

Anthropology of South Asia (ANTH-UA 104)
Fall 2011/ MW 2:00pm-3:15pm/7 E. 12th Street, Rm. 125

Professor: Tejaswini Ganti
Office Location: 25 Waverly Place, # 506
Hours: Thursdays, 3-4:30 pm
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces the cultures and societies of the Indian subcontinent. It will focus not only on the history and ethnography of South Asia, but also on the major concepts and debates in the anthropological study of the region. Topics will include caste, kinship, gender, religion, material culture, nationalism, ethnic conflict, globalization, and the South Asian diaspora. It is a reading, writing, and discussion oriented course that is run along a seminar format – that is we will engage closely with the texts assigned for the course.

PRE-REQUISITES: Either Human Society and Culture (ANTH-UA 1) or Cultures & Contexts: India (MAP-UA 516). If you have not taken either course, you need my permission to enroll in this course. Please inform me of other relevant coursework that makes you eligible to take this course.

REQUIREMENTS

- All assignments must be completed for a passing grade in the course. With the exception of the weekly discussion assignments and components of your project proposal, all other assignments are to be uploaded on to the course's Blackboard Site by 5pm of the date that the assignment is due. The time and date are stamped very clearly in such a submission process.
- **Deadlines: EXTENSIONS WILL NOT BE GIVEN [except for authorized medical reasons/emergencies] LATE WORK WILL BE NOT BE ACCEPTED, i.e., YOU WILL RECEIVE A ZERO INSTEAD.**
- Attendance and doing the readings prior to class are mandatory. Your general demeanor in class – punctuality, level of alertness, paying attention, being respectful– and overall contribution – responding to questions, participating in discussion – significantly shape my perception and assessment of you as a student.
- I do not allow the use of laptops or smart phones in class.

Exams: 50%

1. **Midterm Exam** - 25%; **OCT. 28** (5pm) This is a take-home essay exam. I will post the questions on Blackboard by Oct. 20.
2. **Final Exam** - 25% - **DEC. 16** (5pm) This will be a cumulative, open-book, open-note exam comprised of a few essay questions; I will post the questions on Blackboard by December 8.

Assignments– 50% - More detailed instructions are available on the course's Blackboard site

1. **Weekly Reading/Discussion Assignments** – 20%; Variable due dates; Comprised of two segments:
 - a. Every student must post a question for discussion raised by the reading on the discussion board section of the course's Blackboard site. While I'm looking for open-ended questions that will generate a good discussion, it is also okay to post

questions that are more clarificatory in nature; that is if you are confused or unsure about something, please post it as a question. These questions **must be posted by 9pm the night prior to our meeting [by Sunday 9pm for Monday's class and Tuesday 9 pm for Wednesday's class]**

- b. Periodically, I will give you a question to reflect upon or research related to that week's reading. This will help us to facilitate our discussion of the readings. You will hand this short (1-2 pages typed) response to me in class based on my stipulated deadline.
2. **Literature/Data Base Survey – 5%; SEPT. 23 (5pm)**
 - As a way to get acquainted with the anthropological literature about South Asia as well as to familiarize yourself with the various scholarly databases and indexes that you will need to consult for your project proposal, this assignment asks you to search for and survey broadly the anthropological literature about South Asia. More instructions are posted on the assignment sheet on Blackboard.
 3. **Ethnographic Project Proposal – 25%; DEC. 9 (5pm)**
 - This is the kind of research proposal that one could submit to a funding agency for a grant – to conduct ethnographic research in South Asia connected to issues raised in the class and students' individual interests. Students are encouraged to think creatively about their projects and the readings for the course can serve as a guideline.
 - You will hand in components of the proposal throughout the semester so that I can gauge your progress. Failure to submit the following components on time will affect your final grade. The schedule of assignments and due dates is as follows:
 - One paragraph description [typed] of your stated project: Oct. 3
 - Preliminary bibliography, minimum of 5 sources: Oct. 17
 - Statement of Research Question/Objective: Nov. 7
 - Methodology/Research Design: Nov. 21

RECAP OF DUE DATES

Sept. 23: Data Base Survey due by 5pm on Blackboard

Oct. 3: Paragraph description of project due in class

Oct. 17: Preliminary bibliography due in class

Oct. 28: Take-home Midterm Exam due by 5pm on Blackboard

Nov. 7: Statement of research question due in class

Nov. 21: Methodology/research design due in class

Dec. 9: Project Proposal due by 5pm on Blackboard

Dec. 16: Take-home Final Exam due by 5pm on Blackboard

COURSE MATERIALS

- **Required Books [available at the campus bookstore as well as on reserve at Bobst Library]**

Ahearn, Laura

2001 *Invitations to Love: Literacy, Love Letters, & Social Change in Nepal*. University of Michigan Press.

Gardner, Andrew M.

2010. *City of Strangers: Gulf Migration and the Indian Community in Bahrain*. Cornell University Press.

Patel, Reena

2010 *Working the Night Shift: Women in India's Call Center Industry*. Stanford University Press.

Ring, Laura A.

2006 *Zenana: Everyday Peace in a Karachi Apartment Building*. Indiana University Press.

Trawick, Margaret

2007 *Enemy Lines: Childhood, Warfare, and Play in Batticaloa*. University of California Press.

Tarlo, Emma

1996 *Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India*, Univ. of Chicago.

- **There will also be a series of readings available for you to read/download/print from the course's Blackboard site, these will be marked with a B on the syllabus**

Special Accommodations

If you have a disability, which may require classroom, test-taking, or other reasonable modifications, please see me as soon as possible and be sure to register with the Center for Students with Disabilities (212-998-4980).

COURSE SCHEDULE

I: FOUNDATIONS

9/7 (Wed) Introduction

WEEK 2: SOUTH ASIA AS AN OBJECT OF STUDY

9/12 (Mon) South Asia in the Western Imagination

Readings [B]:

Cohn, Bernard S.

1987 Notes on the History of the Study of Indian Society and Culture. *In An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays*. Delhi: Oxford U.P. pp. 136-69.

Singer, Milton

1972 Passage to More than India: A Sketch of Changing European and American Images, *In When a Great Tradition Modernizes*, New York: Praeger, pp. 1-38.

9/14 (Wed) The Study of Caste

Readings [B]:

Cohn, Bernard S.

1987 The Census, Social Structure and Objectification in South Asia. *In An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays*. Delhi: Oxford U.P. pp. 224-54.

Dirks, Nicholas B.

1992 Castes of Mind. *Representations* 37, Winter, pp. 56-78.

Mines, Diane & Sarah Lamb

2010 "Seven Prevalent Misconceptions about India's Caste System" *In Everyday Life in South Asia*, pp. 153-4

II: SOCIAL ORGANIZATION VIA MATERIAL & EXPRESSIVE CULTURE

WEEK 3: CLOTHING & HISTORY IN INDIA

9/19 (Mon) South Asia Resources at Bobst, orientation with Aruna Magier, South Asia Librarian

9/21 (Wed) Clothing & Colonialism

Readings:

Tarlo, *Clothing Matters*, preface, chs. 1 & 2

9/23 Database Survey due on Blackboard

WEEK 4: THE POLITICS OF CLOTHING

9/26 (Mon) Nationalism and the Politics of Dress

Readings:

Tarlo, *Clothing Matters*, chs. 3 & 4

9/28 (Wed) Caste, Class, Gender & Region

Readings:

Tarlo, *Clothing Matters*, chs. 5 & 6

WEEK 5: THE SOCIAL LIFE OF CLOTHING

10/3 (Mon) Clothing and Social Change

Readings:

Tarlo, *Clothing Matters*, chs. 7 & 8

Preliminary project description due in class!

10/5 (Wed) Clothing and Modernity

Readings:

Tarlo, *Clothing Matters*, chs. 9, 10 & postscript

WEEK 6: LITERACY, LOVE & SOCIAL CHANGE IN NEPAL

10/10 (Mon) *Columbus Day Holiday – No Class*

10/12 (Wed) Theoretical Frameworks

Readings:

Ahearn, *Invitations to Love*, chs. 1-3

WEEK 7: LITERACY, LOVE & SOCIAL CHANGE (Cont.)

10/17 (Mon) Transformations in Gender & Marriage

Readings:

Ahearn, *Invitations to Love*, chs. 4-6

Preliminary bibliography due in class

10/19 (Wed) Love, Literacy & Development

Readings:

Ahearn, *Invitations to Love*, chs. 7 & 8

WEEK 8: GENDERED FORMS OF AGENCY

10/24 (Mon) Love, Literacy, and Agency

Readings:

Ahearn, *Invitations to Love*, chs. 9 & 10

10/26 (Wed) Peace as Gendered Labor

Readings:

Ring, *Zenana*, chs. 1 & 2

10/28 Midterm Due by 5pm on Blackboard
III: NATIONALISM AND ETHNIC CONFLICT

Week 9: PEACE, CONFLICT & EVERYDAY LIFE IN PAKISTAN

10/31 (Mon) Exchange and Emotion

Readings:

Ring, *Zenana*, chs. 3 & 4

11/2 (Wed) Gender and Personhood

Readings:

Ring, *Zenana*, chs. 5 & 6

WEEK 10: CHILDHOOD & CIVIL WAR IN SRI LANKA

11/7 (Mon) Narratives and Discourses of Conflict

Readings:

Trawick, *Enemy Lines*, chs. 1-3

Statement of research question due in class

11/9 (Wed) War as Everyday Life

Readings:

Trawick, *Enemy Lines*, chs. 4 & 5

WEEK 11: CHILDHOOD & CIVIL WAR (Cont.)

11/14 (Mon) The Gender of War

Readings:

Trawick, *Enemy Lines*, chs. 6 & 7

11/16 (Wed) AAA Meetings - NO CLASS

WEEK 12:

11/21 (Mon) Rituals and Spectacles of War

Readings:

Trawick, *Enemy Lines*, chs. 8-10

Research Design/Methodology due in class

IV. GLOBALIZATION AND DIASPORA

11/23 (Wed) Indian Migrant Workers in Bahrain

Readings:

Gardner, *City of Strangers*, chs. 1 & 2

WEEK 13: GENDER, CLASS, & TRANSNATIONAL MIGRATION

11/28 (Mon) Subalterns & Elites

Readings:

Gardner, *City of Strangers*, chs. 3-5

11/30 (Wed) Citizens & Publics

Readings:

Gardner, *City of Strangers*, chs. 6-8

WEEK 14: GENDER IN THE NEW GLOBAL ECONOMY

12/5 (Mon) The Political and Moral Economies of Call Centers

Readings:

Patel, *Working the Night Shift*, chs. 1-3

12/7 (Wed) The Morality of Mobility

Readings:

Patel, *Working the Night Shift*, chs. 4 & 5

12/9 Project Proposal due by 5pm on Blackboard

WEEK 15: GENDER/GLOBAL ECONOMY (cont.)

12/12 (Mon) Reconfiguring Kinship and Domesticity

Readings:

Patel, *Working the Night Shift*, chs. 6-8, postscript

12/14 (Wed) Wrap-Up/Lessons Learned

12/16 FINAL EXAM DUE BY 5PM on Blackboard