

July 31, 2024, Subject to change



Indian Culture and Society

ANTH 3324 / ANTH 5324 Spring 2025

Wednesdays 10:30-12:15

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Office Hours: NAH 303, by appointment

Tutorials: Wednesdays 12:30-1:15pm

Course Description

This course is an anthropological exploration of contemporary India and the social life and diverse cultures of greater South Asia including Pakistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. This region is home to more than a billion people, who look differently, speak different languages, practice different religions, and have distinct rituals, cuisines, and music. The region is also growing in economic and political influence globally. 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 interAsian connections, including ties with Hong Kong.

In this course you will learn India both in the world and the Asian region, developing an understanding of the region'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.

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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 South Asian 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 South Asia
- 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 South Asians in the Indian subcontinent 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

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- 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 Details

- 1) **Participation (10%)**: Regular attendance and participation in tutorial discussions are part of your responsibility. The awarding of high participation points comes with good attendance and active, thoughtful, consistent class participation, the kind that reveals your thorough preparation and engagement with class materials. This means contributing your own ideas as well as providing constructive responses to other students' comments. Attendance will be taken for the tutorials.
- 2) **Source Commentaries (10% x 2)**: To help you connect the topics and readings to contemporary problems and issues, you will have to finish **two** source commentaries. For this assignment, 1) you have to identify a non-academic source that can be understood or investigated through the specific concepts, theories or problems discussed in the readings. You are free in your selection. Sources could be a newspaper article, 'you-tube' clip, blogpost, movie, advertisement, song, etc. The only restriction is that the source you chose has to be in English or be accompanied by a translation. (online link or PDF). 2) Then, write a commentary in which you explain how the source you chose is related to one or more class readings, what anthropological questions or problems it raises, or answers it provides. This note should be about 200-300 words. Please post your assignment **on Blackboard**.
- 3) **Midterm Take-home Exam (20%)** You will be given a take-home midterm exam with some multiple choice and some short-answer questions based on the course readings and lectures. The questions will be distributed about one week before the due date.
- 4) **Local Fieldtrip Response Paper (15%)**: We will all visit a local fieldsite related to the course. This paper will be a mixture of your raw fieldnotes and analysis using course materials.

- 5) **Final Paper (35%):** This final assignment asks you to write an essay about a contemporary issue through the lens and themes of the class. You can focus on a conceptual/theoretical issue, or do a short case-study of something the interests you. A short idea outline (less than 300 words) has to be posted on blackboard by **TBD**. The final essay should be between 2000 – 2500 words (excluding references).
Due **April 30** by 11:59pm.

Weekly class schedule

Week One. January 8. 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 15. 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 22. RELIGION AND FESTIVALS

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

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

PUBLIC HOLIDAY (no class)

Week Four. February 5. 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 12. 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 19. 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. February 26. MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

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

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

Week Eight. March 5. 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 12 “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)

Week 10. March 26. MIGRATION, TRANSNATIONALISM AND LIFE IN DIASPORA

- Kathleen Hall: British Sikh Lives, Lived in Translation. In *Reader*, pp. 448-460
- Filippo Osella and Caroline Osella (2000) Migration, Money, and Masculinity in Kerala. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 6: 117-133

<p>Week Eleven. April 2. INDIANS IN HONG KONG</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How Indians Helped to Build Hong Kong• 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 <p>Guest lecture</p>
<p>Week Twelve. April 9. PUBLIC HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• James Staples (2020) <i>Sacred Cows and Chicken Manchurian</i>. Chapter 5, pp. 119–139• P. P. Karan: Environmental Movements in India. <i>Geographical Review</i>, 1994, 84(1): 32-41 <p>Film: “Killing Ladakh”</p>
<p>Week Thirteen. April 16. CONCLUSION AND REFLECTIONS</p> <p>Fieldtrip</p>

Course Policies:

Reading:

Reading is an important part of the learning experience. Students come to this course with different backgrounds, so some of you may find this amount of reading challenging—those from anthropology or humanities/social sciences backgrounds may find it “normal” though. Please finish the readings at least before the tutorial. Take notes while you read, and bring your questions and thoughts to the tutorial to discuss with fellow students.

Course attendance and participation:

You should attend lectures regularly. Tutorial attendance is mandatory. If you have an unavoidable conflict or become too sick to attend the tutorial, you must contact the TA before the tutorial begins. Active participation in tutorials is necessary and your contribution to discussion will not only be highly appreciated but also become the basis of evaluation.

Academic Integrity:

The use of generative AI (ChatGPT and others) is strictly prohibited for the assignments in this course and will be considered plagiarism.

Students need to know how to cite properly and how to avoid plagiarism—using someone else’s ideas or words without attribution. Please read the University’s guidelines about academic honesty (www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/index.htm). It’s worth refreshing your memory even if you have read it before. Pay particular attention to Section 1 (What is plagiarism), Section 2 (Proper use of source material), and Appendix 1 (Details guidelines on proper use of source material).

Late Policy:

For the midterm and final exam, extension is only granted to documented medical or family/personal emergencies. You must contact the instructor and the TA as soon as possible if such unfortunate events occur. Each day late without an approved extension will result in a reduction of 1/3 of a letter grade (i.e. A becomes A-; B+ becomes B).

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Criteria for 1) the course and 2) for coursework</i>
A	1) Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes. 2) The work has creatively synthesized course materials and key ideas in an original and sophisticated way. The argument is logical and cohesive, the discussion is well-organized, and the writing is clear. Concrete evidence corresponds to statements and claims.
A-	1) Generally outstanding performance on all (or almost all) learning outcomes. 2) The work synthesizes course materials and key ideas in an original way, but there are areas for improvement.
B-range	1) Substantial performance on all learning outcomes, OR high performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance. 2) The work demonstrates a solid grasp of course materials and key ideas. There are areas for improvement with respect to building a cohesive argument, organizing the discussion, communicating clearly, and/or identifying relevant evidence.
C-range	1) Satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes, possibly with a few weaknesses. 2) The work shows some effort, but course materials have not been sufficiently engaged. The argument and the writing is not clear, and/or there is no evidence for statements and claims made. Citations are not consistent or are absent.
D-range	1) Barely satisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes. 2) The work shows little effort to engage course materials. There are major problems with clarity of argument and writing. Citations are not consistent or are absent. 3) Evidence of generative AI use (see note on plagiarism)
F	1) Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specified assessment requirements. 2) The work has failed respond to the assignment prompt.