Course description
This course will focus on the ways in which modern Indian ascetic figures negotiated the binaries of a) tradition/modernity and b) privatized religion/public secular sphere. We take Gandhi as paradigmatic example, but will also situate him in relation to his important predecessors, such as Swami Vivekananda and other ascetic leaders of modern Hinduism. Rudolph’s study of Gandhi’s charismatic authority The Traditional Roots of Charisma will help to ground Gandhi in these contexts and will make a helpful comparison with and analytical lens upon Gandhi’s self-presentation in his autobiography. We will consider Gandhi’s activist side by studying how Gandhi became a type of the saintly hero in literature, one who would inaugurate a new era in modern Indian history. While R. K. Narayan’s novel Waiting for the Mahatma (1955) presents Gandhi as the revolutionary hero who would galvanize a traditional society into a new phase, his The Guide (1958) presents an ironic and ambivalent perspective on the idea of self-sacrifice and renunciation as giving the hero special spiritual and social power. Mulk Raj Anand’s The Untouchable (1935) and Arundhati Roy’s more recent The God of Small Things (1996) makes the figure of the untouchable or Harijan a nodal point of a political and social critique of Hindu society first made prominent by Gandhi.
Kesavan, Looking Through Glass.
Mulkraj Anand, Untouchable.
[original title: Satyanā Prayogo athavā ātmakathā]
Raja Rao, Kanthapura
Susan and Lloyd Rudolph, Gandhi: The Traditional Roots of Charisma.

Note: Gandhi’s Hindu Swaraj and Other Writings is not required for this course. If you have already bought this, it is recommended that you written it to the Bookstore.

Grade Components

Attendance 10%

Seminar Presentation and Blackboard Postings 20%

Three Papers (70%)
First Five-Page Paper 20%
Second Five-Page Paper 20%
Final Paper 30%

Schedule of Readings, Films and Assignments

Week One
1/22 Introduction: Colonial India
1/23 FILM: Attenborough’s Gandhi
1/24 Gandhi and Heroes
*Gandhi, My Experiments with Truth, Foreword and Part I
Week Two
1/29  Life-writing
    * Gandhi, My Experiments with Truth, Part II

1/31  Life-writing
    *Gandhi, My Experiments with Truth, Part III

    Blackboard Posting #1 Due

Week Three
2/5  Gandhi as Modern Yogi: India’s Ascetic Pasts and Presents
    *Rudolph, Gandhi: The Traditional Roots of Charisma

2/6  FILM: The Guide

2/7  Saint Gandhi
    *Juergensmeyer, “St. Gandhi” (E)
    *Rudolph, “Gandhi in the Mind of America” (E)

    Blackboard Posting # 2 Due

Week Four
2/12  *Rao, Kanthapura

2/14  *Waiting for the Mahatma

    Blackboard Posting # 3 Due

Week Five
2/19  NO CLASS MEETING
    *Mahatma vs. Gandhi, Excerpts

2/21  NO CLASS MEETING

    FILM: Gandhi, My Father

Week Six
2/25  Paper #1 due
2/26  Harijan: God’s Children
* Leslie, “Untouchability: Terms and Meanings”
* Coward, “Gandhi, Ambedkar and Untouchability”

2/28  *Anand, Untouchable

Blackboard Post # 4 Due

Week Seven
3/4  Secular India?
* Miller, “Indian Muslim Critiques of Gandhi”
* Neufeldt, “The Hindu Mahasabha and Gandhi”

3/5  FILM: Hey Ram

3/6  Must Gandhi Die?
* Godse, Excerpts

Blackboard Post # 5 Due

Week Eight
3/11  The (Post)Modern Mahatma?
* Hind Swaraj, Excerpts
* Rudolph, “The Postmodern Gandhi”
* Young, “Gandhi and Modernity”
* Rao, “Representing Dalit Selfhood”

3/13  *Roy, The God of Small Things

3/14  Paper No. 2 Due

3/15-3/30  SPRING BREAK

Week Nine
4/1  Quit India, 1942
* Shahid Amin, “Gandhi as Mahatma”

4/3
* Kesavan, Looking Through Glass

Blackboard Post # 6 Due

Week Ten
4/8  MLK and the Mahatma
*Sudarshan Kapur, Raising up a Prophet
*Bondurant, The Conquest of Violence, “Introduction” and Chapter 1

4/9  FILM: A Force More Powerful

4/10  Activism
*Bondurant, Conquest of Violence

Blackboard Post # 7 Due

Week Eleven
4/15  Satyagraha, Case Studies
*Gandhi, The Story of My Experiments with Truth, “The Stain of Indigo” (pp. 404-406) and “The Kheda Satyagraha” (pp. 434-436)

Paper Topics and Bibliography Due

4/17  Satyagraha Case Studies
*Medha Patkar and Mothers of the Plazo de Mayo

Blackboard Post # 8 Due

Week Twelve
4/22  How to be a Satyagrahi
* Juergensmeyer, Gandhi’s Way

4/24  How to be a Satyagrahi
* Juergensmeyer, Gandhi’s Way

Annotated Bibliography Due

Week Thirteen
4/29  Research Paper Workshop

4/31  Introducing Bollywood
*Mishra, “The Angry Young Man”
*Shanti Kumar, “Gandhi meets primetime : globalization and nationalism in Indian television”

Week Fourteen
5/6  Corey Creekmur, Guest Speaker
5/7   FILM: Lage Raho, Munnabhai

5/8   Conclusion

5/14   FINAL PAPERS DUE