

Department of Sociology, South Asian University

Gender and Society in South Asia

Dr. Ishita Dey

(4 credits)

Aim and objective

This course builds upon the idea that gender is a product of historical-cultural formations and therefore a sociological reading of gender needs to emerge from situated knowledge and praxis of gendered experiences.

How do we study experience that is non voyeuristic? Moving beyond the gaze on the female body, and histories of 'encounter', an attempt has been made to traverse through making and unmaking of gendered subjectivities from a transnational experience. The objective of this course is to arrive at a decolonized reading of gender in South Asia as it appears in its 'interactions' rather than 'encounters'.

Keeping in mind that the feminist ideas have always been transdisciplinary the course draws upon debates within sociology, literary texts and tries to arrive at a method of doing gender in three domains that remains central to understanding gendered realities in South Asia. In this course we will dwell on three perspectives: Body, Gender and Desire, Gender and Technology and Gender and Work to understand how 'gender-ing' frameworks have negotiated with the changing socio-economic landscape of South Asia.

Summary of the units

The course is divided into four units

Unit 1 : 'Doing gender' in South Asia

In the first unit the students would be introduced to how sociological approaches to gender and society have undergone a change. Through a problematic of sex-gender debate and post-colonial feminist thought, this section would help the students to engage with the shift within sociology from 'gender' in sociology to gender and sociology to what is to 'do gender'? This shift in axis will provide an entry point to questions of method.

Compulsory readings

West, Candace & Zimmerman, Don H. 1987. Doing Gender. *Gender and Society* 1 (2): 125-151.

Butler, Judith 1990. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge. Chapter 1 &2.

Harding, Sandra. 1987. The Method Question. *Hypatia* 2 (3): 19-35

Mohanty, Chandra. 2003. *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Durham and London : Duke University Press. (Selected Chapters : Introduction, Chapter 2 and Chapter 4)

Mahmood, Saba. 2001. Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent: Some Reflections on the Egyptian Islamic Revival. *Cultural Anthropology* 6 (2):202-236.

Abu-Lughod, Lila. 2013. *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* Harvard: Harvard University Press.

Rubin, Gayle. 1975. The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex. In Rayna E. Reiter (Ed.) *Toward an Anthropology of Women*. New York: Monthly Press.

Povinelli, Elizabeth. 2006. Feminism as a Way of Life. *Women's Studies Quarterly* 34 (1/2): 438-441

Chhachhi, Amrita. 2006. Reflections: Interview Kumari Jayawardena. *Development and Change*, 37 (6), 1335-1346.

Additional readings

Strathern, Marilyn. 2016. *Before and After Gender. Sexual Mythologies of Everyday Life*. HAU (Selected chapters)

Weigel, Moira. 2016. *Labour of Love: The Invention of Dating*. New York : Farrar, Straus and Giroux

Smith, Linda Tuhiwai 2012. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. New York, NY: Zed Books.

TallBear, Kim. 2014. Standing With and Speaking as Faith: A Feminist-Indigenous Approach to Inquiry [Research note]. *Journal of Research Practice*, 10(2), 2014.

(<http://jrp.icaap.org/index.php/jrp/article/view/405/371>)

Unit 2: Body, gender and desire : South Asian perspectives

Bodies are gendered and so are our desires. This unit proposes to examine 'gaze' as it appears 'in interaction'. Erving Goffman in his work on *Gender advertisements* through role plays showed us the constructions around gendered realities in a hyper-real world. In this unit moving beyond role plays, how can we study desire from a gendered lens. A gendered reading of desire is linked to politics of masculine ideas of nation-hood, body imagery used as symbolic references of cultural and how idioms of desire are constructed and practiced in South Asian nationalisms.

Compulsory readings

Connell, Raewyn. 2014. Margin becoming centre: for a world centred rethinking of masculinities. *NORMA: International Journal for Masculinity* 9(4): 217-231.

Srivastava, Sanjay. 2004. "Introduction: Semen, History, Desire and Theory". In *Sexual Sites, Seminal Attitudes: Sexualities, Masculinities and Culture in South Asia*, ed. Sanjay Srivastava, 11-48. New Delhi, Thousand Oaks, London: Sage.

Fanon, Frantz. 1986. *Black Skin, White Masks*: Pluto Press. Chapters 2 & 3.

Chhachhi, Amrita, and Sunila Abeysekera. 2015. Forging a new political imaginary : Transnational South Asian Feminisms. In Rawidda Baksh and Wendy Harcott (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Transnational Feminist Movements*, 553-577. New Delhi : Oxford University Press.

Butler, Judith. 1994. Against Proper Objects. *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 6 (2-3): 1-26.

Weiss, Margot. 2016. "Always after: Desiring Queerness, Desiring Anthropology". *Cultural Anthropology* 31(4): 627-638.

Mookherjee, Nayanika. 2012. "The absent piece of skin: Gendered, racialized and territorial inscriptions of sexual violence during the Bangladesh war". *Modern Asian Studies* 46 (6): 1572-1601.

Saeed, Yousuf. "Lions of Islam: Symbols of Masculine Power in the Devotional Art of India and Pakistan" <http://www.tasveergharindia.net/essay/lions-islam-manly-sufis>; Accessed on 10 January 2019

Additional Readings and sources

Yuval- Davis, Nira. 1997. *Gender and Nation*. London : Sage.

M. Ahearn, Laura. 2001. *Invitations to love. Literacy, love letters, and social change in Nepal*. Ann Arbor : University of Michigan Press.

Glenn, Evelyn Nakano. 2000. Transnational Circuits in the Marketing and Consumption of Skin Lighteners. *Gender and Society* 22 (3): 281-302.

Castro- Vázquez .2013. The 'Beauty' of Male Circumcision in Japan: Gender, Sexuality and the Male Body in a Medical Practice. *Sociology* 47 (4): 687-704.

Gupta, Charu. 2007. Visual Pleasures for the Female Gaze. *Economic and Political Weekly* 42 (50): 19-20.

Monsutti, Alessandro. 2007. Migration as a Rite of Passage: Young Afghans Building Masculinity and Adulthood in Iran. *Iranian Studies* 40(2): 167-185.

<http://www.tasveergharindia.net/>

Unit 3: Gender and technology: Reflections from South Asia

Invisibilisation of women has been one of the central ideas that has shaped the discussion on technology. Technology is crucial to social relations. What has been the role of technology in shaping gender relations? The course will introduce students to two literary texts from the genre of science fiction to understand the sociality of gendered relations.

Compulsory readings

Donna J Haraway, 1990. *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York :Routledge. (Selected chapters)

Bray, Francesca. 2007. Gender and Technology. *Annual Reviews Anthropology*, 36: 37-53.

Le Guin, Ursula.1969. *The Left Hand of Darkness*

Hossain, Rokeya. 1988. *Sultana's Dream and Selections from "The Secluded Ones."*

Montgomery, Catherine M. "Making Prevention Public: The Co-production of Gender and Technology in HIV Prevention Research." *Social Studies of Science* 42, no. 6 (2012): 922-44.

Additional Readings

Cockburn, Cynthia and Ormrod, Susan.1993. *Gender and Technology in the making*. London:Sage. Chapters 1 &2.

Unit 4: Gender and work in South Asia

No discussion on technology remains complete without its implications on work. How do we read gendered experiences of work with changing global shifts, particularly the translocal nature of garment industries in South Asia and feminization of workforce across export processing zones in South Asia. What are the gendered forms of work in South Asia? The main objective of this section would be to question gendered labour politics and forms of work that have become gendered.

Compulsory readings

Ong, Aihwa. 1991. The gender and labor politics of postmodernity. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 20: 279-309.

Harris- White, Barbara. 2005. Commercialisation, Commodification and Gender Relations in Post-Harvest Systems for Rice in South Asia. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 40(25): 2530-2542.

Siddiqui, Dina M. 2014. Solidarity, Sexuality, and Saving Muslim Women in Neoliberal Times. *Women's Studies Quarterly* 42 (3/4): 292-306.

Lahiri-Dutt, Kuntala and Burke, Gill. 2011. Gender Mainstreaming in Asian Mining: A Development Perspective. In Kuntala Lahiri Dutt (ed) *Gendering the Field Book Subtitle: Towards Sustainable Livelihoods for Mining Communities*. ANU Press. Pp 213-230.

Ruwanpura, K & Hughes, A 2016, "Empowered spaces? Management articulations of gendered spaces in apparel factories in Karachi, Pakistan" *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 23 (9): 1270-1285.

Hewamanne, Sandhya. 2011. "Negotiating sexual meanings: Global discourses, local practices, and Sri Lanka's Free Trade Zone (FTZ) factory workers", *Ethnography* 13(3) 352–374.

Additional Readings

Agarwal, Bina. 1994. *Gender and land rights in South Asia*. Cambridge University Press.

*Field visit followed by assignment as per SAU guidelines

Assessment as per SAU Guidelines