Indian Culture and Society

ANTH3324

Dr. Venera R. Khalikova
Email: venera.khalikova@cuhk.edu.hk
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 3:30 PM – 4:15 PM, MMW 715
Tutorial 2: TBD
RA: Feng Yuxuan
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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 the role of popular culture, political processes, and the global economy in the lives of Indians in India and abroad

Learning material

Required books:

• Everyday Life in South Asia———referred to in the schedule as Reader

• A Companion to the Anthropology of India———Referred to as Companion

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
• Shashi Tharoor. Why I Am a Hindu. Scribe Publications, 2018
• Shashi Tharoor. India: From Midnight to the Millennium, Penguin Books India, 2000

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_htm_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, 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](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 class 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, rather than speaking, let me know and I will arrange for 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.

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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/](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

**Final exam: 30%**

The take-home final examination will include short-answer questions based on the entire material of the course. The questions and the guidelines will be handed out on the last day of class. Due December 10, 23:59 via VeriGuide

**Grading scale**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Course Achievements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes: 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>Generally outstanding performance on all (or almost all) learning outcomes: 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>Substantial performance on all learning outcomes, OR high performance on some outcomes which compensates for less satisfactory performance on others: 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.</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes, possibly with a few weaknesses: 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>Barely satisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes: 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>Unsatisfactory performance on most learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specified assessment requirements. Most of your assignments are submitted late or not submitted at all, they are extremely short, factually incorrect, and/or contain instances of plagiarism.</td>
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# Weekly class schedule

**Week One. September 3. DIVERSE CULTURES OF INDIA**

**Required reading:**

**Recommended:**

**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

**Recommended:**
- 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:**
  (This is just an introduction, but you may read other chapters in this book, for example, on “Temples” or “Festivals”)
  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=PLhr9IC4PgsZc1Se8oQWjPTi19UnmY41G&index=3](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IfRlU8t9Jbc&list=PLhr9IC4PgsZc1Se8oQWjPTi19UnmY41G&index=3)
### Recommended:

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

**Recommended:**
- 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 reading:**

**Recommended:**

#### 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

**Recommended:**
- 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:**

**Recommended:**
- Craig Jeffery: Great Expectations: Youth in Contemporary India. In *Companion*, Chapter 3
- Smitha Radhakrishnan: * Appropriately Indian—Chapter 2: Global/Indian*, pp. 53–86

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

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**Week Eight. October 22. MARRIAGE**

**Required readings:**

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

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

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**Week Nine. October 29. FAMILY**

**Required readings:**
- Cari Kapur: *Rethinking Courtship, Marriage, and Divorce in an Indian Call Center*. In *Reader*, pp. 50–61

**Recommended:**
- 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:**

**Recommended:**

**Film:** Cast in India by Natasha Raheja

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

**Required readings:**

**Recommended:**

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

**Required readings:**

**Recommended:**
- 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:


Recommended:

- 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 EXAM DUE