

INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY IN SOUTH ASIA, Anthropology 240
Bates College, Winter Semester 2012

Steven Kemper, 161 Pettengill, 786-6083

OFFICE HOURS: MW 2:00-4:00

If you need me at other times, give
me a call, e-mail or knock on my door

Final: Wednesday, 1:15pm, April 11th

INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY IN SOUTH ASIA focuses on everyday life in a variety of societies in south Asia--India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and the Himalayan states. It proceeds not so much geographically as topically, concentrating on social practices that dominate south Asian life--caste, family, marriage, ritual, gender relations, and asceticism, using Hinduism as a context to tie these practices together. At the end of the course I want to talk about colonialism and its aftermath because a major issue in the study of south Asian society is not just the changes brought by British rule over the subcontinent, but the way British rule created south Asian "tradition" as it now exists. This year I will take up the career of M.K. Gandhi, as an example of a man whose life embodies influences that are at once indigenous, colonial, and transnational.

My hope is that the course will do three things--increase student interest in one of the world's most interesting and consequential regions, draw a contrast between individualism in societies such as our own and the holism of non-Western societies, and create awareness of the fact that "tradition", not to say "culture" or "civilization," are moving images of the past, always motivated by political, social and economic forces. As South Asia becomes more prosperous, it will develop in ways that will influence (and be shaped by) caste, family, marriage, ritual, gender relations, and asceticism.

REQUIRED BOOKS

1. Eck, Darsan
2. Mines and Lamb, eds., Everyday Life in South Asia
3. Courtright and Harlan, eds., On the Margins of Hindu Marriage
4. Rudolph, Gandhi

RESERVE READINGS

- McGilvray, "Sexual Power and Fertility in Sri Lanka," in Ethnography of Fertility and Birth, pp. 35-73.
- Moreno, "A Bride for Raman," Natural History, March 1989, pp. 6-10.
- Kemper, "Sinhalese Astrology, South Asian Caste Systems, and the Notion of Individuality," Journal of Asian Studies, pp. 477-97.
- Roy, "To the Believers of the Only True God" and Macaulay, "Minute on Education," in Sources of Indian Tradition, pp. 21-49.
- Appadurai, "Number in the Colonial Imagination," in Modernity at Large, pp. 114-35.
- Mines, "Personhood and Rank," in Caste in India, pp. 27-35.

TOPICS AND READINGS

1. Introduction

January 10	The Course
2. Hinduism and History	
January 12	Seeing the Sacred Eck, <u>Darsan</u> , pp. 1-58.
January 17	South Asia Observed: The Hindu Core Eck, <u>Darsan</u> , pp. 59-75.
January 19	Hinduism Mines, "The Hindu Gods in a South Asian Village," in Mines and Lamb, pp. 236-48, and Parrish, "God-Chariots in a Garden of Castes," in Mines and Lamb, pp. 174-89.
January 24	South Asian Observed: Islam and Colonialism
January 26	Caste Systems Mines, "Personhood and Rank," in Mines, <u>Caste in India</u> , pp. 27-35 and Marriott, "The Feast of Love," in Mines and Lamb, pp. 249-60.
January 31	Wedding of the Goddess
February 2	The Creaturely World Nicholas, "The Effectiveness of the Hindu Sacraments," in Harlan and Courtright, pp. 137-59.
February 7	High and Low Viramma, "High and Low Castes in Kirani," in Mines and Lamb, pp. 190-98 Dickey, "Anjali's Prospects," in Mines and Lamb, pp. 214-28.
February 9	Caste Ranking
February 14	Below Caste Read online, <u>New International</u> , July 2005, "Combatting Caste," "Caste Out," "View from the top," "I, A Brahman," (www.newint.org/issues/2005/07/01/index.php), scroll down to the individual articles.
February 16	EXAMINATION

February 18-26 Winter Recess

3. Genders and Life Cycles

February 28 Marriage

McGilvray, "Sexual Power and Fertility in Sri Lanka," pp. 25- 73, on reserve, and Moreno, "A Bride for Raman," pp. 6-10, on reserve.

March 1 and Astrology

Kemper, "Sinhalese Astrology, South Asian Caste Systems, and the Notion of Individuality," pp. 477-97, on reserve.

March 6 Astrology

Wadley, "One Straw from a Broom cannot Sweep," in Mines and Lamb, pp. 11-22.

March 8 Domesticity

Gold, "New Light in the House," in Mines and Lamb, pp. 86--99.

Seizer, "Offstage with Special Drama Actresses in Tamil Nadu," in Mines and Lamb, pp. 116-31.

Hancock, "The Dilemmas of Domesticity," in Harlan and Courtright, pp. 60-91.

March 13 Renunciation, Female and Male

Wadley, "No Longer a Wife," in Harlan and Courtright, pp. 92-118.

Courtright, "Sati, Sacrifice, and Marriage," in Harland and Courtright, pp. 184-203.

Harlan, "Abandoning Shame," in Harlan and Courtright, pp. 204-27.

March 15 ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH PAPERS DUE

IN-CLASS VIDEO

4. Colonialism, Courage, and Conflict

March 20 Colonial Culture

Roy, "To the Believers of the Only True God," and Macaulay, "Minute on Education," pp. 21-49, on reserve.

March 22	Colonial Power Raheja, "The Erasure of Everyday Life in Colonial Ethnography," in Mines and Lamb, pp. 199-213, and Appadurai, "Number in the Colonial Imagination," pp. 114-35, on reserve.
March 27	Gandhi's Work Rudolph, <u>Gandhi</u> .
March 27	Gandhi's World
April 3	Taking Darsan from Gandhi Kumar, "Why do Hindus and Muslims Fight? Children and History in India," in Mines and Lamb, pp. 337-356.
April 5	Summary and review

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Final grades will depend on four forms of evaluation:

- an in-class examination on February 15 (25 %)
- a research paper, due March 15 (25%)
- a final examination (35%)
- class participation (15%)

In class I will try to encourage everyone to voice their opinions. But I am not very good at drawing out people who do not raise their hands. Help me out--raise you hand, speak up, interrupt. Allocating 15% of the final grade to class participation reappears a gentle form of coercion, but I believe learning to talk in a public setting is as important as learning to think analytically or use a computer. Students often assume that they are being judged on the content of their comments. I judge students merely on whether they say something. They are no dumb comments--there are only students who do not contribute to class and students who do. Make your views known, whether it is the first day of class or late March.

THE RESEARCH PAPER

What I would like you to do for the research requirement for this course is to write a paper--of 8 pages or so--critiquing or commenting on one of the course's readings by drawing on ethnographic material from the library. The first part of the assignment is to lay out what you find interesting (or unconvincing) in the reading; the second part of the assignment requires research on your part.

Your job is to put the reading in some larger intellectual context, which means that I want you to do one of several things, beginning with important points raised in the article or book you've chosen:

1. Compare the issue under discussion to some other part of south Asian life--another time, another region, another community. We've talked largely about caste in a village context. What happens to caste in urban settings? Is the North different from the South? Taking darsan is a central act in Hindu religious life, but it also plays a role in the way ordinary people relate to movie stars and politicians. How does the one differ from the other? Are the Hindu gods nowadays being treated more and more like movie-stars?

2. Since Hindu bodies are forever changing throughout the life cycle, men and women have to do different things as they grow older--occupy different social spaces, change their diets, and alter their dress. Consider what changes characterize the lives of the people of a particular jati or religious sect. How do these changes in turn affect the way people relate to other kinds of people? You've learned the general model in class. Apply it to a particular case.

3. For some readings, you can put the issue in that context by thinking about the competing claims of text and context. What does the textual tradition, for instance, say about life-cycle rituals? What differences appear when one begins to focus on a particular caste's observance of those rituals? A particular sect?

4. Simply look more deeply into the material by way of further reading in the library. Doing well on this assignment requires taking on an issue from your reading and expanding on it--not by way of your feelings about it but by investigating other sources.

5. What other questions need to be asked of this material and why? Approaching the paper from this perspective requires more argumentation than simply asserting, "I think Rudolph should have discussed Gandhi's relationship to his wife and children." Of course it is entirely legitimate to raise this issue on general grounds but I want to hear why Rudolph's treatment of Gandhi is itself flawed because she leaves out wife and children. I want to hear that what she says about Gandhi is simply "untrue" because she neglects to talk about matters such as family.

6 Some parts of Hindu tradition--astrology, dowry, arranged marriage, and caste itself--look to be very ancient. The fact of the matter is more complicated. When did such practices arise and what they they displace? What political and economic circumstances lead to the inauguration of these practices? Was colonialism involved? If so, how is it that Western influence made India more Indian?

I'd like you to begin the paper by telling me explicitly in paragraph one, which of these approaches you are going to follow in the paper. Make it clear what you take to be the problem at issue in the paper, indicating that you are going to approach that problem in terms laid out in suggestion 1 or 2 or whatever.

Ladd Library has a great collection of south Asian materials. Some of it is in book form; some in periodicals--American Ethnologist, Cultural Anthropology, Contributions to Indian Sociology, Comparative Studies in Society and History, Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute are leading examples. It might be helpful to look through Annual Reviews in Anthropology to get your bearings in the beginning.

You will not be thwarted by lack of material, and you can also get ideas by visiting the various south Asian newsgroups and sites on the web. Another obvious source of

bibliographical assistance is the Reference sections at the rear of Mines and Lamb and Harlan and Courtright.

Reference your sources at the end of the paper and cite evidence as you build your case by way of embedding citations, e.g., (Ghosh, 1982, pp. 53-102).

Doing well on this paper involves more than writing a convincing, well-constructed paper. It requires locating sources in the library in a skillful way.

Students are responsible for understanding the Bates College statements on academic honesty, crediting of sources, and plagiarism.

All students are responsible for reading and understanding the Bates College statement on academic honesty, crediting of sources, and plagiarism.