Everyday Life in South Asia

Near Eastern Languages and Cultures 380

Instructor: Margaret A. Mills
Time: T R 1:30-3:18 PM
Location: Mendenhall Laboratory 0115
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Credit: 5
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Course Description: Introduction to the cultural diversity of South Asia through the study of everyday life and media representations. This course provides GEC credit in the category of Arts and Humanities, Culture and Ideas.

The cultural wealth and diversity of South Asia (India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka) mainly comes to the attention of the American public in the form of brief news reports on sectarian and other violence or concerning interruptions of national and international political processes. This course is designed for those who want to know more about how members of the culturally, religiously, and professionally diverse population of this important region actually experience, manage, and find meaning in their everyday lives. Anthropologists, historians, folklorists, and scholars of religion, media and cultural studies all contribute different insights on this subject. The broad-ranging essay collection of Mines and Lamb, (eds.), Everyday Life in South Asia, will ground the course, balanced with readings on contemporary folklore in everyday use and several recent documentary and feature films.

By the end of this course, students will have:

- familiarized themselves with a general picture of South Asian societies and cultures, from written case studies and sample documentary films,
- read and evaluated short case studies on the region written from different perspectives (sociology, anthropology, history, religious studies) and
- had practice in interpreting indigenous folk narratives told in local contexts and international feature films as two kinds of artistic representations of social settings and groups.

Student evaluation will be based on:

1. A weekly, short written response to the readings (2 pages), due the second meeting day of each week (20% of final grade, total)
2. Mid-term examination (in class; multiple essay format; 25% of final grade)
3. Final examination (take-home; multiple essay format; 40% of final grade)
4. Regular attendance and participation in class discussion (15% of final grade)

Disability Services
Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated, and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901.

Academic Misconduct
All work submitted for credit in this class must be the student's own work. It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term "academic misconduct" includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors are required to report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, visit the Committee on Academic Misconduct website.

Required Reading:
Book:
Mines, Diane P., and Sarah Lamb, eds., *Everyday Life in South Asia*, Indiana U. Press, 2002. ISBN 0-253-21521-8 (available at SBX)

Additional required readings selected from other sources, as itemized on the weekly schedule, will be furnished in a course pack (electronic or otherwise).

Weekly Schedule of Topics and Assignments:

Week One:

Day One: Introduce the region. Introduce the class.

Day Two: Film *Monsoon Wedding* (2001)
Film discussion: India in global imagination. Elites and international culture. Film imagery. Social issues raised. Audiences here and there. (This discussion will carry over to next meeting of class.)

Week Two: Families and Life Histories

Day One: Family and Life Course readings: Mines and Lamb, pp. 7-80. A. K Ramanujan, *Folktales from India*, 2 stories (TBA)

Day Two: Film *Dadi's Family* (1981)
Discussion: Caste, class, religion and family life. Documentary vs. feature film representation.

Week Three: Gender Relations:

Day One: Mines and Lamb, pp. 81-166.

Day Two: Gloria Raheja and Ann Gold, *Listen to the Heron's Words: Reimagining Gender and Kinship in North India*, selections TBA, about 60 pp.

Week Four: Caste and Class

Day One: Mines and Lamb, pp. 167-228.
A.K. Ramanujan, *Folktales from India*, 2 stories (TBA).

Day Two: **Midterm Exam** (in class; multiple essay format)

Week Five: Varieties of Religious Experience and Practice

Day One: Mines and Lamb, pp. 229-300.

Day Two: Film: *The clay Bird*.

Week Six: Varieties of Religious Experience, cont'd

Day One: Film: *Exploring the Religions of South Asia: Himalayan Buddhism*.
Class discussion of two films: Religious communities. Religion in documentary vs. fiction.

Day Two: Kirin Narayan, Women's ritual tales selections from *Mondays on the Dark Night of the Moon: Himalayan Foothill Tales*.
Kirin Narayan, selections from *Storytellers, Saints and Scoundrels: Folk Narrative in Hindu Religious Teaching*.

Week Seven: Nation-making and National Identities

Day One: Readings: Mines and Lamb, pp. 303-380.

Day Two: Film: *Salaam Bombay*

Week Eight: Diaspora Cultures

Day One: Mines and Lamb, pp. 381-454.

Day Two: Film: *My Beautiful Laundrette, The Namesake* or another film

Week Nine: Global Connections: Internet, Global Media

Readings:
Payan Duggal, "Internet and Democracy in India," in I. Banerjee, ed., *Rhetoric and Reality: The Internet Challenge for Democracy in Asia*, 2003, pp. 61-96.
M. J.Matelski, Ch. 6, "Asia," in *Soap Operas Worldwide*, 1999, pp. 119-142

Week Ten: Course Review

Sources and approaches to the study of South Asian popular culture and everyday life. Class discussion of different approaches to cultural knowledge. Global film as local representation.

Final Exam (a take-home exam, due two days after its distribution to the class on [**Date**]; multiple essay format)