexibility around deadlines and assignments, *if* you approach me within a suitable time-frame. By this I mean, if you approach me the day before an assignment is due, or a few days before the end of the semester, I will not be able to help you with unfinished work or lost points.

**Communication and Requirements:** Email is the best way to contact me outside of class. You are expected to read the syllabus for assignment dates and other course relevant information. Any changes to the syllabus will be announced in class and via Canvas, so please make sure to keep up with your email notifications. I will try to respond to all emails within two business days, unless the the information is already available on the syllabus.

**Academic Dishonesty:** This includes cheating on assignments, plagiarizing (misrepresenting as your own work any work that has been written by another author), and submitting the same paper or substantially similar paper to meet the requirements of more than one course without the

approval of all the instructors concerned. The instructor will report such dishonesty. It is grounds for failure in the course.

**Non- native English Speakers and Writers:** If you need some extra assistance with the reading and writing assignments, please contact me early in the term.