**Gender, Nation, and Literature in South Asia**

Professor Preetha Mani

B-307 Lucy Stone Hall (Livingston Campus)

preetha.mani@rutgers.edu

**Course Abbreviation**

GENDERNATIONLITSASIA

**Short description (500 characters)**

This course focuses on how representations of the Indian woman have shaped ideas of citizenship and belonging in colonial and postcolonial South Asia. We will use two main lenses, social reform and law, to examine how images of women in literature articulate meanings of gender, caste, class, and religion in India. Additionally, this course seeks to strengthen skills in literary and historiographical analysis and academic writing through written assignments and a final research paper.

**Long description**

“Woman is endowed with the passive qualities of chastity, modesty, devotion and power of self-sacrifice in greater measure than man is.”

-Rabindranath Tagore, “Woman”

When Tagore gave this description of the modern Indian woman during his lecture tour in the US in the early twentieth century, he was referencing a fairly new idea of who the modern Indian woman was, one that had begun to take shape during the colonial era. How and why did the Indian woman become such a central topic of literary and public debate among Indian writers and political leaders? What are the changing characteristics of this figure, and how do they reference key moments in South Asian history? This course answers these questions by examining literary representations of the modern Indian woman and the ways they have fashioned popular understandings of national belonging and community identity in South Asia. We will use two main lenses, social reform and law, to trace the ways that representations of women in literature articulate meanings of gender, caste, class, and religion. We will read novels and short stories by influential South Asian writers such as Tagore, Sharatchandra, Premchand, and Manto, and our literary analyses will be guided by texts in South Asian historiography and social theory, as well as films. Additionally, this course seeks to strengthen skills in literary and historiographical analysis and academic writing through in-class discussion on the process of academic writing, class presentations, written assignments, and a final research paper.

**Course objectives (500 characters)**

By the end of the course, students will be able to identify recurring literary representations of gender in the Indian subcontinent, explain how they respond to social, cultural, and political changes over time, and relate these connections to theoretical debates on citizenship and community belonging in the South Asian context more broadly. Students will furthermore develop skills in academic writing in the field of South Asian history and literature.

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

This course also fulfills the SAS Core Curriculum requirements for Cognitive Skills and Processes: Writing and Communication [WCd Goals t, u, and v]. Upon completion of this course, students will therefore be able to communicate effectively in modes appropriate to the study of South Asian history and literature (WCd Goal t), evaluate and critically assess sources and use the conventions of attribution and citation correctly (WCd Goal u), and analyze and synthesize information and ideas from multiple sources to generate new insights (WCd Goal v).

**Required texts**

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

**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 printed out all the relevant texts in time for the start of class. You are not allowed to have an online copy of the text—you will need to have it in print form.** 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 I will specify in the class prior to the response’s due date. Your response must be posted by midnight the night before the upcoming class. Occasionally, I will also post prompts for your response on Sakai by the Sunday before your reading response is due. The due dates for all reading 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 (2pts), (2) your incorporation of examples from the readings to support your hypothesis or argument (2pts), (3) the coherence of your sentences and paragraphs (2pts), (4) the inclusion of a conclusion that ties together the main points if your response and relates them to your hypothesis or argument (2pts), (5) your proper use of spelling and grammar (1pt), and (6) whether your response is on time (1pt).

Oral Presentation:

Each student will give one 10-15-minute oral presentation at the end of the semester. Your presentation should engage closely with the readings and research questions you are examining in your final paper, conveying the depth and breadth of your understanding of the readings and how you will use your final paper to respond to the research questions you have developed.

Papers:

There will be two papers over the course of the semester, a midterm paper of six to eight pages and a final one of ten to twelve 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 (6-8 pgs): 20%

Paper 2 (10-12 pgs): 30% (including Prospectus and Annotated Bibliography)

**Extra Credit**

You may receive extra credit (up to 2% of your final grade) by attending South Asian studies, literature, history, 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 the event 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.

**Reading Schedule**

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 One

**Tue:**

Introduction to the course.

**Social Reform and the Indian Woman**

**Thurs:**

Geraldine Forbes, “Reform in the Nineteenth Century: Efforts to Modernize Women’s Roles,” in *The New Cambridge History of India: Women in Modern India*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 10-31.

*Week 1 writing instruction: writing reading responses – This week we will focus some portion of the class discussion on how to structure reading responses based on the critical analysis of texts through close reading.*

Week Two

**Mon:**

300-word Reading Response 1 due on Sakai by midnight.

**Tues:**

O. Chandumenon, *Indulekha*, translated by Anita Devasia, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006).

**Thurs:**

O. Chandumenon, *Indulekha*, translated by Anita Devasia, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006).

*Week 2 writing instruction: writing reading responses – This week we will spend some time reading and evaluating each other’s reading responses according to the criteria outlined in the previous week.*

Week Three

**Mon:**

300-word Reading Response 2 due on Sakai by midnight.

**Tues:**

Partha Chatterjee, "The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question," in *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*, edited by Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 233-253.

**Widows, Wives, and Prostitutes**

**Thurs:**

Rabindranath Tagore, Chapters 1-25 *Chokher Bali*, in *The Tagore Omnibus, Volume I*, translated by Sreejata Guha, (New Delhi: Penguin, 2005), 3-89.

*Week 3 writing instruction: brainstorming ideas about texts – This week we will focus some portion of the class discussion on using free writing as inroads to thinking about texts.*

Week Four

**Mon:**

300-word Reading Response 3 due on Sakai by midnight.

**Tues:**

Rabindranath Tagore, Chapters 26-38, *Chokher Bali*, in *The Tagore Omnibus, Volume I*, translated by Sreejata Guha, (New Delhi: Penguin, 2005), 89-139.

**Thurs:**

Rabindranath Tagore, Chapters 39-55, *Chokher Bali*, in *The Tagore Omnibus, Volume I*, translated by Sreejata Guha, (New Delhi: Penguin, 2005), 139-209.

*Week 4 writing instruction: developing a paper topic – This week we will focus some time on how to develop a paper topic through noticing and focusing on tensions and contradictions within texts.*

Week Five

**Mon:**

300-word Reading Response 4 due on Sakai by midnight.

**Tues:**

Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Domestic Cruelty and the Birth of the Subject," in *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press: 2000), 117-148.

**Thurs:**

Chakrabarty continued.

*Week 5 writing instruction: developing a thesis statement – This week we will devote some discussion to what a thesis statement is and how to develop one.*

Week Six

**Mon:**

300-word Reading Response 5 due on Sakai by midnight.

**Tues:**

Saratchandra Chattopadhyay, Chapters 1-9, in *Devdas*, translated by Sreejata Guha, (New Delhi: Penguin, 2002), 1-60.

**Thurs:**

Saratchandra Chattopadhyay, Chapters 10-16, in *Devdas*, translated by Sreejata Guha, (New Delhi: Penguin, 2002), 61-128.

*Week 6 writing instruction: asking the So what? question – This week we will focus some class time to identifying the larger relevance of an argument and writing conclusions.*

**Intersections of Gender and Caste**

Week Seven

**Tues:**

Premchand, “The Thakur’s Well” and “The Shroud,” in *The Oxford India Premchand*, translated by David Rubin, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004), 83-86 and 233-240.

**Thurs:**

Imayam, “The Binding Vow,” in *The Oxford India Anthology of Tamil Dalit Writing*, translated by Lakshmi Holmstrom, (New Delhi: Oxford India Press, 2012), 57-75.

Bama, “Half-Sari,” in *Harum-Scarum Saar and Other Stories*, translated by N. Ravi Shanker, (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 2006), 71-80.

*Week 7 writing instruction: structuring an essay – This week we will spend some class time discussing the various elements and structure of an academic essay.*

**The New Woman**

Week Eight

**Tues:**

Premchand, "Miss Padma" and "Desire," in *The Oxford India Premchand*, translated by David Rubin, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004), 200-205 and 364-369.

Charu Gupta, “Portrayal of Women in Premchand’s Stories: A Critique,” in *Social Scientist*, 19: 5/6 (1991), 88-113.

**Thurs:**

Mohan Rakesh, “Miss Pall,” in *Death in Delhi and Other Stories*, translated by Gordon Roadarmel (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 105-131.

Nirmal Verma, “Birds,” in *Anthology of Hindi Stories*,translated and edited by B. Sahani (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1993), 262-296.

**Fri:**

Paper 1 due on Sakai by 5pm.

Week Nine

No classes (spring break).

**Women Writing the Nation**

Week Ten

**Tues:**

Susie Tharu and K. Lalita, "The Twentieth Century: Women Writing the Nation," in *Women Writing in India: Volume II, the 20th Century*, (New York: The Feminist Press at The City University of New York, 1993), 43-116.

**Thurs:**

Saroj Pathak, "Quandary," "The Vicious Round," and "The Vow," in *Whom Can I Tell?  How Can I Explain?* translated by Shirin Kudchedkar, (Calcutta: Stree, 2002).

*Week 10 writing instruction: finding external sources – This week we will discuss how to begin researching and identifying relevant external sources for a research paper.*

Week Eleven

**Mon:**

Reading Response 6 due on Sakai by midnight.

**Tues:**

Saroj Pathak, "Divorcee," in *Whom Can I Tell?  How Can I Explain?*, translated by Shirin Kudchedkar, (Calcutta: Stree, 2002).

Triveni, “The Final Decision,” in *Women Writing in India: Volume II, the 20th Century*, translated by Seemanthini Niranjana and Tejaswini Niranjana, (New York: The Feminist Press at The City University of New York, 1993), 285-291.

**Thurs:**

Rochana Majumdar, “Nationalizing the Joint Family: The Hindu Code Debates, 1955-56,” in *Marriage and Modernity: Family Values in Colonial Bengal*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 206-237.

*Week 11 writing instruction: creating an annotated bibliography – This week we will talk about how to narrow down and analyze external sources, as well as how to cite properly and what citation methods one can use.*

**Contested Citizenships**

Week Twelve

**Mon:**

300-word Reading Response 7 due on Sakai by midnight.

**Tues:**

Sa’adat Hasan Manto, “The Black Shalwar,” translated by Ralph Russell, in *Black Margins: Sa’adat Hasan Manto Stories*, (New Delhi: Katha, 2001), 57-73.

Sa’adat Hasan Manto, “Insult,” in *Black Margins: Sa’adat Hasan Manto Stories*, translated by M. Asaduddin, (New Delhi: Katha, 2001), 82-104.

**Thurs:**

Sa’adat Hasan Manto, “Khushia,” “Babu Gopi Nath,” and “Mummy,” in *Saadat Hasan Manto: Selected Stories*, translated by Khalid Hasan, (New Delhi: Penguin, 2007), 203-256.

*Week 12 writing instruction: writing a paper prospectus – This week we will talk about the purpose and structure of a paper prospectus.*

Week Thirteen

**Mon:**

300-word Reading Response 8 due on Sakai by midnight.

**Tues:**

Amrita Pritam, "Pinjar (The Skeleton)," in *Pinjar: The Skeleton and Other Stories*, translated by Khushwant Singh, (New Delhi: Tara Press, 2009).

**Thurs:**

Amrita Pritam, "Pinjar (The Skeleton)," in *Pinjar: The Skeleton and Other Stories*, translated by Khushwant Singh, (New Delhi: Tara Press, 2009).

*Week 13 writing instruction: purpose and organization of paper presentations – This week we will spend some time discussing what to include in an academic presentation that is based on a research paper, such as how to most effectively organize and convey one’s research topic and questions, his/her paper argument and evidence, and the larger relevance and questions his/her argument might raise.*

Week Fourteen

**Tues:**

Film screening of *Roja* (1992, 137 min), Tamil with English subtitles, directed by Mani Ratnam.

Nicholas Dirks, “The Home and the Nation: Consuming Culture and Politics in *Roja*,” in *Pleasure and the Nation: The History, Politics and Consumption of Public Culture in India*, edited by Rachel Dwyer and Christopher Pinney, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), 161-185.

**Thurs:**

*Roja* continued.

**Fri:**

Paper 2 Annotated Bibliography and Prospectus due on Sakai by 8pm.

**Class Presentations**

Week Fifteen

**Tues:**

Presentations.

**Thurs:**

Presentations.

Week Sixteen

**Thurs:**

Paper 2 due on Sakai by 8pm.