

PAPER G6: CONTEMPORARY INDIA: WOMEN AND EMPOWERMENT

Course Objectives

This course engages with contemporary representations of women femininities, gender-parity and power. The course aims to help students from non-English literature backgrounds to develop a robust understanding of how discourses of gender underlie and shape our very lives, experiences, emotions and choices. The course exposes students to a broad range of literary and textual materials from various historical periods and contexts, so that they are able to examine the socially-constructed nature of gendering. Through the analysis of literary texts humanities and social sciences scholarship students will develop a nuanced understanding of how to perceive, read, understand, interpret and intervene ethically in debates on the subject.

The course will help students

- read, understand and examine closely narratives that seek to represent women, femininities and, by extension, gendering itself;
- understand how gender norms intersect with other norms, such as those of caste, race, religion and community to create further specific forms of privilege and oppression;
- identify how gendered practices influence and shape knowledge production and circulation of such knowledges, including legal, sociological, and scientific discourses;
- participate in challenging gendered practices that reinforce discrimination; and
- Create a portfolio of analytical work (interpretations and readings of literary and social-sciences texts) and analyses of fictional and non-fictional narratives that students encounter in their lived worlds.

Facilitating the Achievement of Course Learning Outcomes

Sl. No	Course Learning Outcomes	Teaching and Learning Activity	Assessment Tasks
1	Understanding concepts	Interactive discussions in small groups in Tutorial classes	Reading material together in small groups initiating discussion topics participation in discussions
2	Expressing concepts through writing	How to think critically and write with clarity	Writing essay length assignments
3	Demonstrating conceptual and textual understanding in tests and exams	Discussing exam questions and answering techniques	Class tests

Course Contents

Unit 1

Concepts

- Sex and Gender -- social construction of gender; socialisation into gender
- Femininities and masculinities -- normative gender privilege; heteronormativity
- Patriarchy -- history of the efforts to undo feminism

Readings

Baby Kamble, 'Our Wretched Lives', *Women Writing in India: 600 BC to the early twentieth century*, eds Susie Tharu and K Lalitha (Delhi: OUP, 1997) pp. 307-11.
Rassundari Devi, From *Amar Jiban*, in *Women Writing in India: 600 BC to the early twentieth century*, eds Susie Tharu and K Lalitha (Delhi: OUP, 1997) pp. 190-202.
Rokeya Shekhawat Hossain, 'Sultana's Dream', in *Women Writing in India: 600 BC to the early twentieth century*, eds Susie Tharu and K Lalitha (Delhi: OUP, 1997) pp. 340-51.
V Geetha, *Patriarchy*, Theorizing Gender Series (Kolkata: Stree, 2007) pp. 3-61.

Unit 2

Intersections

- Women and caste, religion, class, sexualities, race, disability
- Women and environment, technology, development
- Women and access to resources: employment, health, nutrition, education
- Women and reproductive work: singleness, marriage, motherhood, symbolical biological surrogacy and ART, parenting, abortion, and other rights over own body

Readings

Mahaweta Devi, 'Bayen', *Five Plays*, trans. Samik Bandyopadhyaya (Calcutta: Seagull, 2009).
Mary John, 'Feminism Poverty and the Emergent Social Order', in *Handbook of Gender*, ed. Raka Ray (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012).
Leela Kasturi, 'Report of the Sub-Committee Women's Role in Planned Economy National Planning Committee (1947)', in *Feminism in India*, ed. Maitrayee Chaudhuri (Delhi: Zed, 2005) pp. 136-55.
Vandana Shiva, *Staying Alive: Women Ecology and Development*, Chapters 2&4 (Delhi: Kali for Women, 1989).
M. M. Vinodini, 'The Parable of the Lost Daughter', in *The Exercise of Freedom*, eds K. Satyanarayana and Susie Tharu (Delhi: Navayana, 2013) pp 164-77.

Unit 3

Histories

- The women's question pre-Independence -- sati-reform, widow remarriage, debates around age of consent
- Women in the Independence movement, Partition
- Post-Independence campaigns -- against sexual harassment and rape, dowry, violence, debates around the Uniform Civil Code
- Public sphere participation of women -- in politics, in the workplace, in the economy, creating educational inclusion

Readings

Radha Kumar, *A History of Doing: An Illustrated Account of Movements for Women's Rights and Feminism in India 1800—1990*, Chapters 2, 3, 7, 8, 11 (Delhi: Zubaan, 1993).

Kumkum Sangari, 'Politics of Diversity: Religious Communities and Multiple Patriarchies', *Economic and Political Weekly* 3052 (1995).

Tanika Sarkar, 'Rhetoric against Age of Consent: Resisting Colonial Reason and Death of a Child-Wife', *Economic and Political Weekly* 2836 (1993 April).

Urvashi Butalia, Chapter 2 'Blood', in *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* (Delhi: Penguin Books, 1998)

Urmila Pawar and Meenakshi Moon, *We also made history: Women in the Ambedkarite Movement*, Chs 1, 5, 6 (Delhi: Zubaan, 2008).

Unit 4

Women, the Law, the State

- Constitutional remedies and rights against gender-based violence
- The history of constitutional protections for women (Hindu Code Bill, right to property, personal laws)
- State interventions and feminist engagements with the law
- IPC sections relevant to rape protection, of the 'modesty' of women, obscenity
- The concept of 'woman' in these frameworks

Readings

Janaki Nair, 'The Foundations of Modern Legal Structures in India', in *Handbook of Gender*, ed Raka Ray (Delhi: OUP, 2012).

Flavia Agnes, 'Conjugal Property, Morality and Maintenance', in *Handbook of Gender*, ed Raka Ray (Delhi: OUP, 2012).

Workshop: Students to examine the bare text of 4 laws (as set out in the Gazette of India) followed by discussion and analysis -- laws against dowry (The Dowry Prohibition Act 1961), against sex determination (Pre-Conception & Pre-Natal Diagnostics Act 1994), against domestic violence (Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005), against sexual harassment at the workplace (The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Prevention Prohibition and Redressal Act 2013).

Essential Reading

Note: This is a literature-based course, and students will be examined on all the prescribed readings in Units 1 through 4. Therefore, all those texts are to be considered essential reading. In addition to those texts, the following is also essential reading:

Indian Literature: An Introduction. Delhi: University of Delhi, 2005.

Teaching plan

Week 1: Unit 1 -- Concepts
Week 2: Unit 1 contd
Week 3: Unit 1 contd
Week 4: Unit 2 -- Intersections
Week 5: Unit 2 contd
Week 6: Unit 2 contd
Week 7: Unit 2 contd
Week 8: Unit 3 -- Histories
Week 9: Unit 3 contd
Week 10: Unit 3 contd
Week 11: Unit 3 contd
Week 12: Unit 4 -- Women the Law the State
Week 13: Unit 4contd
Week 14: Unit 4contd

Keywords

Gender
History
Law
Caste
Femininities
Masculinities
Heteronormativity
Patriarchy
Feminism
Gender-based violence
Casteism
Women's movements