

Anthro 244
South Asian Ethnography _____
Fall 2019

Department of Anthropology, Rutgers University

Class Times: Mo/Thurs 9:15-10:35 am (1st. period)

Instructor: Parvis Ghassem-Fachandi (parvis@anthropology.rutgers.edu)

Office Hours: Mo /Thurs 11:00-12:00 in in RAB 313

Phone: 848 932 4104

Location of Course: RAB-110B, DC

Credits: 3

Semester: Fall 2019

Pre-requisites: none

This course explores South Asia with particular focus on India through expository writing: travel accounts, literary and journalistic renditions, philosophical reflection, as well as ethnographic exposition. It begins with an investigation into what constitutes ethnographic knowledge, encounter, and investigates the vagaries of experiencing and representing another cultural reality through time. The course prepares students to critically confront various genres of texts and develop skills in their interpretation and analysis. This is a course of close reading that tries to engage with an authors' written product in some intensity. The main emphasis will be placed on texts produced by modern anthropologists after prolonged field work stays. The course is also an introduction to society and culture in South Asia with particular focus on India with occasional journeys into other parts of South Asia. The course will discuss material on untouchability and social abjection, embodiment and sexuality, bourgeois worldview in a postcolonial society and class upward mobility, religious nationalism and civil war, memory and forgetting.

Course objectives:

To provide students with concrete knowledge of South Asia with special focus on India: practices, beliefs, and life-ways in a range of contexts, paying attention to the relationship of this knowledge to the politics of representation of groups in scholarly, travel, autobiographic, journalistic, creative and popular writing, as well as photography, documentary and commercial film.

To help students gain proficiency in the use of critical thinking skills in their analytic assessment of these different genres of writing that deal with themes such as upward mobility, poverty, social abjection, nationalism, gender, ritual and religion, sexuality and violence.

To provide students with an understanding of various aspects of Indian and South Asian society through ethnographic accounts that involves a field researcher and her/his experiences.

To provide students with the training of reading and presentation skills, the use of a foreign language glossary, and a comparative approaches to cultural and social difference as well as class and caste inequality.

Books for Purchase

Jean-Luc Racine, Josiane Racine and John L. Variano. Translated by Will Hobson. Viramma. *Life of an Untouchable*. Verso, 1997. 312 pages. ISBN 978-1-85984-148-8

Katherine Boo. *Behind the Beautiful Forevers. Life, Hope, and Death in a Mumbai Undercity*. Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2012, 256 pages. ISBN 978-1-4000-6755-8.

Readings for Class

The books will be available on Reserve at the (Mable Smith) Douglass Library (8 Chapel Drive, Douglas Campus) and articles or chapters are on Sakai. Books can be purchased at the Rutgers University Bookstore.

Course Requirements and Grading Criteria

Please note that the reading load for this class will be medium from 50- 150 pages per week. The emphasis is on class discussion of the readings. **Students are expected to attend all classes**; 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 thus automatically be sent to me. Students have to complete *all* the reading and participate in class discussion *actively*. Hence it is important to come prepared to class with **a print out of the text or a copy of the book** to be discussed.

Class Participation (30%). There will be a **Take Home Mid Term Exam (30%)**, 4-5 pages and a **Take Home Final Exam (40%)**, 4-5 pages.

Students found cheating on exams, handing in exams containing plagiarized passages, or otherwise violating academic integrity policies will be turned in to the appropriate Dean for punishment. There will be no exception. Please familiarize yourself, therefore, with the Rutgers academic integrity policy, posted online at <http://ctaar.rutgers.edu/integrity/policy.html>.

Moving Pictures:

Anand Patwardhan, We are not your Moneys

Amar Kanwar, A Night's Prophecy

P. Kerim Friedman and Shahwati Talukdar, Acting like a Thief

Videotaped Debate: James Baldwin and William Buckley in 1965

1. Theme. What is *ethnography*? (Thurs September 5th)

Clifford Geertz. "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture." *In Interpretation of Cultures*. New York, Basic Books, pp. 3-32 [29 pages]

Rec: Michel de Certeau. A Very Ordinary Culture. *In The Practice of Everyday Life*, Part I, I-III, pp. 1-42 [42 pages]; Clifford Geertz. "From the Native's Point of View": On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding. *In Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretation*, New York: Basic Books, pp. 55-72; Clifford Geertz. Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight. *In Interpretation of Cultures*, New York, Basic Books, pp. 412-453; James Clifford. On Ethnographic Authority. *In Representations*, 1983, No. 2, pp. 118-146

2. Theme. What is an ethnographic *encounter*? (Monday September 9th/Thurs 12th)

Mo **Kezaburo Oe.** "For a Lousy Battery," *The New Yorker*, Oct. 15, 2001, p. 123 [1 page]

Aleksander Hemon. "Door to Door," *The New Yorker*, Oct. 15, 2001, p. 170. [1 page]

Anchie Min. "Footprints in the Flag," *The New Yorker*, Oct. 15, 2001, pp. 181 [1 page]

Laura Bohannon. "Shakespeare in the Bush," *Natural History* 75 (1966): 28-33

Bronislaw Malinowski. 1922. "Introduction: The Subject, Method and Scope of this Inquiry." *In Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, pp. 1-24 [24 pages]

Thurs **W. Lloyd Warner.** 1937. "Mahkarolla and Murngin Society." *In A Black Civilization: A Study of an Australian Tribe*, Chapter XV, pp. 467-490 [37 pages]

Rec: J. Borneman and A. Hammoudi (eds.). Introduction. *In Being There: The Fieldwork Encounter and the Making of Truth*. University of California Press, 1991, Chapter 1, pp. 1-24 as well as Chapters 3 and 6.

3. Theme. Past encounters (Mo, Sept 16th/Thurs 19th)

Mo **Al Biruni.** 1983[~11th century]. تحقيق ما للهند من مقولة معقولة في العقل أو مرذولة. (A Critical Study of What India Says, Whether Accepted by Reason or Refused), also simply called *Kitab al-Hind* or "India" by Al Biruni. Edited by Q. Ahmad Preface and Chapters I-XII, pp. 1-62 [62 pages]

Abbé J. A. Dubois. 1999[1825, first english edition in 1817]. *Moeurs, institutions et cérémonies des peuples de l'Inde* (Hindu Manners, Customs, and Ceremonies). Author's Preface and Part I, Chapter I - II, pp. 1-37 [37 pages]

Thurs **Herbert Risley.** 1999[1915]. "Caste in Proverbs and Popular Sayings." *In The People of India*, Chapter III, pp. 128-153 [25 pages]

Geo. W. Briggs. 1920. The Chamars. The Religious Life of India, pp. 11-34 and pp. 224-247. [46 pages]

Rec: Gloria Goodwin Raheja. 1996. "The Erasure of Everyday Life in Colonial Ethnography." *In* *Everyday Life in South Asia*, eds. Diane P. Mines & Sarah Lamb, pp. 199-213; Georg Friedrich Hegel. *The Oriental World. In The Philosophy of History*, "India" and "India Buddhism" Part I, Section II, pp. 139-172; Ibn Battuta. *The Travels of Ibn Battutah*. Edited by Tim Mackintosh-Smith. Picador, 2002; Richard Francis Burton. *Sindh and the Races that Inhabit the Valley of the Indus*, 1997[1851]; E. Ojo Arewa and Alan Dundes. 1964. *Proverbs and the Ethnography of Speaking Folklore*. *American anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 66, No. 6, Part 2: *The Ethnography of Communication*, pp. 70-85

4. Theme. Writing and contemporary encounters (Mo, Sept. 23rd/Thurs 26th)

Mo **Omprakash Valmiki**. 2003[1997]. *Joothan: An Untouchables's Life*, pp. 1-17
[17 pages]
Isabelle Clark-Decès. 2007. "Back to Fieldnotes." *In* *The Encounter Never Ends: A Return to the Field of Tamil Studies*, pp. 1-15 [15 pages]

Thurs **Parvis Ghassem-Fachandi**. 2011. Naming and Omission. *In Reverberations: New Directions in the Study of Prayer*
See: <http://forums.ssrc.org/ndsp/2013/10/11/naming-and-omission/> [8 pages]
Andrea Luithle-Hardenberg. 2019. Public Vegetarianism and Public Menstruation: Staging Chastity Among Jains in Gujarat. *In* *Sex: Ethnographic Encounters*, eds. Ricky Martin and Dieter Haller, pp. 127-144 [17 pages]

5. Theme. Untouchability: Writing experience (Mo Sept. 30th/Thursday Oct. 3rd)

Viramma, Josiane Racine and Jean-Luc Racine. 1997. *Viramma: Life of an Untouchable*. Verso, Chapters 1-12, pp. 1-130 [130 pages]

Rec: Michael Moffat. *An Untouchable Community in South India. Structure and Consensus*, 1979, Princeton University Press; Louis Dumont. *A South Indian Subcaste. Social Organization and Religion of the Pramalai Kallar*, 1986

6. Theme. Untouchability: Writing experience (Mo, October 7th/Thurs 10th)

Viramma, Josiane Racine and Jean-Luc Racine. 1997. *Viramma. Life of an Untouchable*. Verso, Chapters 13-25, pp. 131-281 [150 pages]

HAND OUT OF TAKE-HOME MID TERM EXAM!

Rec: Oliver Mendelsohn and Marika Vicziany. 1998. "Who are the Untouchables?" *In* *The Untouchables: Subordination, Poverty and the State in Modern India*, Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-43 [43 pages]; Human Rights Watch. 1998. *Broken People: Caste Violence Against India's "Untouchables."* New York: Human Rights Watch

7. Theme. Karma and Myths of Origin (Mo, Oct 14th/Thurs 17th)

Mo **Lawrence A. Babb**. 1983. "Destiny and Responsibility: Karma in Popular

Hinduism.” *In Karma: An Anthropological Inquiry*, eds. Charles F. Keyes and E. Valentine Daniel, Part 1, Chapter 7, pp. 163-180 [23 pages]

Thurs **Robert Deliège**. 1993. The Myths of Origin of the Indian Untouchables. *Man*, Vol. 28, No. 3, pp. 533-549 [16 pages]

Rec: Alan Dundes. 1997. Two Tales of Crow and Sparrow: A Freudian Folkloristic Essay on Caste and Untouchability. Rowman and Littlefield Publishers. Oxford

8. Theme. Dirt and Symbolic System (Mo, Oct. 21st/ Thurs 24th)

Mo **Mary Douglas**. 1966. “Ritual Uncleanliness” and “Secular Defilement.” *In Purity and Danger*. Chapter 1 and 2, pp. 8-35 and pp. 36-50 [41 pages]

Diane Coffey and Dean Spears. 2017. “Purity, pollution and untouchability.” *In Where India goes: Abandoned Toilets, Stunted Development and the Costs of Caste*, Chapter 3, pp. 49-64 [15 pages]

David Pocock. 2001. “Prologue.” *In Mauss: General Theory of Magic*, pp. 5-6 [1 page]

Thurs **Saba Imtiaz**. “A Plague of Flies Descends on Karachi: ‘They’re Hounding People’” *The New York Times*, Aug. 29, 2019 [4 pages]

Sudipta Kaviraj. 2011. “Filth and the Public Sphere: Concepts and Practices about Space in Calcutta.” *In The Enchantment of Democracy and India*, pp. 238-273 [35 pages]

Home assignment: Watch **Sangita Vyas**, “The Surprising Truth of Open Defecation in India,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V35Vw29tay0>, TEDxWalledCity, 15 minutes long, or, alternatively, **Anamik Nagrik**, “Why is India so ugly? The Ugly Indian,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tf1VA5jqmRo>, 17 minutes long. You do not need to finish the entire Ted talks, but listen at least for 10 few minutes

9. Theme. Hierarchy or Social Stratification? (Mo, Oct. 28th/Thurs 31st)

Mo **Louis Dumont**. 1980. *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and its Implications*. Chapter 1, “History of Ideas,” pp. 21-32, “From System to Structure: The Pure and the Impure,” Chapter 2, pp. 33-64, and Chapter 3, “Hierarchy: The Theory of ‘Varna’,” 65-91 [48 pages]

Louis Dumont. 1986. “The Divine and Caste.” *In A South Indian Subcaste: Social organization and religion of the Pramalai Kallar*, pp. 460-464 [4 pages]

Thurs **Gerald D. Berreman**. 1960. Caste in India and the United States. *The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 66, No. 2, pp. 120-127 [7 pages]

Satish Deshpande. 2003. Caste Inequalities in India Today. *In Contemporary India: a sociological view*, pp. 98-124. [26 pages]

Rec: G.W.F. Hegel. Independence and Dependence of Self-consciousness: Lordship and Bondage. *In*

Phenomenology of Spirit. Transl. by A.V. Miller, 1977[1807], pp. 111-119; J. J. Rousseau. Discourse on the Origin and Foundation of inequality among men, pp. 11-35 [24 pages]

10. Theme. Inequality, Responsibility and Responsiveness (Mo November 4th/Thurs 7th)

Arundhati Roy. 2016. "The Doctor and the Saint." *In* Annihilation of Caste by B.R. Ambedkar, Verso, pp. 15-141. Selections, TBA [126 pages]

Rec: Iris Marion Young. 2011. Responsibility for Justice; Gopal Guru and Sundar Sarukkai. 2012. The Cracked Mirror: An Indian Debate on Experience and Theory; Gopal Guru (ed.). 2009. Humiliation: Claims and Context. Oxford, New Delhi; Martha Nussbaum. 2004. Hiding From Humanity: Disgust, Shame, and the Law

11. Theme. Bourgeois worldview and upward mobility (Mo 11th/Thurs 14th)

Pavan K. Varma. 1998. The Great Indian Middle Class. Viking Books, Preface and chapter 1, pp. xi-xiv, pp. 1-24 [24 pages]

Satish Deshpande. 2003. The Centrality of the Middle Class. *In* Contemporary India: a sociological view, pp. 125-150 [25 pages]

Katherine Boo. 2004. The Best Job in Town: The Americanization of Chennai. *The New Yorker*, July 5th, 2004, pp. 1-18 [18 pages]

Meredith McGuire. 2010. 'How to Sit, How to Stand': Bodily Practice and the New Urban Middle Class." *In* Companion to the Anthropology of India. Isabelle Clark-Decès (ed.), pp. 117-133 [16 pages]

Shehzad Nadeem. 2011. The Uses and Abuses of Time, Chapter 4, pp. 73-101. *In* Dead Ringers: How Outsourcing is changing the way Indians understand themselves [28 pages]

Rec: Leela Fernandez. Nationalizing 'the global': media images, cultural politics and the middle class in India. Media, Culture & Society September 2000 22: 611-628; Katherine Pratt Ewing. Arguing Sainthood: Modernity, Psychoanalysis, and Islam. 1997. Selections.

12. Theme. Muslim marginalization (Mo 18th/Thurs 21st)

Amrita Shah. 2015. "Meraj." *In* Ahmedabad: A City in the World, Chapter 1, pp. 1-28 [28 pages]

Parvis Ghassem-Fachandi. 2012. The Hyperbolic Vegetarian. *In* Pogrom in Gujarat: Hindu Nationalism and Anti-Muslim Violence in India, Chapter 5, pp. 153-184 [34 pages]

Jazira Fazila-Yacoobali Zamindar. 2007. "Introduction: The Place of Partition" and "Moving Boundaries," 1-16 and 229-240. *In* The Long Partition and the Making of Modern South Asia: Refugees, Boundaries, Histories [27 pages]

Jeffrey Gettleman and Hari Kumar. 2019. "India Plans Big Detention Camps for Migrants. Muslims Are Afraid." *The New York Times*, Aug. 17 [15 pages]

Rec: Shahid Amin. 2006. "Representing the Musalman: Then and Now Now, Then." *In muslims, dalits, and the fabrications of history*, edited by Shail Mayaram, M.S.S. Pandian and Ajay Skaria, pp. 1-35.

13. Theme. TBA (Mo November 25th)

No reading.

In-class Movie Screening TBA

THANKSGIVING BREAK NOVEMBER 28 to December 1st

14. Theme. Describing the slum (Mo, December 2nd/Thurs 5th).

Katherine Boo. *Behind the Beautiful Forevers. Life, Hope, and Death in a Mumbai Undercity.* Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2012, pp 1-134

[134 pages]

15. Theme. Last Class (Mo 9th)

Katherine Boo. *Behind the Beautiful Forevers. Life, Hope, and Death in a Mumbai Undercity.* Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2012, pp. 135-246

[111 pages]

HAND OUT FINAL EXAM!