

Department of Anthropology  
The George Washington University

**Anthropology 3991: Peoples and Cultures of India**

Class meets on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 08:00 to 09:15 p.m. in COR, Room 106

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Office hour: Tue & Thurs at 09:30-10:30  
and by appointment

COURSE OVERVIEW

The first part of this course briefly introduces the students to the prehistory and history of India. Any discussion of India without placing it in historical context serves no purpose. The major focus will be on the rich diversity amongst the peoples and cultures of India and the meaning of contemporary life. "Diversity," "pluralism" and "complexity" are terms often used to characterize Indian cultures and society. Such terms could suggest conflict and divisiveness. Yet, India has shown extraordinary persistence and stability. What are the accommodating forces at work? What features of social structure and belief might contribute to this order? Though India's majority population consists of Hindus, during the course of this semester, we will also explore the status of the other groups. (There are many: Muslims, Sikhs, and Christians, Buddhists, Jews, Parsis, Jains, Anglo-Indians, and indigenous peoples). We will examine their inclusion in Indian life. We will also explore how outside forces such as the colonial experience and recent globalization of Indian society influence rural and urban life; issues of caste, relative positions of men and women and pop culture.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Describe in general terms the events in Indian history that led to the current pattern of ethnic and religious diversity.
2. Identify the major religious groups in India and their attitudes to each other.
3. Explain the major characteristics of the Indian caste system and its relationship to religious pluralism.
4. Identify the components of Indian traditional society that have contributed to the long-term stability of Indian culture as a whole despite recurrent ethnic conflict.
5. Describe how the British Imperial period shaped the political and ethnic geography of the subcontinent and identify major ways in which it affected family life and the caste system.
6. Compare positive and negative aspects of the involvement of India in a world economy.
7. Give examples of the current role of India in the global economy, both as an exporter and importer, a provider of low-skilled labor and a center for high-tech enterprise.
8. Compare current and traditional India with regard to class and caste distinctions, gender roles, and the structure of families.
9. Give examples of how India has both adopted and changed aspects of global pop culture.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. **Required books to be purchased.** These books are available at the GWU bookstore:

1. Keay, John INDIA: A HISTORY. Atlantic Monthly Press, (2000).

2. Narayan, Kiran *STORYTELLER, SAINTS AND SCOUNDRELS*. University of Pennsylvania Press, (1997).
3. Stern, Robert W. *CHANGING INDIA*. Cambridge University Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (2003). ISBN: 0 521 00912 X.

**B. *Materials on electronic reserve:***

1. Mencher, Joan P. "The Caste System Upside Down, or The Not-So-Mysterious East." In *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 15, No 4, December 1973.
2. Pandian, Jacob *THE MAKING OF INDIA AND INDIAN TRADITIONS*. Prentice Hall (1995).

**C. *Written Work:***

1. Two 45-minute quizzes on lectures and assigned readings.
2. One seventy-five minute in-class exam on lectures, reading assignments and the films you will be seeing in this class.
3. One take-home exam on Narayan's book. Instruction and other details for the take-home exam will be given in class.
4. One well-researched, 15 page essay paper on your chosen topics. The topics can be either historical or on current issues. Instruction and other details for the paper will be discussed in class.
5. Regular attendance, class participation, and reading the assignments in the time they are assigned are required for this course and they give me a sense of your overall engagement in the course. \*\*\* **Each time you miss a class, you will lose a point**\*\*\*

There is no final examination.

**D. *Films:***

I am planning to show a number of films during the course of the semester. You are responsible for them.

***Grading Procedure:***

1. Quizzes, 10 points each, total 20 points.
2. In-class exam, 25 points.
3. Research paper, 25 points.
4. Take-home exam 20 points.
5. Ten (10) points for regular attendance, active participation in class discussion and reading the assignments in the time they are assigned.

Your final grade for this class will be calculated as follows:

NUMBER VALUE	LETTER GRADE EQUIVALENT
96-100	A
91-95	A-
86-90	B+
81-85	B
76-80	B-
71-75	C+
66-70	C
61-65	C-
56-60	D
55 or less	F

\*\*\* The final grade will be evaluated by adding up all the number values you have received in all quizzes, exam, research paper, and attendance\*\*\*

#### GRADING STANDARD

An “A” grade is considered as an exceptional work that goes beyond the basic/simple meeting of requirements. It shows that imaginative and special efforts are clearly communicated.

A “B” indicates degree of competence, careful attention given to fulfill the requirement including effective presentation.

A “C” is just a satisfactory work with some weakness that requires fixing.

#### TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE

Class 1-January 15	Introduction, distribute syllabus; discuss texts; organization of course, requirements, policies and procedures.
Class 2, 3, 4, 5,- January 17, 22, 24, 29	Geography and a brief summary of Indian Pre-History, Proto History and <i>Vedic</i> period. READ: Start reading Keay Stern, pp-1-31 FILM: “ <i>The Empire of the Spirit</i> ” will be shown on January 17
Class 6-January 31	<b>QUIZ: First 45 minute quiz will be given on January 31 followed by lecture.</b>
Class 7, 8, 9, 10, 11- February 5, 7, 12, 14, 19	History: Early empires, Islamic influence, British Raj and independent India. READ: Continue reading Keay Stern, pp 129-215

Class 12, 13-February 21, 26	Caste: Its origin, traditional function, and changing role. READ: Mencher, the whole journal (electronic reserve) Stern, pp 56 – 87
Class 14-February 28	<b>Second 45 minute quiz will be given, followed by lecture.</b>
Class 15-March 4	Instruction and guidelines for research paper will be discussed.
Class 16, 17, 18,- March 6, 11, 13	Family and village life: Before, during, and after the British Rule. READ: Stern, pp 35-55 FILM: <u>Dadi's (Dhadhi's) Family</u> will be shown during this period.
March 18, 20	<b>No class, spring break.</b>
Class 19-March 25	<b>Seventy-five minute in-class exam will be given.</b>
Class 20, 21, 22- March 27, April 1, 3	Hindu Religion: Its origin, ideology, and practice. READ: Narayan, the whole book The film, <u>The Fourth Stage</u> will be shown during this period. <b>Take-home exam questions on Narayan will be given out on April 2.</b>
Class 23, 24, 25, 26- April 8, 10, 15, 17	Religion and minority traditions: Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, Jews, Parsis, Jains, Tibetans, Chinese, Anglo-Indians, and indigenous people. READ: Pandian, pp: 80-102 (electronic reserve) FILM: A film on Indian/Cochin Jew will be shown during this period.
Class 27-April 22	Gender and the forces of social change in contemporary India. READ: Handout out <b>Take-home exam on Narayan is due in class on.</b>
Class 28, 29-April 24, 29	Pop culture, the influence of Bollywood on contemporary culture. FILM: A commercial Indian film with subtitles will be shown. Title of the film not yet decided.  <b>April 29, last day for this class.</b>

**Academic integrity:** All students must practice academic integrity. This means doing your own work, and when you use the words and ideas of others in any written work, you must: 1) identify quotations with quotations marks; and 2) indicate the source of ideas that are not your own using social sciences notation form. If you have any questions at all about what this means, you should speak to the instructor. Plagiarism, and all breaches of academic integrity (for example, the sale of lecture-notes, or use of content from the internet as though it was your own), will be severely dealt with in accordance with the University's policies and procedures. For more information on The George Washington University's policies on

academic integrity, consult: <http://studentconduct.gwu.edu/academic-integrity>

### **Support for students outside of the classroom:**

#### Disability Support Services (DSS)

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in the Rome Hall, Suite 102, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: <http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/>

#### Mental Health Services 202-994-5300

The University's Mental Health Services offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include: crisis and emergency mental health consultations confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals. <http://counselingcenter.gwu.edu/>

### **University Policy on Religious Holidays:**

1. Students should notify faculty during the first week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance;
2. Faculty should extend to these students the courtesy of absence without penalty on such occasions, including permission to make up examinations;
3. Faculty who intend to observe a religious holiday should arrange at the beginning of the semester to reschedule missed classes or to make other provisions for their course-related activities.