**HIST/SOC 170b: Gender and Sexuality in South Asia**

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**Course Description:** This seminar introduces students to historical and contemporary debates about gender and sexuality in South Asia, centered on the family, the nation, the law, and the labor market. What historical patterns and social institutions have shaped contemporary representations of South Asian femininity, both within South Asia and in the rest of the world? While we cannot cover all of South Asian history, we focus on the relationship between the colonial and postcolonial periods: how have the Mughal Empire, East India Company rule, the British Raj, post-colonial state-building, and liberalization/globalization affected contemporary gender relations and sexual politics in South Asia?

The course will engage an array of sources, both primary and secondary, including historiographical debates, ethnographic studies, legal debates, memoir and autobiography, literary criticism, literature, and film. We will consider how definitions of “woman,” “femininity,” “civilization,” “home,” “nation,” and “family” have shifted over time. Toward the end of the semester, we will turn to the ways in which the contemporary debates about rape in India crystallize tensions around domesticity, femininity, nation, globalization, labor, caste, and social mobility, and reflect on representations of South Asian women in contemporary media and popular culture. While the course emphasizes what is now India, we will also draw links to scholarship on Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal.

Throughout, we will use our subject material to engage broader questions in the transnational study of gender and sexuality. How did colonialism shape contemporary understandings of gender, women, femininity, and sexuality? What can we learn about the history of feminism by studying the close and conflicted relationship between feminists in Britain/North America and South Asia over time? How are historical narratives mobilized in contemporary politics, and how can alternative histories be formulated? What are the challenges and the possibilities of placing historical and sociological scholarship in conversation with one another?

**Learning Goals**

- Analyze key contemporary topics related to gender and sexuality in South Asia—family, law, labor, activism, and media representation—in historical context
- Develop a working basic knowledge of the history of South Asia and shifting relations of gender and sexuality within that history
- Think critically about the relationships between South Asian feminisms and British/North American feminisms in the colonial and post-colonial periods
- Understand the different types of questions, methods, and analyses employed in different social science disciplines, and value (as well as the potential challenges) of placing them in conversation
- Read, write, and speak comfortably about historical and sociological scholarship
Required Texts (available at the Brandeis University Bookstore, and on reserve at the library):


The majority of our readings will be selections and excerpts from longer works, as well as key primary sources, all of which can be found in the coursepack (coursepacks can be purchased from Dona DeLorenzo in the History Department Office, Olin Sang 215). In order to receive credit for class participation, you must bring your coursepack with you to class. Readings from both the required texts and coursepack are listed below under “Class and Reading Schedule.”

**Communication:** Please feel free to come to office hours or to e-mail us at any point during the semester if you have questions or concerns about the course, the assignments, or the course material more generally. However, detailed questions that require more than a sentence to answer are best answered in office hours. E-mail (mullerh@brandeis.edu and gowri@brandeis.edu) is the best way to reach us to ask questions or to set up an appointment. We will respond to e-mail in a timely manner (within 48 hours). Please keep in mind, however, that we are generally not on e-mail after 8:00 PM or on weekends.

**Summary of Requirements:** Two short papers (4-6 pages) (35%); informed class participation and short writing assignments (30%); initial proposal/bibliography and final paper (12-15 pages) (35%). For this four-credit course, students should assume that they will spend a minimum of nine hours of study time per week in preparation for this class (completing readings, papers, and writing assignments).

**Attendance:** Attendance is mandatory. Students will be permitted a maximum of two unexcused absences, after which the overall participation grade will be lowered by 1/3 of a letter grade for each day missed. Excused absences must be discussed with us, and any missed work must be completed. Repeated unexcused absences, tardiness, early departures, and conducting private conversations in class are disrespectful to all of us and will affect your overall grade for the course.

**Technology:** Use of laptops and cell phones is not permitted in class (unless you have discussed the matter with us in advance). Please turn phones to silent (not vibrate) and put them away. Students texting during class will receive no credit for class participation that day.

**Class Participation:** While we will provide background information as necessary, this is primarily a discussion-based course. The success of our meetings depends on your active listening and thoughtful participation. Participation will be 30% of the final grade, and consistent engagement in all discussions is expected, as is diligent and timely preparation of readings and assignments. Your participation grade will be based on the quality of your contributions to class discussions (which are strengthened by doing the reading, bringing assigned texts to class to facilitate specific references, completion of discussion
questions and course response papers, and being prepared with comments and questions to contribute to the conversation). We will grade participation on a check plus/check/check minus basis after each class.

**Reading Responses:** For each class, we will post one or two questions/prompts on Latte to help guide your readings and in preparation for class. You should always consider these before class, but you will be required to submit 8 short (350-500 word) written responses to these prompts over the course of the semester, which will factor into your overall participation grade. We expect your written responses to 1) make a discernible argument and 2) refer directly to at least one of the readings for the day, with page numbers. Use the reading response to help you pull together your thoughts, questions, and immediate reactions to the readings in preparation for active participation in class. What provoked, inspired, angered, puzzled, or resonated with you? Students who wish to use writing assignments to further engage with the material may submit additional responses. Reading responses are due in hard copy at the start of class.

**Paper Assignments:** There will be two short papers (4-6 pages) and a final paper (12-15 pages) for this course (with an initial proposal and bibliography due to professors before meetings about topics). Late papers will be penalized. We will deduct 1/3 of a letter grade for every day (beginning at 4:00 PM) they are late (i.e. a paper due on 4:00 PM on Thursday earning a B+ will receive a B if turned in on Friday by 4:00 PM, a B- on Saturday, etc.). The final paper is due Tuesday, December 12th.

**General Notes on Grading Expectations for Papers:** Good writing relies on argument, evidence, and what William Strunk, Jr., called the “elements of style.” General characteristics of various letter grades for papers are as follows: an **A** paper is distinguished by a clearly articulated, compelling argument and/or organizing principle; a judicious use of well-digested evidence; and a strong command of grammar, spelling, and punctuation. A **B** paper is marked by an argument that is well-crafted, but predictable; evidence that is appropriately placed but inadequately exploited; and serviceable but not superlative prose. A **C** paper is characterized by a loose or regurgitated argument; mechanical citation and support; awkward paragraph structure, repetitive constructions, lapses into colloquialism, and overuse of the passive, adverbs, and the exclamatory voice. A **D** paper is marred by assertions rather than argument; the misreading or misuse of evidence; and simple grammatical and spelling mistakes. An **F** paper lacks an argument entirely; shows no familiarity with relevant evidence; has consistent problems with basic sentence construction; and/or does not address the assignment.

**Grade Appeals:** If you wish to appeal any grade with us, you must do so in writing, carefully explaining the reasons for your appeal and submitting a copy of your work along with our comments. You must submit grade disputes to us in person during office hours. We will then schedule a later appointment to discuss the issue. Please note that appealing a grade means that the evaluation process begins again. After reviewing your appeal, we may lower or raise the grade.

**Academic Integrity:** Please do your own work. Plagiarism will not be tolerated in any form. Academic honesty, the cornerstone of teaching and learning, is the foundation of integrity, and you are expected to be honest in all of your academic work. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, providing or receiving assistance with coursework in ways not authorized by the instructor, submitting an assignment produced for one course to a second course without the approval of all instructors, and, of course, plagiarism. Plagiarism is intellectual theft; it means presenting someone else’s work and ideas as if they
were your own. Neither ignorance nor carelessness is an acceptable defense in cases of plagiarism. It is your responsibility to cite any sources consulted – not only for quoted phrases but also for ideas and information that are not common knowledge – and to follow the proper format for those citations.

Please consult Brandeis University Rights and Responsibilities for all policies and procedures related to academic integrity. Students may be required to submit work to TurnItIn.com software to verify originality. Allegations of alleged academic dishonesty will be forwarded to the Director of Academic Integrity. Sanctions for academic dishonesty can include failing grades and/or suspension from the university. Citation and research assistance can be found at LTS - Library guides.

Please remember that you should always ask us for assistance if you have any questions about what sorts of materials and assistance are appropriate for assignments or if you are uncertain about how to cite sources correctly.

**Accommodations:** If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please check in with us immediately. Please keep in mind that accommodations cannot be made retroactively.

**Additional Resources:** The Writing Center is a free resource available to all Brandeis students. The Center is located in Goldfarb 232 on the Goldfarb Mezzanine. Appointments can be made Monday through Friday from 10:30 AM to 6:00 PM. There are also drop-in sessions available Monday through Thursday from 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM. To make an appointment or to find out more, please visit: http://www.brandeis.edu/writingprogram/writingcenter.

**Classroom Environment.** We will discuss difficult topics in this class, and it will take all of our trust, sensitivity, and maturity to create an inclusive and safe environment for conversation. Please remember that your classmates have a range of experiences and be thoughtful when you speak and listen. If you have any concerns about your ability to participate actively in class, because of personal experience, trauma, or something else, please do not hesitate to talk with us about it—the earlier in the semester, the better.

**Changes to the Syllabus:** We will make every effort to follow the schedule outlined below. If any changes are required or any adjustments are necessary for snow days or other reasons, we will announce them in class and/or on Latte as early as possible. You are responsible for keeping up with any alterations to the schedule or assignments.
Class and Reading Schedule

**Th (8/31): Introduction: Theorizing Gender and Sexuality in Colonial and Post-Colonial Contexts**


**Tu (9/5): Women in Medieval and Mughal India**


**Th (9/7): Masculinity, Representation, and the Mughal Empire**


**Tu (9/12): Colonial Intimacies**


**Th (9/14): Sati and “The Condition of Women”**

William Cavendish Bentinck, “Minute on Sati, November 8, 1829 and Sati Regulation of the Bengal Code (1829)” (CP).

**Tu (9/19): Imperial Feminism and Colonial Masculinity**


**Th (9/21) Rosh Hashanah – No Class**

**Tu (9/26): Policing Sexuality in the Nineteenth Century**


**Th (9/28): Reform and Protection**


**Tu (10/3) Sexuality and Humanitarianism**

Film screening and discussion in class: *Born into Brothels* (2004) and *We are Foot Soldiers* (2011)

*PAPER #1 DUE IN CLASS ON TUESDAY, OCTOBER 3RD, 2017.*

**Th (10/5) Sukkot – No Class**
Tu (10/10): Women and the Nationalist Movement

Geraldine Forbes, Women in Modern India, 121-1143, 153-156 (required text).

W (10/11) (Thursday Class Schedule in Effect): Imagining Mother India

Katherine Mayo, Mother India (1927), 81-92, 107-115, 152-160 (CP)
Film screening before class: Mother India (1957) (clips posted on Latte).

Th (10/12) – Shmini Atzeret – No Class

Tu (10/17) Gendering Violence: Partition and Abduction

Film screening before class: Earth (1998).

Th (10/19): Gender and Communalism

Atreyee Sen, “Martial Tales, Right-Wing Hindu Women, and ‘History Telling’ in the Bombay Slums,” in South Asian Feminisms, 75-96 (CP).

Tu (10/24): Gendering Caste

Sharmila Rege, *Writing Caste/Writing Gender: Reading Dalit Women’s Testimonials* (New Delhi: Zubaan, 2013), 123-165 (CP).

**Th (10/26): The Politics of Reproduction**


**Tu (10/31): Gendered Labor: The Factory and the Home**


**Th (11/2): NGOs and Microfinance**


**Tu (11/7): Women, Nation, and Globalization**


**PAPER #2 DUE WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2017 BY 4:00 PM.**

**Th (11/9): Liberalization, Youth, and Public Space**

Tu (11/14): Lesbian Histories


Film screening before class: Fire (1996)

Th (11/16): LGBTQ Activism and Section 377


Tu (11/21): Sexual Economies


Th (11/23): NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING

INITIAL PROPOSALS AND BIBLIOGRAPHIES DUE MONDAY BY 4:00 PM

Tu (11/28): Individual Meetings for Final Paper Topics

Th (11/30): Media and the Politics of Rape

Tu (12/5): Caste, Memoir, Feminisms


Th (12/7): Wrap Up

*FINAL PAPER DUE TUESDAY, DECEMBER 12TH, 2017.*