

ES/WS 339
South Asian Migrants: Culture & Politics
Tuesdays and Thursdays 3-4:15pm
KUY 301

Dr. Monisha Das Gupta
Ethnic Studies and Women's Studies
306 George Hall
956-2914
dasgupta@hawaii.edu

Office Hours: Tuesdays: 10am-12 noon, Fridays: 10 am-11am and by appointment

For all updates on the syllabus see: <http://www2.hawaii.edu/~dasgupta/> (The page can also be accessed through the Ethnic Studies Home Page)

Course Description:

This interdisciplinary course examines the overseas migration of South Asians since the nineteenth century. Large communities of migrants from colonial India as well as contemporary South Asia can be found in the U.S., Fiji, Trinidad and Britain. How did they arrive at these far-flung places? How do they go about building their lives and recreating their culture so far away from home in these very different contexts? What common themes run through the experiences of these migrants? This course compares the history and contemporary experiences of South Asian migrants in the U.S., Fiji, Trinidad, and Britain through the lens of culture and politics. Through academic and literary texts as well as films we explore the politics of gender, sexuality, and class relations that shape these communities and cultures. We analyze the lives of South Asian migrants through the themes of racial-ethnic politics, gender relations, identity construction, popular culture, and religion.

* Please use my office hours. If you cannot make those, make an appointment to see me. One-to-one meetings enable us to discuss your ideas, help you with any difficulty you face with the course material, and help me to get to know you better.

* Students who have special needs should make an appointment to see me within the first week of class so that we can ensure your full participation.

Learning Objectives:

The course aims at fostering:

- Ability to think comparatively across societies
- Ability to think and write critically as well as reflectively
- Ability to orally engage with the course material to generate class discussion
- Ability to do group work

Required Readings:

Course Reader will be available at **Professional Image**, 2633 S. King Street, 973-6599.

Books will be available at **Revolution Books**, 2626 King Street, 944-3106

- 1) Amrit Wilson, *Dreams, Questions, Struggles: South Asian Women in Britain* (Pluto, 2006). (Wilson in Course Outline)
- 2) Vijay Prashad, *Karma of Brown Folk* (University of Minnesota Press, 2000). (Prashad in Course Outline)

Grade Distribution:

Take Home Midterm and Final	20% x 2= 40%
1 Movie Review (3 pages):	10%
Weekly Assignment:	2 x 15= 30%
Oral presentations	10%
Participation and Attendance	10%

Course Requirements:

Attendance:

Attendance is mandatory. An attendance sheet will be passed around at the beginning of class. You cannot sign the sheet if you come in late. Early departures or coming late to class - unless by permission - will be considered as absences. You are allowed two unpenalized absences during the semester (this amounts to one week of class) but in all cases of absence, you need to inform me via e-mail. I reserve the right to fail a student whose attendance is irregular. Please understand that if you are absent then you obviously cannot participate in class. Your absences will be reflected in the grade you receive for participation.

Participation:

Speaking and active listening in class counts for participation. The success of this class depends on honest and respectful discussion that engages with the ideas presented in the readings, lectures, videos, and by your classmates. The grade of students who do not participate in class discussion will automatically drop to a "B." If you have problems speaking in a classroom setting, please talk to me about it.

Readings:

You must come to class having done the assigned reading. You cannot participate in class discussions or do the weekly assignments without doing the readings. This is an upper level class. In taking it, you are making a commitment to come to class prepared. Please bring the readings we are covering on a particular day (books or reader or both) to class.

Writing:

All written work for this course needs to be word-processed, grammatical, free of spelling errors, and well-organized. All direct quotations taken from the readings must be cited. A paper that does not cite direct quotes by author and page number or that inadequately paraphrases the readings will receive an "F."

Weekly Assignments: These assignments should be *no more than one page*. They need to be word processed and double spaced. There are no make-ups for these assignments and no e-mail submission. If you are not in class, the assignment will not be accepted.

Take Homes: You will be given questions a week before the exam. The review will be based on your notes and queries about the assignment.

Movie Review: You will be given a short list of movies from which you will select *one*.

Class Presentations:

You will be required to do group presentations on topics that are indicated in the syllabus. I will provide you with the readings on which you will base the presentations. Please schedule a meeting with me at least *three* weeks before the presentation. The oral presentations should be polished and well-organized.

Policies:

Late papers:

All assignments are due at the beginning of the class. The dates on which the papers are due are firm deadlines. You will lose 1/3 of a grade for every day that an assignment is late. For eg., if you submit a A- paper a day late, the grade will be scaled down to a B+.

Absences:

Attendance is mandatory.

Academic honesty:

Any infraction of codes of academic honesty will lead to sanctions from the instructor. You will receive a failing grade if you copy or submit other people's work, or do not properly attribute ideas that are not original to you.

Course Outline:

* Readings from the books are referred to by authors: Wilson, Prashad

* Articles from the 339 Reader are indicated as (R). See Reader for the full reference of the articles listed in the syllabus.

Week 1: Introducing terms and concepts

8/21: Introductions

8/23: Discuss terms: "South Asia," "diaspora," "metropole," "colonialism," "indenture"

Unit I: Two Plantation Societies

Trinidad

Week 2:

- **Weekly Response Due Th (2pts):** Why were Indian workers imported to Trinidad (note 3 points)? Comment on how they were positioned in Trinidadian society.

8/28: Munasinghe, Viranjini, "Foretelling Ethnicity" pp. 43-52 (R)

8/30: Brereton, Bridget, "The Newcomers, 1838-1917" (R); Kale, Madhavi, "Projecting Identities" p. 144-154 (R: Start from "Role of Indian Indentured Workers")

Week 3

- **Weekly Response Due Th (2pts):** Note three major themes in the experiences of indentured women. Why do the authors argue that these women should not be seen as victims?

9/4: Rhoda Reddock, "The Indentureship Experience: Indian Women in Trinidad and Tobago 1845-1917" (R)

9/6: Patricia Mohammed, "Writing Gender into History" (R)

Week 4

- **Weekly Response Due Th (2pts):** Why was there a moral panic about indentured women in the Indian nationalist movement to abolish indenture?

9/11: Niranjana, Tejaswini, "'Left to the Imagination': Indian Nationalism and Female Sexuality" pp. 55-73 (R)

Video: Sachdeva, Riti and Lisa Seepaul, "*Kalapani*"

9/13: Niranjana, Tejaswini, "'Left to the Imagination'" pp. 73-84 (R: Start from "Abolishing Indenture")

Fiji

Week 5

- **Student Presentation Tues on Indo-Trinidadian Identity post-independence**
- **Weekly Response Due Th (2pts):** Construct a Timeline for Indo-Fijian history. Note three instances in which grimits exercised agency.
- View Thomas, Larry, dir., *Bitter Sweet Hope* prior to class (DVD 4409)

9/18: Lal, Brij "Girmit, History, Memory" (R); Lal, Brij, "A Journey Begins" from *Chalo Jahaji* (R)

9/20: Lal, Brij, "The Story of the Haunted Line" from *Chalo Jahaji* (R), Ryan, Matthew, "The Labasa Strike, 1907" (R)

Week 6

- **Weekly Response Due Th (2pts):** Indenture was seen as particularly degrading for women in Fiji. Based on your reading of Niranjana, how would you respond?

9/25: Lal, Brij, "Kunti's Cry" from *Chalo Jahaji* (R); Shameem, Shaista, "Migration, Labour and Plantation Women in Fiji" (R)

9/27: Kelly, John, "Jaikumari" (R)

Unit II: Migration to U.S. and Britain: New Girmits

Week 7

- **Weekly Response Due Th (2pts)**

10/2: Brah, Avtar, "Constructions of 'the Asian' in post-war Britain" (R); Ali, Monica, "Dinner with Dr. Azad" (R); Video: Chadha, Gurinder, dir., *I'm British but...*

10/4: Midterm Review

Week 8

- **MIDTERM DUE 10/9, Tuesday (20pts)**
- **Weekly Response Due Th (2pts)**

Week 8 contd

10/9: Video: Hart, Jayasri, dir., *Roots in the Sand*;

10/11: Prashad, "Of India" and "Of the Origin of Desis"

Week 9

- **Weekly Response Due Th (2pts)**

10/16: Prashad "Of a *girit* consciousness"; Banerjee, Payal. "Indian information technology (IT) workers in the U.S.: The H-1B visa, flexible production, and the racialization of labor." (pdf)

10/18: Sivanandan, A. "From Resistance to Rebellion: Asian and Afro-Caribbean Struggles in Britain" (R); Wilson, Ch 7

Unit III: Race Politics, Identities, Questions of Culture

Week 10

- **Weekly Response Due Th (2pts)**
- Video: View Parmar, Pratibha, Dir., *Khush* prior to class (VIDEOTAPE 8170)

10/23: Wilson, Ch 3; Prashad, "Of authentic cultural lives"

10/25: Das Gupta, Monisha, "Contests over Culture" (R); Gopinath, Gayatri "Nostalgia, Desire, Diaspora" (R)

Week 11

- **Weekly Response Due Th (2pts)**
- **Student-led discussion Th of *Mississippi Masala***

10/30: Video: Nair, Mira, Dir., *Mississippi Masala*

11/1: Video (contd); Rasiah, Dharini, "Mississippi Masala and Khush: Redefining Community" (R); Prashad, "Of Antiracist Racism"

Week 12

- **Weekly Response Due Th (2pts)**
- **Student-led discussion Th of *Bhaji***

11/6: Wilson, Ch 1 and Ch 5; Video: Chadha, Gurinder, dir., *Bhaji on the Beach*

11/8: Video (contd); Sudbury, "Rethinking Antiviolence strategies" (R)

Week 13

- **Weekly Response Due Th (2pts)**
- **Student Research presentation on British Asian Music and Chutney-Soca**

11/13: Teaiwa, Katerina "South Asian Down Under" (pdf)

11/15: Khan, Aisha, "Rites and Rights of Passage: Seeking a Diasporic Consciousness" (pdf); Richman, Paula, "Ravana in London" (pdf)

Week 14

- **Movie Review Due Tues (10pts)**
- **Weekly Response Due Th (2pts):**

11/20: Prashad, "Of Yakee Hindutva"; Mustapha, "The influence of Indian Islam on fundamentalist trends in Trinidad and Tobago" (R)

Week 14 contd.

11/ 22: Wilson, Ch 2, pp. 59-71; Chris Allen, “From Race to Religion: The New Face of Discrimination” (R)

Week 15

- **Weekly Response Due Th (2pts)**
- Video: View Thomas, Larry, dir., *A race for rights* prior to class (VIDEOTAPE 19892)

11/27: Guest Speaker

11/29: Rabuka, Sitiveni, “The Fiji Islands in Transition” (R); Hereniko, V.

“Interdisciplinary approaches in Pacific Studies: Understanding the Fiji Coup of 19 May 2000” (pdf)

Week 16

- **Response Due Tues (2pts):**

12/4: Prashad, “Of Solidarity and Other Desires”; Review and Wrap up

TAKE HOME FINALS DUE 12/10, Monday, at George Hall 301 by 11:30 am