Women Writers of South Asia
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M/W 1:40-3pm, Beck 201

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Office hours: Wednesdays 3:30-4:30pm, Thursdays 2:15-3:15pm, or by appointment

Course description

This course examines women’s writing in South Asia in the colonial and postcolonial periods, focusing on how South Asian women writers explore issues of identity, violence, and belonging in predominantly male literary traditions. In particular, it considers how poetry, short stories, novels, and autobiographies by South Asian women offer unique insight into new meanings of gender, work, and family that accompanied the Indian Independence Movement and the Partition of India and Pakistan, as well as more recent transformations introduced by globalization. We will be motivated by two interrelated concerns: 1) how can we understand the question of women’s voices and “agency” in the South Asian context? And 2) how do women writers mobilize the category of gender to define alternative understandings of “individual” and “community” in this region? In order to answer these questions, we will trace the intersections between gender, caste, class, religion, and sexuality in women’s fiction and non-fiction writing, giving particular regard to concepts such as “tradition,” “modernity,” “nation,” and “genre.”

Course objectives

By the end of the course, students will be able to demonstrate an in depth understanding of the socio-cultural, historical, and rhetorical problematics shaping women’s writing in India in the colonial and postcolonial periods. Furthermore, they will develop the tools to draw connections between the particular constraints on women’s writing in India with larger theoretical debates on the broader category of women’s writing across colonial/postcolonial contexts and express these connections through close reading and critical analysis.

Readings

This is a reading intensive course. You are expected to keep up with weekly readings and be prepared to ask questions and comment on readings during class. Some of the theoretical readings (e.g., Foucault, Barthes, Butler, Spivak) are dense, take time, and may require that you read them multiple times. Although these are demanding materials, you will find that spending time with them to understand them will pay off, since we will return to these same theories throughout the semester.

Required texts

Course readings uploaded to the Sakai course website at https://sakai.rutgers.edu/portal


**Course Requirements**

**Attendance:**
Because this is a reading-intensive and discussion-based course, attendance and participation are compulsory and will be an important component of your final grade. Each student is allowed two unexcused absences for the semester, after which your attendance grade will be lowered by a letter for each additional unexcused absence. This means that your attendance grade will drop to a B if you miss three classes and to a C if you miss four classes, and so forth.

*If you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University absence reporting website https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/ to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email will automatically be sent to me.*

Excused absences include religious holidays (please notify me in advance), family emergencies, transportation emergencies, health emergencies, and scheduled visits to the doctor (in which case, students should bring a note from their doctor). Students who find that they need to be excused for a long period of time for medical or other reasons should contact their college dean and ask the dean to notify all their professors of their absence.

**Participation:**
As class participation is a requirement of this course, students must come ready to discuss the texts chosen for that day. **Not having read the assigned texts for class is equivalent to an absence. Please make sure to have ordered and received all the relevant texts in time for the start class. You are not allowed to have an online copy of the text—you will need to have it in print form of some kind.** Tardiness, inattention, and not participating actively detracts from the learning experience of others and will not be tolerated.

Participation is assessed through your in-class questions and comments, completion of in-class quizzes and exercises, small group work, and office hour visits.

**Reading Responses:**
As part of this course, you will be responsible for writing and posting eight 300-word (or longer) reading responses on Sakai. The purpose of these responses is to help you engage critically with the readings and to formulate written queries, hypotheses, and arguments pertaining to them that will inform both class discussions, as well as your paper writing process. I therefore expect these responses to be well composed and thoughtfully argued.

Each response must discuss one or more of the readings for the upcoming class and must be posted by 8pm the night before. The due dates for these responses are marked in the syllabus below. **No late responses will be accepted.**
Oral Presentation:
Each student will give one 15-20 minute oral presentation over the course of the semester. The presentation should engage with all the readings assigned on that day, discussing their main arguments, and raise one or two guiding questions for class discussion. I strongly encourage you to come talk to me during office hours before your presentation day.

Papers:
There will be two papers over the course of the semester, a midterm paper of five pages and a final one of eight pages. In advance of the second paper, you will hand in an annotated bibliography along with a prospectus outlining the research question and argument of your paper. Late papers will lose one letter grade for each week they are submitted after the deadline.

Grading

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance/Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Responses</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oral Presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper 1 (5 pgs)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper 2 (8 pgs)</td>
<td>30% (including Prospectus and Annotated Bibliography)</td>
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Extra Credit

You may receive extra credit (up to 2% of your final grade) by attending literature, or women’s and gender studies oriented extra-curricular events scheduled throughout the term. To obtain extra credit, you must 1) receive approval from me for the event in advance of the event, 2) write a one-page summary of the event, and 3) prepare a list of 4-5 critical questions prompted by the event that relate to this course. You may exercise this option only once per term.

Plagiarism

Rutgers University views plagiarism as a very serious offense. Plagiarism is the use of another person’s words, ideas, or results without giving that person appropriate credit. To avoid plagiarism, every direct quotation must be identified by quotation marks or appropriate indentation and both direct quotation and paraphrasing must be cited properly. Some common examples of plagiarism include copying something word for word (from an oral, printed, or electronic source) without proper attribution, paraphrasing without proper attribution, or submitting a purchased, downloaded, or one’s own already-submitted paper. Cases of plagiarism will be pursued following university regulations, which can be found at http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml.

Wikipedia and other non-peer reviewed websites are not acceptable sources for papers and reading responses.

Use of Electronic Devices

Computers, cell phones, and all other technological devices (beepers, iPods, MP3 players, etc.) must be turned off during class out of respect for the instructor and fellow students.
Disability Support Services

Students who may be requesting accommodations due to disabilities are encouraged to familiarize themselves with procedures and policies regarding disability support services at the following website: http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/. It is recommended that students seeking accommodations begin filing paperwork as soon as possible as the documentation review process may take up to 30 business days. Students are encouraged to speak with teachers about these issues at the beginning of the term. All such conversations will be kept strictly confidential.

Syllabus

Please note that the following reading schedule is provisional, as I am open to working with you to amend it according to the pace and interests of the class.

Who are Women and What is Women’s Writing?

Wed 9/5
Introduction to the course

Mon 9/10


Mothers and Daughters

Wed 9/12

Sun 9/16
Reading response 1 due on Sakai by 8pm.

Mon 9/17

Wed 9/19

**Mon 9/24**

**Sisters and Brothers**

**Wed 9/26**

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**Sun 9/30**

Reading response 3 due on Sakai by 8pm.

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**Mon 10/1**
In lieu of today’s class, you are requested to attend Sheldon Pollock’s inaugural lecture of the AMESALL Distinguished Lecture Series, titled “Postcapitalist Reading,” at **4:30pm in the Alexander Library Teleconference Room, 4th floor (CAC)**. Please see attached flyer for more details.

Professor Pollock is Arvind Raghunathan Professor of South Studies in the Department of Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies at Columbia University. His areas of specialization are Sanskrit philology, Indian intellectual and literary history, and increasingly, comparative intellectual history.

Those students who cannot attend today’s lecture due to scheduling conflicts, please talk to me in advance about making up this class.

**Wed 10/3**

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**Sun 10/7**

Reading response 4 due on Sakai by 8pm.

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**Mon 10/8**

Husbands and Wives

Wed 10/10

Sun 10/14
Reading response 5 due on Sakai by 8pm.

Mon 10/15


Female Desire and Sexuality

Wed 10/17


Mon 10/22

What’s in a Name?

Wed 10/24
Film screening of She Write (2005, 55min), Tamil with English subtitles, directed by Anjali Montiero and K.P. Jayasankar.

Fri 10/26
Paper 1 due in my office by noon.

Mon 10/29


Wed 10/31


Ideal Women and Feminist Utopias

Sun 11/4
Reading Response 6 due on Sakai by 8pm.

Mon 11/5

Wed 11/7


Sun 11/11
*Reading response 7 due on Sakai by 8pm.*

Mon 11/12

**Individuals and Communities**

Wed 11/14

Sun 11/18
*Reading response 8 due on Sakai by 8pm.*

Mon 11/19


Wed 11/21
*No class due to Thanksgiving Break.*
Mon 11/26

Wed 11/28

Fri 11/30
*Paper 2 prospectus and annotated bibliography due in my office by noon.*

Globalization and Women's Labor

Mon 12/3

Wed 12/5

Mon 12/10

Wed 12/12

Mon 12/17
*Paper 2 due in my office by noon.*
Postcapitalist Reading
An exciting exploration of possibilities beyond the postcolonial by
Professor Sheldon Pollock
(Arvin Raghuwathan Professor of South Asian Studies, Columbia University)

Monday, October 1, 2012
4:30-6:00pm
Alexander Library, CAC
Teleconference Room, 4th Floor
(Reception at 4:00pm – All are welcome)

For the past thirty years the study of Asia has been powerfully, and properly, shaped by postcolonialism, that is, by the aim of rebalancing the authority to represent. However, a tide of recent developments, economical, political, and ecological, with global or near-global transformative effect, prompts the question whether we should now find ways to supplement postcolonialism with postcapitalism as the organizing logic of critical inquiry. This presentation will seek to contribute toward this sort of liberation philology, so to call it: trying to understand how we humanists might move from preoccupation with past wrongs toward envisioning, and in our own way enacting, future rights.

Co-sponsored by the Dean of Humanities, the Program in South Asian Studies, and the Office of Undergraduate Education

For more information contact
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Phone: 848-445-0305

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