**Women Writers of South Asia**

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Office hours: Mondays 3:30-5:30 pm or by appointment

**Course abbreviation**

WOMENWRITERSOFSOASIA

**Short description (500 characters)**

This course introduces students to South Asian women’s writing in the colonial and postcolonial periods, focusing on how these writers explore issues of identity, violence, and belonging in predominantly male literary traditions. It considers how poetry, short stories, novels, and autobiographies by South Asian women offer unique insight into new meanings of gender, work, and family that accompanied the Independence movement and Partition and recent transformations introduced by globalization.

**Long description**

This course introduces students to women’s writing in South Asia in the colonial and postcolonial periods, focusing on how South Asian women writers explore issues of identity, violence, and belonging in predominantly male literary traditions. In particular, it considers how poetry, short stories, novels, and autobiographies by South Asian women offer unique insight into new meanings of gender, work, and family that accompanied the Indian Independence Movement and the Partition of India and Pakistan, as well as more recent transformations introduced by globalization. We will be motivated by two interrelated concerns: 1) how can we understand the question of women’s voices and “agency” in the South Asian context? And 2) how do women writers mobilize the category of gender to define alternative understandings of “individual” and “community” in this region? In order to answer these questions, we will trace the intersections between gender, caste, class, religion, and sexuality in women’s fiction and non-fiction writing, giving particular regard to concepts such as “tradition,” “modernity,” “nation,” and “genre.”

**Learning Objectives (500 characters)**

By the end of the course, students will be able to demonstrate an in depth understanding of the socio-cultural, historical, and rhetorical problematics shaping colonial and postcolonial women’s writing in South Asia. They will also develop tools to draw connections between the particular constraints on South Asian women’s writing with theoretical debates on women’s writing across colonial/postcolonial contexts and express these connections through close reading and critical analysis.

**Core Curriculum Learning Goals Met by this Course**

This course fulfills the SAS Core Curriculum requirements for Arts and the Humanities. Upon completion of this course, students will therefore be able to: **1) examine critically philosophical and other theoretical issues concerning the nature of reality, human experience, knowledge, value, and/or cultural production** in relation to South Asia; and 2**) analyze arts and/or literature in themselves in relation to the specific histories, values, languages, cultures, and technologies** of South Asia.

**Required texts**

Course readings uploaded to the Sakai course website at <https://sakai.rutgers.edu/portal>

Desai, Anita. 2000. *Clear Light of Day*. New York: Mariner Books.

Hossain, Rokeya Sakhawat. 1988. *Sultana's Dream: A Feminist Utopia and Selections from The Secluded*

*Ones*, edited and translated by Roushan Jahan. Afterword by Hanna Papanek. New York:

The Feminist Press at The City University of New York.

Bama. 2005. *Sangati: Events*. Translated by Lakshmi Holmstrom. New Delhi: Oxford University

Press.

Ali, Monica. 2003. *Brick Lane*. London: Doubleday.

**Course Requirements**

Attendance:

Because this is a reading-intensive and discussion-based course, attendance and participation are compulsory and will be an important component of your final grade. Each student is allowed two unexcused absences for the semester, after which your attendance grade will be lowered by a letter for each additional unexcused absence. This means that your attendance grade will drop to a B if you miss three classes and to a C if you miss four classes, and so forth.

**If you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University absence reporting website https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/ to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email will automatically be sent to me.**

Excused absences include religious holidays (please notify me in advance), family emergencies, transportation emergencies, health emergencies, and scheduled visits to the doctor (in which case, students should bring a note from their doctor). Students who find that they need to be excused for a long period of time for medical or other reasons should contact their college dean and ask the dean to notify all their professors of their absence.

Participation:

As class participation is a requirement of this course, students must come ready to discuss the texts chosen for that day. **Not having read the assigned texts for class is equivalent to an absence. Please make sure to have ordered and received all the relevant texts in time for the start class. You are not allowed to have an online copy of the text—you will need to have it in print form of some kind.** Tardiness, inattention, and not participating actively detract from the learning experience of others and will not be tolerated.

Participation is assessed through your in-class questions and comments, completion of in-class quizzes and exercises, small group work, and office hour visits.

Reading Responses:

As part of this course, you will be responsible for writing and posting eight 300-word (or longer) reading responses on Sakai. The purpose of these responses is to help you engage critically with the readings and to formulate written queries, hypotheses, and arguments pertaining to them that will inform both class discussions, as well as your paper writing process. I therefore expect these responses to be well composed and thoughtfully argued.

Each response must discuss one or more of the readings for the upcoming class and must be posted by midnight the night before the upcoming class. Occasionally, I will give you prompts in class or post them on Sakai to help guide you as you write a response. The due dates for your responses are marked in the syllabus below. **No late responses will be accepted.**

Reading responses will be graded on a scale of 10 points each. They will be assessed on the basis of (1) your articulation of a specific hypothesis or argument about some aspect of the readings (2 pts), (2) your incorporation of examples from the readings to support your hypothesis or argument (2 pts), (3) the coherence of your sentences and paragraphs (2 pts), (4) the inclusion of a conclusion that ties together the main points of your response and relates them to your hypothesis or argument (2 pts), (5) your proper use of spelling and grammar (1 pt), and (6) whether your response is on time (1 pt).

Oral Presentation:

Each student will give one 15-20 minute oral presentation over the course of the semester. The presentation should engage with all the readings assigned on that day, discussing their main arguments, and raise one or two guiding questions for class discussion. I strongly encourage you to come talk to me during office hours before your presentation day.

Papers:

There will be two papers over the course of the semester, a midterm paper of five pages and a final one of eight pages. In advance of the second paper, you will hand in an annotated bibliography along with a prospectus outlining the research question and argument of your paper. Late papers will lose one letter grade for each week they are submitted after the deadline.

**Grading**

Attendance/Participation: 20%

Reading Responses: 20%

Oral Presentation: 10%

Paper 1 (5 pgs): 20%

Paper 2 (8 pgs): 30% (including Prospectus and Annotated Bibliography)

**Extra Credit**

You may receive extra credit (up to 2% of your final grade) by attending literature, South Asian Studies, or women’s and gender studies oriented extra-curricular events scheduled throughout the term. To obtain extra credit, you must 1) receive approval from me for the event in advance of the event, and 2) write a one-page summary of the event that demonstrates your understanding of it and how it relates to this course.

**Plagiarism**

Rutgers University views plagiarism as a very serious offense. Plagiarism is the use of another person’s words, ideas, or results without giving that person appropriate credit. To avoid plagiarism, every direct quotation must be identified by quotation marks or appropriate indentation and both direct quotation and paraphrasing must be cited properly. Some common examples of plagiarism include copying something word for word (from an oral, printed, or electronic source) without proper attribution, paraphrasing without proper attribution, or submitting a purchased, downloaded, or one’s own already-submitted paper. Cases of plagiarism will be pursued following university regulations, which can be found at http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml.

Wikipedia and other non-peer reviewed websites are not acceptable sources for papers and reading responses.

**Use of Electronic Devices**

Computers, cell phones, and all other technological devices (beepers, iPods, MP3 players, etc.) must be turned off during class out of respect for the instructor and fellow students.

**Disability Support Services**

Students who may be requesting accommodations due to disabilities are encouraged to familiarize themselves with procedures and policies regarding disability support services at the following website: http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/. It is recommended that students seeking accommodations begin filing paperwork as soon as possible as the documentation review process may take up to 30 business days. Students are encouraged to speak with teachers about these issues at the beginning of the term. All such conversations will be kept strictly confidential.

**Syllabus**

Please note that the following reading schedule is provisional, as I am open to working with you to amend it according to the pace and interests of the class.

Week 1

**Wed 9/4**

Introduction to the course

**Who are Women and What is Women’s Writing?**

Week 2

**Mon 9/9**

Tharu, Susie, and K. Lalita. 1993. Parts II-III excerpted from Introduction. In *Women Writing in India, Vol II: The 20th Century*, edited by S. Tharu and K. Lalita. New York: The Feminist Press at The City University of New York, 15-37.

Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. 1984. Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses. *Boundary 2* 12/13 (Spring-Autumn): 333-358.

**Mothers and Daughters**

**Wed 9/11**

Shree, Geetanjali. 2000. Chapters 1-10 in *Mai: A Novel*. Translated by Nita Kumar. New Delhi: Zubaan, 1-54.

Week 3

**Sun 9/15**

Reading response 1 due on Sakai by midnight.

**Mon 9/16**

Shree, Geetanjali. 2000. Chapters 11-29 in *Mai: A Novel*. Translated by Nita Kumar. New Delhi: Zubaan, 55-136.

**Wed 9/18**

Shree, Geetanjali. 2000. Chapters 30-35 in *Mai: A Novel*. Translated by Nita Kumar. New Delhi: Zubaan, 137-157.

Kumar, Nita. 2000. Afterword: Mai: A Discussion. In *Mai: A Novel*. New Delhi: Zubaan, 161-208.

Week 4

**Sun 9/22**

Reading response 2 due on Sakai by midnight.

**Mon 9/23**

Sobti, Krishna. 2002. *Listen Girl!* Translated by Shivnath. New Delhi: Katha, 7-107.

**Sisters and Brothers**

**Wed 9/25**

Desai, Anita. 2000. Chapter I in *Clear Light of Day*. New York: Mariner Books, 1-44.

Week 5

**Sun 9/29**

Reading response 3 due on Sakai by midnight.

**Mon 9/30**

Desai, Anita. 2000. Chapters II and III in *Clear Light of Day*. New York: Mariner Books, 45-141.

**Wed 10/2**

Desai, Anita. 2000. Chapter IV in *Clear Light of Day*. New York: Mariner Books, 142-183.

Week 6

**Sun 10/6**

Reading response 4 due on Sakai by midnight.

**Husbands and Wives**

**Mon 10/7**

Desai, Anita, Feroza Jussawalla and Reed Way Dasenbrock. 1992. “Anita Desai.” In *Interviews with Writers of the Post-colonial World*. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 157-179.

Parekh, Pushpa Naidu. 1996. Redefining the Postcolonial Female Self: Women in Anita Desai’s *Clear Light of Day*. In *Between the Lines: South Asians and Postcoloniality*, edited by D. Bahri and M. Vasudeva. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 270-283.

**Wed 10/9**

Ambai. 1992. Wings I. In *A Purple Sea*. Translated by Lakshmi Holmstrom. Chennai: Manas, 30-45.

Ambai. 1992. Wings II. In *A Purple Sea*. Translated by Lakshmi Holmstrom. Chennai: Manas, 46-68.

Pant, Gaura (“Diddi”). 2005. Band Ghari. In *Diddi: My Mother’s Voice*. Translated by Ira Pande. New

Delhi: Penguin, 78-87.

Pant, Gaura (“Diddi”). 2005. Lal Haveli. In *Diddi: My Mother’s Voice*. Translated by Ira Pande. New

Delhi: Penguin, 95-103.

Week 7

**Sun 10/13**

Reading response 5 due on Sakai by midnight

**Mon 10/14**

Antherjanam, Lalithambika. 1991. The Goddess of Revenge. In *Women Writing in India, Vol II: The 20th Century*, edited by S. Tharu and K. Lalita. Translated by Gita Krishnakutty. New York: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 487-501.

Sundar Rajan, Rajeswari. 1993. In the Name of the Husband: Testimony and Taboo in the Wife’s Discourse. In *Real and Imagined Women: Gender, Culture, and Postcolonialism*. New York: Routledge, 83-102.

**Female Desire and Sexuality**

**Wed 10/16**

Desai, Anita. 1994. Preface. In *The Quilt and Other Stories*. New York: The Sheep Meadow Press, vii-xi.

Chughtai, Ismat. 1994. The Quilt. In *The Quilt and Other Stories*. Translated by Syeda Hameed. New York: The Sheep Meadow Press, 5-12.

Chughtai, Ismat. 2012. In the Name of Those Married Women… In *A Life in Words: Memoirs*. Translated by M. Asaduddin. New Delhi: Penguin, 21-42.

Week 8

**Mon 10/21**

Chughtai, Ismat. 2008. Terhi Lakeer. In *Same-Sex Love in India: A Literary History*, edited by R. Vanita and S. Kidwai. Translated by Ruth Vanita. New Delhi: Penguin, 321-328.

Gopal, Priyamvada. 2005. Habitations of Womanhood: Ismat Chughtai’s Secret History of Modernity. In *Literary Radicalism in India: Gender, Nation, and the Transition to Independence*. New York: Routledge, 65-88.

**What’s in a Name?**

**Wed 10/23**

*Film screening of* She Write (2005, 55min)*, Tamil with English subtitles, directed by Anjali Montiero and K.P. Jayasankar.*

**Fri 10/25**

Paper 1 due on Sakai by 5pm.

Week 9

**Mon 10/28**

Bhandari, Mannu. 2006. Spectacles. In *To Each Her Own: An Anthology of Contemporary Hindi Short*

*Stories*, edited and translated by Vandana Singh. New Delhi: National Book Trust, 119-133.

Bhandari, Mannu. 1999. Salt. In *Imagining the Other*, edited by Sara Rai. Translated by Rana Nayar. New Delhi: Katha, 15-26.

Ambai. 1992. Squirrel. In *A Purple Sea*. Translated by Lakshmi Holmstrom. Chennai: Manas, 81-92.

**Wed 10/30**

Barthes, Roland. 1977. Death of the Author. In *Image, Music, Text*. Translated by Stephen Heath.

New York: Hill and Wang, 142-148.

Foucault, Michel. 1977. What is an Author? In *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, edited by Donald Bouchard. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 113-138.

Week 10

**Sun 11/3**

Reading response 6 due on Sakai by midnight.

**Mon 11/4**

Butler, Judith. 1993. Gender is Burning: Questions of Appropriation and Subversion. In *Dangerous**Liasions: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 381-395.

**Ideal Women and Feminist Utopias**

**Wed 11/6**

Naidu, Sarojini. 1905. Selections from *The Golden Threshold*. New York: John Lane Company.

Naidu, Sarojini. 1917. The Temple. In *The Broken Wing: Songs of Love, Death, and Destiny*. New York:

John Lane Company, 83-120.

Week 11

**Sun 11/10**

Reading response 7 due on Sakai by midnight.

**Mon 11/11**

Naidu, Sarojini. 1919. Nilambuja: The Fantasy of a Poet's Mood. In *Speeches and Writings*. Madras:

G.A. Natesan & Co., 1-4.

Naidu, Sarojini. 1919. A Vision of India's Future Women. In *Speeches and Writings*. Madras: G.A.

Natesan & Co., 172-176.

Alexander, Meena. 1985. Sarojini Naidu: Romanticism and Resistance. *Economic and Political Weekly* 20 (43):WS68-WS71.

Sinha, Mrinalini. 2008. Gender in the Critiques of Colonialism and Nationalism: Locating the 'Indian Woman'. In *Women and Social Reform in Modern India: A Reader*, edited by S. Sarkar and T. Sarkar. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 452-472.

**Wed 11/13**

Hossain, Rokeya Sakhawat. 1988. *Sultana's Dream: A Feminist Utopia and Selections from The Secluded Ones*, edited and translated by Roushan Jahan. Afterword by Hanna Papanek. New York: The Feminist Press at The City University of New York, 1-85.

**Individuals and Communities**

Week 12

**Sun 11/17**

Reading response 8 due on Sakai by midnight.

**Mon 11/18**

Bama. 2005. Excerpts from *Sangati: Events*. Translated by Lakshmi Holmstrom. New Delhi: Oxford University Press; xi-xxiii (optional), 15-31 (beginning part of Ch 2), 45-59 (Ch 5), 111-123 (Ch 12).

Scott, Joan. 1992. “Experience.” In *Feminists Theorize the Political*, edited by J. Butler and J. Scott. New York: Routledge, 22-40.

**Wed 11/20**

Devi, Mahasweta. 1988. Breast-Giver. In *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*. Translated by Gayatri Spivak. New York: Methuen, 222-240.

Week 13

**Mon 11/25**

*No class due to Thanksgiving.*

**Wed 11/27**

*No class due to Thanksgiving.*

**Globalization and Women’s Labor**

Week 14

**Sun 12/1**

Paper 2 Prospectus and annotated bibliography due on Sakai by midnight.

**Mon 12/2**

Ali, Monica. 2003. *Brick Lane*. London: Doubleday.

**Wed 12/4**

Ali, Monica. 2003. *Brick Lane*. London: Doubleday.

Week 15

**Mon 12/9**

Ali, Monica. 2003. *Brick Lane*. London: Doubleday.

**Wed 12/11**

Review of course.

Week 16

**Mon 12/16**

Paper 2 due on Sakai by 5pm.