



## **SOCI 360 Introduction to Contemporary India: Politics, Society, Economy, and Culture**

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### **Summer 2009 Course Syllabus**

#### **Course Introduction:**

This two-week intensive seminar is meant to provide an introduction to the study of contemporary India that will enable you undertake more advanced studies in one of two specialized seminars for the last six weeks of your stay in India. In our whirlwind seminar, a lot will be expected of you in terms of engaging seriously with readings, films and other cultural artifacts; exploring Pune and its surroundings through field site visits; and learning from each other as colleagues.

Our class sessions will include a mix of lecture, discussion, film viewing, and field visits, some of which will extend into the afternoon. We're privileged to be in Pune among a wealth of scholars and experts on all aspects of India's contemporary politics, society, economy, and culture, and will try to benefit from their expertise as much as possible through guest lectures. Interactions with many of these professionals and academics will also open up vistas of possibility as you plan the internship component of your study abroad program.

In the first section of the class we focus on India's first forty years, when the mantle of political power passed from the colonial powers to the elites of new India. Here we examine the construction of the nation in the late colonial and early postcolonial periods, the medium of film as a vehicle of the nationalist imagination, the political economy of development, and the role of religion and religious identities in the shaping of contemporary India. During the second portion of the class we turn our attention to the last two tumultuous decades, when much of what had been established in the earlier period was upturned. After forty years of hewing closely to a closed economic model, India began a gradual process of economic liberalization that has forged a greater interdependence with global flows of capital, labor, goods, and services. Indian politics was revolutionized by the arrival of previously disenfranchised and politically marginalized communities and the fracturing of what was once a single party political system led by the Congress Party into a dizzying array of regional, caste-based, and religiously-oriented political parties. Indian culture and society have likewise been beset by the challenges of cultural difference asserted through religious, regional, and caste identity, while also reaching new heights of public cultural production through the explosion of cinema, television, and the internet.

## Course Requirements/ Evaluation:

You are expected to have read, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy* by Ayesha Jalal and Sugata Bose (any edition) before you arrive in India. Also prior to arrival, you are expected to have read one additional book, either a contemporary work of fiction set in India or a more popular book about India. Examples of the former include Vikram Chandra's *Sacred Games*, Arvind Adiga's *The White Tiger*, or Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*. Examples of the latter include Ed Luce's *In Spite of the Gods*, Suketu Mehta's *Maximum City*, Mira Kamdar's *Planet India*, or Nandan Nilekani's *Imagining India: The Idea of a Renewed Nation*. The rest of the readings for the seminar will be contained in a course packet that will be distributed in Pune.

To succeed in this class, you must attend all lectures and film screening and participate in discussions thoughtfully and respectfully; complete all required reading assignments; attend all field site visits. You will undertake several short ethnographic projects and will share your findings orally in class and in the form of short written pieces (3-5 pages). The final grade will be a composite of class **participation** (50%) and ethnography **presentations and written reports** (50%).

## Course Outline:

### Day One

- Orientation to the study abroad program

### Day Two

- Morning: lecture, Indian nationalism: contention and compromise in forging the nation
- Afternoon: Field visit to the Aga Khan Palace AND/OR viewing of Satyajit Ray's documentary on Rabindranath Tagore
- Evening: read selections from Gayatri Chatterjee, *Mother India* (London: British Film Institute, 2002).

### Day Three

- Morning: lecture on Indian cinema (guest lecture by Gayatri Chatterjee)
- Afternoon: view *Mother India*
- Evening: reading of critique of development

### Day Four

- Morning: lecture on India's political economy of development
- Afternoon: The Problem of Development: Visit to a local NGO or guest speaker

### Day Five

- Morning: lecture, Religions and the making of the modern nation (guest lecture by Christian Lee Novetzke); discussion on ethnographic methods and practices

- Afternoon: 1<sup>st</sup> Ethnographic project: students divide into three groups and visit local temple, mosque, and church
- Evening: Screening of *Amar, Akbar, Anthony* (1977) directed by Manmohan Desai, host families invited

### **Day Six**

- Morning: lecture on Caste, class, and power in Indian democracy (guest lecture by local scholar)
- Afternoon: Visit to New Modikhana, tour and discussion with local scholar
- Evening: reading on Maharashtra politics and history

### **Day Seven**

- Morning / afternoon: lecture, Regional politics and history and field visit to Sinhagad (“The lion’s fort”) with optional hike up to the fort with local trekking and environment expert

### **Day Eight**

- Morning: lecture, Regional religion and culture (guest lecture by local scholar)
- Afternoon: field visit to Alandi with OR field visit to Dehu, accompanied by local scholar

### **Day Nine**

- Morning: lecture, India in the age of globalization: economy and politics
- Afternoon: Divide into three groups and conduct ethnography at Pune’s new shopping malls: E Square, Pyramid, and Pune Central
- Evening: reading on DDLJ

### **Day Ten:**

- Morning: lecture, India in the age of globalization: culture and society (guest lecture)
- Evening: Screening of *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (1995), directed by Aditya Chopra, Host families invited