

Gender and Sexuality in South Asian Literature
Spring 2011, TTH 11:00-12:30
AAS 320 / WGS 340

Instructor: Dr. Jeanette Herman

Course Overview:

This course will critically engage representations of gender and sexuality in literature from the South Asian diaspora. Through our discussions of contemporary novels, stories, essays, and films, we will explore a number of questions: How do gender and sexuality impact the ways in which writers and artists imagine the world and their own communities? How do writers represent gendered and sexual identities and practices, particularly in relation to other categories of identity such as class, caste, nationality, race, ethnicity, and religion? What historical, cultural, and political contexts are important for understanding the representations of gendered and sexual identities and practices in these texts? How do representations of women and sexual minorities contend with the kinds of violence that these groups have experienced? We will ground our discussion of the literary and film texts in an understanding of the ways in which the legacies of colonialism and decolonization continue to shape constructions of gender and sexuality in South Asian cultures, and with an examination of contemporary feminist and queer movements both in the region and in the diaspora.

This course carries the Writing Flag. Writing Flag courses are designed to give students experience with writing in an academic discipline. In this class, you can expect to write regularly during the semester, complete substantial writing projects, and receive feedback to help you improve your writing. You will also have the opportunity to revise one or more assignments, and to read and discuss your peers' work. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from your written work.

This course also carries the flag for Cultural Diversity in the United States. Cultural Diversity courses are designed to increase your familiarity with the variety and richness of the American cultural experience. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from assignments covering the practices, beliefs, and histories of at least one U.S. cultural group that has experienced persistent marginalization.

Objectives:

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- Analyze representations of gendered and sexual identities and practices in South Asian literature and film, and discuss these representations in relation to other categories of identity.
- Discuss literary and film texts from the South Asian diaspora, with a critical understanding of the historical, cultural, and political contexts within which these texts circulate.
- Write a well-organized, informed, clearly-articulated analysis of the texts we study in this course, as well as similar texts. Whatever your writing skills, this course should help you improve them and should teach you how to write effectively about literary representations.

Texts:

Fire, d. Deepa Mehta (1996)
Shyam Selvadurai, *Funny Boy*
Ugra, *Chocolate*
Ismat Chughtai, *The Crooked Line*
Rakesh Satyal, *Blue Boy*
My Beautiful Laundrette, d. Stephen Frears (1985)
Shani Mootoo, *Cereus Blooms at Night*
Abha Dawesar, *Babyji*
Monsoon Wedding, d. Mira Nair (2002)
My Brother ... Nikhil, d. Onir (2005)

Assignments and Grading:

In addition to participating actively in class discussions, you will be expected to contribute weekly blog postings, write two short papers, write a mid-term paper, and write a final paper.

Late papers will not be accepted. If you have extenuating circumstances that will prevent you from turning in an assignment on time, it is your responsibility to communicate with me **in advance** about the situation.

Short Papers (20%): You will complete two 2-3-page response papers. See assignment for prompts, details, due dates, and general guidelines on writing for this course.

Blog Postings and Responses (20%): You will be responsible for contributing weekly entries to the course blog. You are responsible for writing both an original posting (250-300 words, due by the end of the day each Friday) and a response to a classmate's posting (100 words, due by the end of the day each Monday). You might choose to write about an issue you found interesting in a text that was not raised in class discussion; commentary about a passage from the text that you found interesting; or a discussion in class that you would like to extend. The course blog is a way to continue the discussions we have in class, especially ideas and question that are left underdeveloped in our class discussions. The course blog will be open only to members of this class, but you should think about your postings as having both a direct audience, consisting of the class members, and a potential public audience. With this in mind, though not formal essays, your postings should be well-written, thoughtful, and proofread. You will receive feedback from me on your postings twice during the semester.

Mid-term Paper (20%): 5-6 page paper on one or more of the readings from the first half of the semester. See assignment for detailed instructions. You will be required to turn in a complete first draft of the midterm paper and participate in a peer review; students failing to turn in a complete first draft on time or to participate fully in the peer review will lose a full letter grade (10 percentage points) from their grade for the midterm.

Final Paper (20%): 6-7 page paper on one or more of the readings from the second half of the semester. You will be required to turn in a topic proposal, complete a first draft of the final paper, and participate in a peer review; students failing to turn in a complete first draft on time or to participate in the peer review will lose a full letter grade (10 percentage points) from their midterm grade. Part of your grade for the paper will come from the quality of your topic proposal.

Participation and Reading Quizzes (20%): Includes active in-class participation and in-class reading quizzes. In-class reading quizzes—which may include short-answer, short essay, or other formats—will be unannounced and may not be made up; the two lowest quiz grades will be dropped at the end of the semester.

Grading Scale:

Final grades will be determined on the basis of the following rubric, and plus/minus grades will be assigned for the final grade. The University does not recognize the grade of A+.

A (94-100); A- (90-93); B+ (87-89); B (84-86); B- (80-83);
C+ (77-79); C (74-76); C- (70-73); D+ (67-69); D (64-66);
D- (60-63); F (0-59).

Attendance Policy:

Prompt and consistent attendance is a required part of your grade for this course. You are allowed up to 3 excused absences, which should be used for illnesses or other unavoidable absences. Students missing more than 3 classes during the semester will lose 5% from their final grade for the class for each additional absence. We will make full use of the class period, and I expect you to arrive on time and stay until the end of class. Frequent late arrivals will add up to additional absences and will impact your grade; furthermore, if you miss a quiz because you have arrived late, you will not be able to make it up or get additional time to finish.

A student who misses classes or other required activities for the observance of a religious holy day should inform me as far in advance of the absence as possible, so that arrangements can be made to complete an assignment within a reasonable time after the absence. Do NOT come to class if you have the flu. Contact me before the class period to let me know your situation.

Accommodations:

The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact the Office of the Dean of Students at 471-6259, 471-6441 TTY.

Academic Integrity:

Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty: I expect all of the work you turn in for my class to be your own. If you use words, perspectives, or information that are not entirely your own, you must quote and cite your sources appropriately. Please consult the *MLA Handbook* for the appropriate guidelines and formats for citing your sources. Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, please visit the Student Judicial Services Web site: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sis>.

Email:

Email will be used for communication about any changes to the schedule; please check your email regularly during the semester.

Laptops and Electronic Devices in Class:

Please do not use laptops or other electronic devices during class, unless you have explicit permission from me. Please turn off your cell phones during class.

Syllabus

(T) January 18:

Introductions; intro to content and themes of course; review of syllabus and class policies.

(H) January 20:

WATCH: *Fire*, d. Deepa Mehta

(T) January 25:

WATCH: *Fire*, d. Deepa Mehta

READ: Ismat Chughtai, "The Quilt"

READ: Gayatri Gopinath, "The Transnational Trajectories of *Fire* and "The Quilt"

(H) January 27:

READ: Shyam Selvadurai, *Funny Boy* (Part 1, pp 1-97)

(T) February 1:

READ: Shyam Selvadurai, *Funny Boy* (Part 2, pp 98-203)

(H) February 3:

READ: Shyam Selvadurai, *Funny Boy* (Part 3, pp 204-305)

READ: Shyam Selvadurai, "Introducing Myself in the Diaspora"

(T) February 8:

DUE: SHORT PAPER #1

READ: Selections from *Same-Sex Love in India* (all available on Blackboard): Vyasa's *Mahabharata*, "Sikhandin's Sex Change" (pp 31-36); Ruth Vanita, "Vatsyayana's *Kamasutra*" (pp 46-53); "*Bhagvata Purana*: The Embrace of Shiva and Vishnu" (pp 69-71); "*Skanda Purana*: Sumedha and Somavan" (pp 72-76); "Somedeva Bhatta's *Kathasaritsagara*: Kalingasena and Somaprabha" (pp 85-89); "*Padma Purana*: Arjuni" (pp 90-93); "Ziauddin Barani: The Khaljis in Love" (pp 131-135); "*The Mirror of Secrets*: 'Akhi' Jamshed Rajgiri" (pp 136-139); "*Haqiqat al-Fuqara*: Poetic Biography of 'Madho Lal' Hussayn" (pp 145-156)

(H) February 10:

READ: Selections from *Same-Sex Love in India* (all available on Blackboard): Ruth Vanita, "Introduction: Modern Indian Materials" (pp 191-217); "Rekhti Poetry: Love between Women" (pp 220-228); "Bankim Chandra Chatterjee: *Indira*" (pp 233-235); "M.K. Gandhi: Reply to a Query" (pp 253-256); "Sharada: 'Farewell'" (pp 267-269)

(T) February 15:

READ: *Chocolate* (pp 1-78)

(H) February 17:

READ: Ismat Chughtai, *The Crooked Line* (Part 1, pp 1-76)

(T) February 22:

READ: Ismat Chughtai, *The Crooked Line* (Part 2, pp 77-243)

(H) February 24:

READ: Ismat Chughtai, *The Crooked Line* (Part 3, pp 244-370)

(T) March 1:

READ: Rakesh Satyal, *Blue Boy* (Part 1, pp 1-146)

(H) March 3:

READ: Rakesh Satyal, *Blue Boy* (Part 2, pp 147-265)

(T) March 8: **DUE: FIRST DRAFT OF MIDTERM PAPER**

Peer review in class

(H) March 10:

NO CLASS: Individual consultations on midterm drafts scheduled for 3/10 and 3/11.

(T) March 15:

SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS

(H) March 17:

SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS

(T) March 23: **DUE: FINAL DRAFT OF MIDTERM PAPER**

WATCH: *My Beautiful Laundrette*, d. Stephen Frears (1985)

(H) March 25:

WATCH: *My Beautiful Laundrette*, d. Stephen Frears (1985)

(T) March 29:

READ: Shani Mootoo, "Out on Main Street"

READ: Gayatri Gopinath, "Impossible Desires: An Introduction"

(H) March 31:

READ: Shani Mootoo, *Cereus Blooms at Night* (Part 1, pp 1-102)

(T) April 5:

READ: Shani Mootoo, *Cereus Blooms at Night* (Part 2, pp 103-188)

(H) April 7:

READ: Shani Mootoo, *Cereus Blooms at Night* (Part 3, pp 189-249)

(T) April 12:

DUE: SHORT PAPER #2

Ginu Kamani, "Ciphers," "Just Between Indians" (CP)

(H) April 14:

Abha Dawesar, *Babyji* (Part 1, pp 1-111)

(T) April 19:

Abha Dawesar, *Babyji* (Part 2, pp 112-219)

(H) April 21: **DUE: TOPIC PROPOSAL FOR FINAL PAPER**
Abha Dawesar, *Babyji* (Part 3, pp 220-354)

(T) April 26:
WATCH: *Monsoon Wedding*, d. Mira Nair (2002)

(H) April 28:
WATCH: *My Brother ... Nikhil*, d. Onir (2005)

(T) May 3: **DUE: COMPLETE DRAFT OF FINAL PAPER**
Peer review in class

(H) May 5:
Short presentations on final papers; Course evaluations

Wednesday, May 11, 4:00 pm
DUE: FINAL PAPER