

Anthropology 220The Politics of Food and Sex (in South Asia)

Department of Anthropology

Class Time: Mo/Thurs. 10:55am-12:15 pm

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

Office: RAB 313, D-Campus

Office Hours: Mo/Thurs. 12:30-13:30pm in 313

Phone: 848-932 - 4104

Location of Course: Room RAB 208 (D/C)

Credit: 3

Semester: Spring 2020

What to eat? Who to marry? This seminar examines food and sexuality in its relation to society in a comparative perspective. One strong regional focus will be South Asia, in particular India, while other regions of the world will be included. Students must be able to oscillate between different cultural and national contexts, confronting familiar phenomena inflected by unfamiliar frames of reference. The human body is frequently employed as a symbol of society. This seminar follows the contours of this symbol by investigating the ways in which food and sex form part of the formation of community boundaries. It focuses on how both are internal to forms of rejection, circulation of stigma and in occurrences of ethnic conflict. The investigation includes an analysis of the a role played by the moral and humoral classification of food substances at work in ritual mechanisms and symbolic procedures such as pollution, purification, ritual inversion, and transgression, which frequently become inscribed onto individual and collective bodies. The seminar will place a strong emphasis on the analysis of foundational experiences, phenomena such as ingestion, incorporation, disgust, revulsion; as well as the facts of procurement, production and consumption of food substances such as animal slaughter and its logical inversion, the renunciation of meat, namely vegetarianism. The class will traverse several fields of knowledge while retaining a strong focus in socio-cultural anthropology and in empirical ethnographic accounts. The reading materials consist of a wide array of texts of different genres, including ethnographic monographs (descriptive exposition), religious treatises, semiological analysis, psychoanalysis, analysis of ritual and exchange, cultural materialism, as well as philology, sociology, and history. Besides scholarly texts the reading materials include contemporary religious manuals, autobiography, journalistic accounts, documentary and feature movies, as well as travel literature.

Course objectives:

To provide students with concrete knowledge of diverse cultural practices, beliefs, and life-ways in a range of cultural contexts with focus on South Asia, paying attention to the relationship of this knowledge to how groups are represented in scholarly and popular writing, as well as in commercial feature film.

To help students gain proficiency in the use of critical thinking skills in their assessment of articles, ethnographic writing, autobiography, history, philology, psychoanalysis and documentary film.

To provide students with an understanding of various aspects of Indian society, social structure, ritual, religion, identity, gender, social organization and politics.

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.

Readings: All readings will be on electronic reserve (sakai.rutgers.edu).

Course Requirements and Grading Criteria

Take Home Mid Term Exam (30%), 4-5 pages. Take Home Final Exam (30%), 4-5 pages. Students have to complete all the readings and participate actively in class discussion (30%). There will be two class quizzes on the content of reading materials and class discussion (10%). Attendance in each class is required. No more than two absences will be accepted! Generally, while not a requirement, students should be willing to spontaneously introduce reading material of the week in question.

Students found cheating on exams or quizzes, handing in exams or quizzes containing plagiarized passages, or otherwise violating academic integrity policies will not be tolerated. Please familiarize yourself, therefore, with the Rutgers academic integrity policy, posted online at <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu>.

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 is automatically sent to me. Do not miss class without a University absence report!

General Class Policies:

There will be no extra credit. Please note that the texts to be discussed in class have to be brought to the appropriate class session. There is no excuse for not having the readings with you. Technological devices that do not serve class proceedings, on the other hand, do not belong in class. **Laptops and tablets if used for tasks relating to class proceedings are permitted.** Checking email, face book, and various other activities are absolutely not. Please try to be on time when class begins and in case any class material is indeed missed, do communicate with student colleagues about the content. When it comes to visiting me in office hours, *please* do come prepared with concrete questions about the class material.

1. Theme: Introduction (Thursday, January 23rd — first class)

Roland Barthes. 1975 [1961]. Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption, *In European Diet from Pre-Industrial to Modern Times*, pp. 47-59 [12 pages]

Jack Goody. The high and the low: culinary culture in Asia and Europe, *In Cooking, Cuisine, and Class. A Study in Comparative Sociology*, 1982, pp. 97-153 (esp. 114-127) [56 pages]

2. Theme: Defilement and Reminders (Monday, January 27th/Thurs. 30th)

Abbé J.A. Dubois. 1897 [1999]. External Defilements, Chap. III, pp. 178-186, Internal Defilements, Chap. IV, pp. 186-194, and Defilements of the Soul, Chapter V, pp. 194-204 and The Kinds of Food expressly forbidden to Brahmins, Chap. IX, pp. 282-288. *In Hindu Manners, Customs, and Ceremonies*, Part II. New York: Dover Publications [32 pages]

?more pages, perhaps Al Biruni?

3. Theme: Purity and Pollution (Monday, February 3rd/Thursday, February 6th)

Mary Douglas. 2004 [1966]. Secular Defilement, Chap. 2, pp. 36-50, and Powers and Danger, Chap. 6, pp. 117-140, External Boundaries, Chap. 7, pp. 141-159 (esp. 152-9), *In Purity and Danger. An analysis of concept of pollution and taboo*. London and New York: Routledge. [55 pages]

Burkhard Bilger. Nature's Spoils: The underground food movement ferments revolution. *In The New Yorker Magazine*, November 22, 2010, pp. 2-13 [11 pages]

4. Theme: Orifice, Anality and Excrement (Mo. February 10th/Thurs. February 13th)

William Ian Miller. Orifices and Bodily Wastes, Chapter 5, 1997, pp. 89-108, *In The Anatomy of Disgust*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press [19 pages]

Sjaak Van der Geest. Akan Shit: Getting Rid of Dirt in Ghana. *In Anthropology Today*, Vol. 14, No.3, June 1998, pp. 8-12 [4 pages]

Sándor Ferenczi. The Ontogenesis of the interest in money, *In First Contributions to Psycho-analysis*, 1952, pp. 319-331. London. Hogarth [12 pages]

?Mitra on the smell of shit?

5. Theme: Labor and Commodification (Mo. February 17th/Thurs. February 20th)

Marl Liechty. 2005. Carnal Economies: The Commodification of Food and Sex in Kathmandu. *In Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 20, Issue 1, pp. 1-38 [38 pages]

Lotte Hoek. 2010. "More Sexpression Please!" Screening the Female Voice and Body in Bangla Desh Film Industry. *In Meyer (ed.). 2010. Aesthetic Formations: Media, Religion, and the Senses*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.71-92 [21 pages]

Naila Kabeer. 2014. The Rise of the Female Breadwinner: Reconfigurations of marriage, motherhood, and masculinity in the global economy. In *New frontiers in feminist political economy*. pp. 62-84.
[22 pages]

6. Theme: Hierarchy and Exchange (Mo. February 24th /Thurs. February 27th)

Lawrence Babb. Foods of the Gods: Puja, In *The Divine Hierarchy*, Chap. 2, 1975, pp. 31-67 (and if desired: Chap 7, pp. 215-246) [67 pages]

Nur Yalman. On the Meaning of Food Offerings in Ceylon, In *Social Compass XX*, 1973/2, pp. 287-302 [15 pages]

Chitrita Banerji. The Propitiatory Meal. In *Land of Milk and Honey: Travels in the History of Indian Food*, 2007, London: Seagull Books, pp. 69-96 [27 pages]

>> bring in Vietnamese exchanges?

Mid Term Take Home Exam

7. Theme: Symbolism and Ritual Inversion (Mo. March 2nd/Thurs. March 5th)

Jonathan Parry. Death and Digestion: The Symbolism of Food and Eating in North Indian Mortuary Rites, In *Man*, New Series, Vol. 20, No. 4, 1985, pp. 612-629 [17 pages]

Paul M. Toomey. “Mountain of Food, Mountain of Love: Ritual Inversion in the Annakuta Feast at Mount Govardhan.” In *The Eternal Food. Gastronomic Ideas and Experiences of Hindus and Buddhists*, R.S. Khare (ed.), 1992, pp. 117-38 [21 page]

-needs another example of ritual/festival/inversion?

8. Theme: Society and Internal Boundaries: Caste (Mo. March 9th/Thurs. March 12th)

Wendy Doniger O’Flaherty. The dismemberment of the cosmic Person, Rig Veda, In *Textual Sources For the Study of Hinduism*, Wendy Doniger O’ Flaherty with Daniel Gold, David Haberman, David Shulman (ed.), 1988, pp. 27-28 [1 page]

Louis Dumont. Hierarchy: The Theory of the ‘Varna,’ (1966) In *Caste and Democratic Politics in India*, 2004, Ghanshyam Shah (ed.), pp. 44-55 [11 pages]

Josiane Racine and Jean-Luc Racine. High and Low Castes in Karani, Chapter 16, and The Paraiyar, Chapter 17 . In *Viramma: Life of an Untouchable*. 1997[1995]. London: Verso, pp. 156-171 [15 pages]

?needs more pages?

—Spring Recess and Reading Time, March 14th - March 22nd—

9. Theme: Animals, Morality and Identification (Mo. March 23rd/Thurs. March 26th)

M.K. Gandhi. An Autobiography. The Story of My Experiments with Truth, 1927, Part I, VI and VII, pp. 16-21 [5 pages]

David F. Pocock. Morality and non-violence, *In Mind, Body and Wealth. A Study of Belief and Practice in an Indian Village*, 1973, Appendix I, pp. 164-171 [7 pages]

Gopinath Aggarwal. 1991. The 'Auto-biography' of a Goat, *In Vegetarian or Non Vegetarian. Choose Yourself*. Chap. 14, pp. 33-35 [2 pages]

more readings on karma, animal protection, etc.

10. Theme: Comparative Excursus: Papua New Guinea (Mo. March 30th/Thurs. April 2nd)

Ira Bashkow. The Foods of Whitemen. *In The Meaning of Whitemen: Race & Modernity in the Orokaiva Cultural World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006, pp. 145-208 [63 pages]

11. Theme: Celibacy, Consumption, and Renunciation (Mo. April 6th /Thurs. 9th)

Joseph S Alter. 2002. Nervous Masculinity: Consumption and the Production of Embodied Gender in Indian Wrestling. *In Everyday Life in South Asia*, D.P. Mines and S. Lamb, (eds.), pp. 132-145 [13 pages]

Suketu Mehta. 2004. Good-bye World. *In Maximum City. Bombay Lost and Found*. New York: Vintage, Part III, pp. 497-534 [37 pages]

Vinay Lal. 2000. Nakedness, Nonviolence, and Brahmacharya: Gandhi's Experiments in Celibate Sexuality. *In Journal of the History of Sexuality*, Vol. 9, No. 1/2, pp. 105-136 [31 pages]

Source Material:

Malookchand R. Shah. "Then Brahmacharya is not difficult," 1999. Chap 4, pp. 69-102, Chap. 5, pp. 103-110, Chap. 6, pp. 111-116.

Swami Sivananda. "Practice of Brahmacharya," 2001. Chap. I, pp.31-40, III, pp. 57-65, VI, 72-108, and VII, pp. 109-127.

12. Theme: The Obscure Object of Sexuality (Mo. April 13th/Thurs. April 16th)

Georges Bataille. Eroticism in Inner Experience. *In Erotism: Death and Sensuality*. 1986[1962], San Francisco: City Lights Books, pp. 29-39 [10 pages]

M. Masud R. Khan. 1979. Cannibalistic tenderness in Nongenital Sensuality. *In Alienation in Perversions*, Chapter 7, pp. 177-184. International Universities Press, New York [7 pages]

Ruth Stein. 2008. The Otherness of Sexuality: Excess. *In Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, Vol. 56, Issue 1, pp. 43-71 [28

pages]

?-some thing to replace destitution of authors in stein?

13. Theme: Body and Cosmology (Mo. April 20th/Thurs. April 23rd)

Maurice Leenhardt. The Notion of the Body, Chapter 2, and The Living and the Dead, Chapter 3, *In Do Kamo: Person and Myth in the Melanesian World*. Translated by Basia Miller Gulati, 1979 [1947], pp. 11-42, Chicago: University of Chicago Press [31 pages]

Margaret Mead. 2001[1928]. *Coming of Age in Samoa. A Psychological Study of Primitive Youth for Western Civilisation*. William Morrow. *Selections* (on Sakai) [? pages]

14. Theme: Ingestion and Conflict (Mo. April 27th/Thurs. April 30th)

Zahir Janmohamed. 2013. Butter Chicken in Ahmedabad. In *The New York Times*, India Ink, August 20 [4 pages]

Parvis Ghassem-Fachandi. 2009. The Hyperbolic Vegetarian: Notes on a fragile subject in Gujarat, *In Being There: The Fieldwork Encounter and the Making of Truth*. Abdellah Hammoudi and John Borneman (eds.), pp. 77-112 [35 pages]

Ajoy Ashirwad Mahaprashata. Messing with Food habits (the politics of meat eating). In *Frontline Magazine*, cover story, December 10, 2014 [3 pages]

???Maybe something on cow lynching???

15. Theme: Conclusion and Exam (Monday May 4th)

Take-Home Exam!

Final Exam Due Date: May ???, 2019