

James Madison College Announces a New Course

MC 390 | South Asia: Paradoxes of cultural identities and development (Spring 2018)

Professor: Sejuti Das Gupta

Prerequisites: Completion of Tier 1 Writing Requirement and MC 230/231, MC 220/221 or by permission from the instructor



South Asia consists of seven nation states: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The region is intriguing with the highest population in the world, a sustained economic growth of 6% for the last two decades with the world's second largest number of poor as residents, having experienced the largest mass migration of human history.

The course will begin with an examination of the historical context for independence in the region, with particular attention to the Partition of India and Pakistan. Partition not only left millions of Indians and Pakistanis scarred, it also raised questions about the content of 'nation' and 'nationality' on the subcontinent and influenced the cultural politics of all the countries of the region.

Four specific paradoxes will be examined: nationality and belonging, secularism and communalism, class/caste cleavages and development, and gender-power and powerlessness. India will remain the most prominent case as it is the de facto hegemon of the region and exercises tremendous power not just over the region but its influence permeates the domestic politics of these nations. Despite being celebrated as the largest democracy of the world, the politics of India is mired in traditional cleavages like religion, caste, class, ethnicity and gender which makes the contradiction even more stark.

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