

**Department of Sociology**  
**Faculty of Social Sciences**  
**South Asian University**

**Political Sociology**  
(Compulsory Course for MA)  
**Total Credits: 04**

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### **Objectives of the Course**

This course will introduce students to some key themes of political sociology, with a focus on South Asia. We will start with tracing the origins of this field by going through some classic readings in this field. Next, we will examine some key concepts to understand modern political sociology: State, Civil Society and Governmentality. We will then discuss some major texts on the peculiarities of the modern state in its colonial avatar, and its postcolonial legacies in South Asia. Our next module is on the ethnography of the state, with focus on two of its principal contemporary aspects- bureaucracy and democracy. Here too, our ethnographies will be from South Asia. Our final two modules are a broad introduction to politics of gender and of caste and ethnicity in South Asia.

### **Unit I: Political sociology as a discipline: Genealogies**

This unit aims to introduce some classic early ethnographies of politics which served to establish this sub-discipline, as well as early critiques of such work.

1. Vincent, Joan (2002) *The anthropology of politics: a reader in ethnography, theory, and critique*, Blackwell: Oxford, pp. 15-26
2. M. Fortes and E.E. Evans-Pritchard (1969) *African Political Systems*, Oxford University Press: Oxford. pp. 1-24, 272-296
3. Leach, Edmund Ronald (1970) *Political systems of highland Burma: a study of Kachin social structure*, University of London Athlone Press: London
4. T. Asad (1995) "Two European Images of Non-European Rule," in T. Asad ed, *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*, Prometheus Books: Ithaca, pp. 71-100.
5. F.G. Bailey (2001) *Stratagems and Spoils: A Social Anthropology of Politics*. Westview Press: Boulder.

### **Unit 2: Understanding modern politics: Key concepts**

This unit aims to introduce the key concepts of modern politics: state, civil society, governmentality and resistance. We will look at key theoretical texts as well as classic sociological treatises on the concepts.

#### **State**

1. Marx, Karl (1963) *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte: With Explanatory Notes*, International Publishers: London.
2. Lenin, Vladimir (1992) *The state and revolution*. Penguin: London.
3. Abrams, Philip (1977) "Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State," *Journal of historical sociology* 1.1: 58-89.

4. Mitchell, Timothy (2006): "Society, economy and the state effect" in Akhil Gupta & Aradhna Sharma (ed.), *The anthropology of the state: A Reader*, Blackwell: Oxford, pp. 169-186.
5. James C. Scott (1998) *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, Yale University Press: New Haven
6. Nandy, Ashis (1989) "The political culture of the Indian state." *Daedalus*: 1-26

### **Civil Society**

1. Akhil Gupta and Aradhana Sharma (2006) *The Anthropology of the State: A Reader*, Blackwell: Oxford, 71-85, 86-111.
2. Kaviraj, Sudipta and Sunil Khilnani (2001) *Civil society: history and possibilities*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.

### **Governmentality**

1. Akhil Gupta and Aradhana Sharma (2006) *The Anthropology of the State: A Reader*, Blackwell: Oxford, 131-143.
2. Rose, Nikolas (1999) *Powers of freedom: Reframing political thought*. Cambridge university press: Cambridge.
3. Rose, Nikolas, and Peter Miller (1992) "Political power beyond the state: problematics of government," *British journal of sociology*, 173-205.

### **Resistance**

1. Scott, James C. (2008) *Weapons of the weak: Everyday forms of peasant resistance*. Yale University Press: New Haven
2. Lila Abu-Lughod (1990) "The Romance of Resistance: Tracing Transformations of Power through Bedouin Women," *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 17, No. 1, pp. 41-55.

### **Unit 3: The Colonial and Post-colonial state**

This unit will look at recent re-examinations of colonial and postcolonial histories in South Asia that impinge upon contemporary predicaments.

1. Chatterjee, Partha (1993) *The nation and its fragments: Colonial and postcolonial histories*. Princeton University Press: Princeton
2. Scott, David (1995) "Colonial governmentality," *Social Text* 43: 191-220.
3. Kaviraj, Sudipta (1997) "On the construction of colonial power: structure, discourse, hegemony" in Sudipta Kaviraj (ed.) *Politics in India*, Oxford University Press: New Delhi, pp. 141-158
4. Guha, Ranajit (1997) *Dominance without hegemony: History and power in colonial India*, Harvard University Press: Cambridge.
5. Alavi, Hamza (1972) "The state in post-colonial societies: Pakistan and Bangladesh," *New Left Review* 74.1: 59-81.
6. Cooper, Frederick, and Ann Laura Stoler (1997) *Tensions of empire: colonial cultures in a bourgeois world*, University of California Press: Berkeley.
7. Mamdani, Mahmood (1996) *Citizen and subject*, Princeton University Press: Princeton.
8. Cohn, Bernard S. (1985) "The command of language and the language of command," *Subaltern Studies IV* : 276-329.

9. Kaviraj, Sudipta (2013) "On state, society and discourse in India," in James Manor (ed.) *Rethinking third world politics*. Routledge: New York, pp. 72-99

#### **Unit 4: Ethnographies of the State:**

This unit will look at contemporary ethnographies of two key aspects of the modern state: bureaucracy and democracy. The emphasis will be on such studies in South Asian contexts.

##### **Bureaucracy**

1. R. Smith (1985) "Rule-by-records and rule-by-reports: complementary aspects of the British imperial rule of law", *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 19: 153-176
2. C.J. Fuller and Veronique Benei, eds. (2000) *The Everyday State and Society in Modern India*, Social Science Press: New Delhi
3. Emma Tarlo (2003) *Unsettling Memories: Narratives of the Emergency in Delhi*, Permanent Black: Delhi.
4. Akhil Gupta (1995) "Blurred Boundaries: The Discourse of Corruption, the Culture of Politics, and the Imagined State" *American Ethnologist*, 22(2), pp. 375-402.
5. Veena Das and Deborah Poole, eds. (2004) *Anthropology in the Margins of the State*. Oxford University Press: New Delhi
6. Lloyd I. Rudolph and John Kurt Jacobsen, eds. (2006) *Experiencing the State*. Oxford University Press: New Delhi.
7. Hull, Matthew (2012) *Government of paper: The materiality of bureaucracy in urban Pakistan*, University of California Press: Berkeley

##### **Democracy**

1. De Tocqueville, Alexis (1970) *Democracy in America (in 2 Volumes)*, Schocken Books: New York, Selected Chapters
2. Rosanvallon, Pierre (2007) *Democracy past and future*, Columbia University Press: New York.
3. Julia Paley (2002) "Toward an Anthropology of Democracy," *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 31/1: 469-496.
4. Kaviraj, Sudipta (2011) *The Enchantment of Democracy and India: Politics and Ideas*, Permanent Black: Ranikhet.
5. Gilmartin, David (2010) "Rule of Law, Rule of Life: Caste, Democracy, and the Courts in India," *The American Historical Review* 115.2: 406-427.
6. Naqvi, Tahir H. (2013) "Nation, Space, and Exception Pakistan's Basic Democracies Experiment," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 33.3: 279-294.
7. Kothari, Rajni (1964) "The 'Congress' System' in India," *Asian Survey* : 1161-1173.
8. Michelutti, Lucia (2007) "The vernacularization of democracy: political participation and popular politics in North India," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 13.3: 639-656.
9. Hauser, Walter, and Wendy Singer (1986) "The Democratic Rite: Celebration and Participation in the Indian Elections," *Asian Survey*: 941-958.
10. Banerjee, Mukulika (2011) "Elections as communitas," *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 78.1: 75-98.
11. Banerjee, Mukulika (2013) *Why India votes?* Routledge: New Delhi.

12. Srinivas, Mysore Narasimhachar, and A. M. Shah (2007) *The grassroots of democracy: field studies of Indian elections*. Permanent Black: New Delhi.
13. Robinson, M. S. (1988) *Local Politics. The Law of the Fishes*. Oxford University Press: New Delhi
14. Alavi, Hamza (1976) "The rural elite and agricultural development in Pakistan." *Pakistan Economic and Social Review* 14.1/4: 173-210.
15. Paul Brass (1997) "The politics of the peasantry in a North Indian state" in Sudipta Kaviraj (ed.) *Politics in India*. Oxford University Press: New Delhi.

### **Unit 5: Gender and politics**

This unit aims to introduce critical themes on gender and politics, with a focus on South Asia. Before moving on to case studies, we will look at the framing of the women's question in western political theory and in colonial South Asia.

1. Brown, Wendy (1992) "Finding the Man in the State." *Feminist Studies* 18.1: 7-34.
2. Chatterjee, Partha (1989) "Colonialism, nationalism, and colonized women: The contest in India." *American Ethnologist* 16.4: 622-633
3. Naila Kabeer (1991) "The Quest for National Identity: Women, Islam and the State in Bangladesh," *Feminist Review*, 37, pp. 38–58.
4. De Mel, Neloufer (2001) *Women & the nation's narrative: gender and nationalism in twentieth century Sri Lanka*, Rowman & Littlefield: New York
5. Menon, Nivedita (1995) "The impossibility of 'justice': Female foeticide and feminist discourse on abortion," *Contributions to Indian sociology* 29.1-2: 369-392.
6. John, Mary E. (2000) "Alternate Modernities? Reservations and Women's Movement in 20th Century India," *Economic and Political Weekly*: 3822-3829.

### **Unit 6: Politics of Caste and Ethnicity**

This unit will provide a general overview of the intractable arenas in the politics of caste and ethnicity in various South Asian countries, which so dominate the everyday politics of the region.

1. Kothari, Rajni, ed. (1995) *Caste in Indian politics*, Orient Blackswan: New Delhi.
2. Surinder Singh Jodhka (2010) "Caste and Politics" in Niraja Jayal and Pratap Bhanu Mehta ed. *Oxford Companion to Politics in India*, Oxford University Press: Delhi, pp. 154-167.
3. Shah, Ghanshyam, ed. (2004) *Caste and democratic politics in India*, Orient Blackswan: New Delhi.
4. Nancy E. Levine (1987) "Caste, State, and Ethnic Boundaries in Nepal," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 1: 71-88.
5. Gellner, David, Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka and John Whelpton, eds (2012) *Nationalism and Ethnicity in a Hindu Kingdom: The Politics and Culture of Contemporary Nepal*, Routledge: London.
6. Ahmed, Feroz (1998) *Ethnicity and politics in Pakistan*. Oxford university press: Karachi.
7. Tambiah, Stanley (1986) *Sri Lanka: Ethnic fratricide and the dismantling of democracy*, IB Tauris: London
8. Baruah, Sanjib (1999) *India against itself: Assam and the politics of nationality*, University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia