South Asia

The Ethics and the Politics of Gender, Sexuality, and the Body in South Asia

Course Number: 184
Semester: Spring
Year: 2016
Location: 213 Wheeler
Instructor: Cohen, L
Units: 4
Time: Tu Th 2 - 3:30 pm
CCN: 02716

section time and location in the Schedule of Classes

Anthropology 184 is an upper division introduction to society, culture, politics, and history in South Asia. Each year the course is taught there is a different focus and for 2015-16 the focus will be "the ethics and the politics of gender, sexuality, and the body." There is no prerequisite though lower division courses either in anthropology, South Asian studies, or gender and sexuality will enhance understanding of readings and lectures.

How do particular norms emerge regarding the comportment and behavior of the human body and of its gender, and how do people work toward, cling to, or contest these norms? How do institutions--households, religious and secular law, schools, media, bureaucracies, political office, the market, medicine and science--shape and govern the gendered body and its desire? What happens when we ask these questions in relation to local worlds in South Asia, and in relation to the regional global networks of long relevance to South Asia, from Indian Ocean trade to British colonialism to South Asian American labor diasporas over the 19th through 21st centuries?

The course will include a midterm, a research paper, and a final and weekly readings and occasional film screenings and guest lectures.

A provisional outline, subject to change, of the course follows:

Week 1: Inside and outside of "kinship": On sex, gender, marriage, and the village
Week 2: The matter of universals: An introduction to U.S. feminist and queer debate in anthropology
Week 3: The sexual logics of race and colonialism 1: On Gandhian experiments and their critics
Week 4: The sexual logics of race and colonialism 2: On the contested matter of sati, or the burning of the widow
Week 5: The sexual logics of postcolonial development 1: On eugenics, family planning, and coercive sterilization
Week 6: The sexual logics of postcolonial development 2: Maternal and child health programs in Bangladesh, Nepal, and India
Week 7: The sexual logics of postcolonial development 3: mothers, gay men, kothis, transgenders, hijras, truck drivers, and other "key populations" in the age of AIDS
Week 8: The politics and ethics of transgender lives on the social margin
Week 9: The sexual logics of globalization 1: Sex, gender, marriage, and the computer scientist
Week 10: The sexual logics of globalization 2: Post 9/11 media on gender, sexuality and Islam
Week 11: The beauty and the pain of family life: Views from ethnography and from cinema
Week 12: Violence and Its Aftermath 1: The 1984 anti-Sikh riots and the question of survival

Week 13: Violence and Its Aftermath 1: Gender/sex and the Sri Lankan civil war

Week 14: On the body in aspiration, activism, and other commitments to new social forms