

Media and Society in Modern South Asia (SARS 253, SARS 553)

Fall Semester 2004

Tuesday and Thursday 3-4:30pm

Location: Williams 321

Professor Christian Lee Novetzke

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Office Hours: Thursday, 1-3, or by appointment

Course Synopsis:

This course selectively surveys modern media in South Asia, with an emphasis on India and the interactions between India and other South Asian countries. The “media” we’ll examine include novels, non-fiction monographs, films, cartoons, and clothing. We’ll explore the effects of colonialism, globalism, capitalism, “Orientalism,” and modernity on portrayals of various facets of South Asian life, including nationalism, religion, the diaspora, and gender. The course assumes no previous knowledge of South Asian history or culture and all are welcome.

Requirements:

You’re required to attend all classes, read all materials carefully and thoughtfully, and engage with the subject matter in class and in your writing. This means that during class you’re expected to participate enthusiastically with **regular and direct reference to the reading and films**, and outside of class you’re expected to complete your readings conscientiously. Each week you’ll be asked to compose a **short reaction** paper (2 pages max.); you can send this to me electronically by Wednesday at 10pm. The reaction paper should cover the materials to be read for that week. In other words, all reading for a given week must be done by Wednesday night, and a reaction paper presented on the material and/or film. For at least one Thursday session in the semester, you’ll each give a **presentation** on the readings or viewings, and **lead discussion** for the remainder of the class.

Throughout the semester you’ll have three media projects outlined below:

First Project: Idiosyncratic Map of South Asia (two pages)

Second Project: South Asia News Media Study on Assigned Topic (six to eight pages)

Third Project: South Asia Popular Culture Study on Assigned Topic (six to eight pages)

Graduate students will write an essay relevant to their dissertation projects.

During the semester we will occasionally screen films outside of class. In these weeks, our class will meet once (on Thursday), rather than twice, to accommodate the screening. These showings will take place on Tuesdays in Williams Hall 421 from 6-9pm. **Screenings are mandatory.**

Grading:

Fifteen percent (15%) of your grade will depend on your attendance and the quality of your classroom participation; fifteen percent (15%) will be based on the quality of your weekly reaction papers; twenty percent (20%) will depend on your day(s) of presentation and leading discussion; and fifty percent (50%) will hinge on three media projects [10%+20%+20%].

Materials:

These books will be available for purchase at House of Our Own:

Chatterjee, Gayatri. 2002. *Mother India*.

Mehta, Gita. 1979. *Karma Cola*.

Prasad, Vijay. 2000. *The Karma of Brown Folk*.

Rushdie, Salman. 1981. *Midnight's Children*.

A bulkpack will be available for purchase at the Wharton Copy Shop. In addition, the bulkpack will be online through the course's blackboard site.

Whether or not you purchase these materials, you must bring copies of our readings to class.

Syllabus

Week One: Introduction

- 9/9: Introduction to the course.

Reading for 9/14: None.

Week Two: Time Travel

- 9/14: Lecture—Crash Course in South Asian History, Part I

Reading for 9/16: None.

- 9/16: Lecture—Crash Course, Part II.

Reading for 9/21: *Midnight's Children* [First Quarter]

Week Three: Nationalism and Narrative

- 9/21: Lecture—Nationalism, Historiography, and Narratives

Reading for 9/23: *Midnight's Children* [Second Quarter]

- 9/23: Presentation and Discussion.

Reading for 9/28: *Midnight's Children* [Third Quarter]

Week Four: Nationalism and Religion

- 9/28: Lecture—Nationalism, Secularism, and Religion

Reading for 9/30: *Midnight's Children* [Finish]

- 9/30: Presentation and Discussion.

Reading: *Mother India* by Gayatri Chatterjee [First-Half].

MAP PROJECT DUE ON 10/1

Week Five: The Personified Nation—*Mother India*

- 10/5: Screening of *Mother India* (Mehboob Khan, dir. 1957; Hindi; 160min.)

Reading for 10/7: Finish Chatterjee.

- 10/7: Presentation and Discussion.

Reading for 10/12: “Partition, Pakistan, and South Asian History: In Search of a Narrative,” by David Gilmartin in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 57, Is. 4 (Nov. 1998):1068-1095.

Week Six: The Birth of Nations and Partition

- 10/12: Screening of *Earth* (Deepa Mehta, dir. 1998; Hindi; 101 min.)

Reading for 10/14: Read short story “Toba Tek Singh” by Sadaat Manto (originally in Urdu) in coursepack and also at:

<http://www.wordswithoutborders.org/article.php?lab=Toba;>

and “A Necessary Journey: A Story of Friendship and Reconciliation” by Urvashi Butalia. *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*. Apr-Jun2002, Vol. 27 Issue 2, p147 (18).

- 10/14: Presentation and Discussion. [Led by T.A.]

Reading for 10/19: “Untangling India and Pakistan,” by K. Shankar Bajpai, *Foreign Affairs* (May/June 2003):112-126.

Week Seven: Kashmir on Film

- 10/19: Screening of *Roja* (2000 Mani Ratnam, dir.; Hindi; 175min.)

Reading for 10/21: “The Home and the Nation: Consuming Culture and Politics in *Roja*,” by Nicholas B. Dirks in *Pleasure and the Nation*, pages 161-185.

- 10/21: Presentation and Discussion.

Reading for 10/26: No Reading

Week Eight: Politics and Cartoons

- 10/26: **Fall Break**

Reading for 10/28: “Cartoons of the Raj” by Partha Mitter in *History Today*; “Freedom to cartoon, freedom to speak,” by R. K. Laxman in *Daedalus*, Fall 1989 v118 n4 p68(24). AND peruse online “You Said It” and “Dubyaman” via *The Times of India*.

- 10/28: Presentation and Discussion.

Reading for 11/2: “Introduction” and “Knowing the Oriental” by Edward Said in *Orientalism* (1-49).

Week Nine: Orientalism

- 11/2: Lecture—Orientalism, Economics, and Otherness

Reading for 11/4: “Orientalist Constructions of India” by Ronald Inden.

- 11/4: Presentation and Discussion.

Reading for 11/9: “Introduction: The Problem of What to Wear” and “Questions of Dress in a Gujarati Village,” in Emma Tarlo’s *Clothing Matters* [1-22; 129-167]

Week Ten: The Culture of Clothing

- 11/9: Lecture—Sartorial Uncertainties

Readings for 11/11: “Fashion Fables of an Urban Village,” and “Dressing for Distinction: A Historical Review,” in *Clothing Matters* [284-317; 318-336].

- 11/11: Presentation and Discussion.

Readings for 11/16: “The Contemporary Feminist Movement” by Radha Kumar in *The History of Doing* (96-114); and “A Horror of Isms: Why I Do Not Call Myself a Feminist,” by Madhu Kishwar.

Week Eleven: Indian Feminism and the Political Economy of Beauty

- 11/16: Screening of *Unlimited Girls* (Paromita Vora, dir. 2002; English and Hindi; 94min.)

Reading for 11/18: “A Perfect 10—‘Modern and Indian’: Representations of the Body in Beauty Pageants and the Visual Media in Contemporary India” by Shoma Munshi in *Confronting the Body* (162-182).

- 11/18: Presentation and Discussion.

Reading for 11/23: First half of *Karma Cola* by Gita Mehta.

SECOND MEDIA PROJECT DUE 11/19

Week Twelve: Orientalism and Cultural “Exports”

- 11/23: Lecture by TA on New Religious Movements in the Encounter with Orientalism.

Reading for 11/25: Second Half of *Karma Cola* by Gita Mehta.

- 11/25: **Thanksgiving Break**

Reading for 11/30: “Introduction,” [7-12] and “Indian Cinema” [13-41] in *Cinema India* by Rachel Dwyer and Divia Patel.

Week Thirteen: The Theater of Belief

- 11/30: Screening of *The Guide* (Vijay Anand, dir. 1965; Hindi; 167min.)

Reading for 12/2: “The Active Audience: Spectatorship, Social Relations and the Experience of Cinema in India” by Lakshmi Srinivas.

- 12/2: Presentation and Discussion of subjects of Weeks Twelve *and* Thirteen.

Reading for 12/7: First half of the *Karma of Brown Folk*

Week Fourteen: The “ABCD” Film Genre

- 12/7: Screening of *American Desi*.

Reading for 12/9: Second Half of the *Karma of Brown Folk*.

- 12/9: Presentation and Discussion.

THIRD MEDIA PROJECT DUE 12/17