

## Women in South Asian Societies

His 350L/ANS 361/WGS 340/ISL 371  
MW 3:00-4:30  
GAR 2. 128

Gail Minault

### Textbooks

#### Required:

Geraldine Forbes, Women in Modern India

Kumkum Sangari & Sudesh Vaid, eds., Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History

Ritu Menon & Kamla Bhasin, Borders and Boundaries

Syeda Hameed, ed., They Hang: 12 Women in My Portrait Gallery

#### One of the following:

Sara Suleri, Meatless Days

Meena Alexander, Fault Lines (new edn.)

Women in South Asian Societies is an interdisciplinary seminar that will deal with the history, social and political roles, and contemporary problems of women in South Asia. We will study the changes that have occurred in women's lives as a result of historical forces in the 19th and 20th centuries: colonialism, social and religious reform movements, and the roles of women in the movement for independence from colonial rule and partition. We will also attempt to assess the status and roles of women in contemporary South Asian societies, with special emphasis on women's struggles for economic and legal rights, and the problem of violence toward women. Secondary readings will be supplemented occasionally with the testimony of women themselves. Indeed, many of the books for the course combine a variety of sources, and we will have ample discussion concerning the different viewpoints represented.

Requirements for the course include the required readings, which we will discuss in class, and several writing assignments of different lengths (see below). For each class there will be readings from the texts and occasional supplemental readings, either in the form of handouts, or on e-reserve. For each class, a student will be designated discussion leader. The discussions leaders will pose questions, call on people, try to get the quiet ones to speak up, and summarize the points discussed. S/he will then write up a (brilliant and pithy) short report on the readings and the discussion, to be handed in one week later. If you are the designated leader, it goes without saying that you must come to class that day. I expect those not designated leaders for the day (a) to have done the readings and (b) to participate in the discussion. Non-discussants will also write up short response papers every week on the readings. See a separate sheet for details on the writing assignments and discussion techniques.

The writing assignments include a book report of approx. 6 pp. on one of the choice of autobiographies listed above, due **Oct. 5**; and a research paper of approx. 15 pp. that will be due on **Dec. 4**. The latter can be on any topic covered in the class that

appeals to you or about which you would like to know more. I would like to know your topic by **Oct. 28** so that we can discuss bibliography, and then have your preliminary bibliography by **Nov. 4**. Each student will have to present her research topic in class during the last few weeks of the course. For fuller details on the writing assignments, see a separate sheet. Percentages for the grade: class participation 10%, discussion leading and report 15%, response papers (collectively) 15 %, book report 20%, research paper, including oral presentation 40%.

**Attendance:** I will take attendance in this class, and any more than **three** absences will be cause for lowering your grade. Seminars thrive on discussion and the only way to have good discussions is for everyone to turn up and participate. On the other hand, if you come down with swine flu, stay home. Get a note from the Student Health Center or your doctor to receive a medical excuse.

I hope that, from our discussions in class, we will get to know one another, but I also enjoy meeting my students personally and urge you to visit my office at least once during the semester. My office is Garrison 3.118, and my office hours are MW 1:30-3, or by appointment on Fridays, 1:30-3. Office phone 475-7214. Please do not call me at home, email instead: [gminault@mail.utexas.edu](mailto:gminault@mail.utexas.edu)

### Course Outline and Reading Assignments

Aug. 26 - Introduction to the Course

Aug. 31 – Indian Women in Myth, Epic, and Religious Thought

Read: Kumkum Roy, “The King’s Household: Structure and Space in the Shastric Tradition,” from Sangari & Chakravarti, eds. From Myths to Markets, pp. 18-38 (e-reserve).

Tales of Ancient India, excerpts (hand out, also e-reserves)).

Sept. 2 & 9 – Indian Women in the Traditional Indian Family (Urban)

**Note:** Sept. 7 – Labor Day Holiday

Read for 9/2: Sangari & Vaid, “Introduction;” to Sangari & Vaid, Recasting, pp. 1-25.

Tanika Sarkar, “A Book of Her Own, A Life of Her Own,” from Sangari & Chakravarti, Myths to Markets, pp. 85-124 (e-reserve).

For 9/9: Gail Minault, Secluded Scholars, ch. I, pp. 14-57 (e-reserve).

Sept. 14-16 – Indian Women in the Traditional Indian Family (Rural)

Film on 9/14: “Dadi’s Family.” Discussion of film

Read for 9/16: Prem Chowdhry, “Customs in a Peasant Economy,” in Sangari & Vaid, pp. 302-37 (see next p. for more).

Helen Gideon, “A Baby is Born in the Punjab,” Ann. Anthropologist, 64/6 (Dec. 1962): 1220-1234. (e-reserve).

- Doranne Jacobson, "Purdah: Life Behind the Veil," Natl. Geographic, 152/2 (Aug. 1977): 270-286 (e-reserve).
- Sept. 21-23 – Women in 19<sup>th</sup> Century India: Colonial Debates over Women's Status and Reform  
 Read for 9/21: Geraldine Forbes, Women in Modern India, pp. 1-31.  
 " for 9/23: Lata Mani, "Contentious Traditions," in Sangari and Vaid, Recasting, pp. 88-126, and  
 Ram Mohan Roy, "In Defense of Hindu Women" (e-reserve).
- Sept. 28-30 – Women in Colonial India: Debates over Education  
 Read for 9/28: Forbes, Women, pp. 32-63.  
 Sumanta Banerjee, "Marginalization of Women's Popular Culture in 19th Century Bengal," Recasting, pp. 127-179.  
 Read for 9/30: Gail Minault, Secluded Scholars, pp. 58-104 (e-reserve).
- Oct. 5-7 – Women and the Press: Writings for and by Women  
**1<sup>st</sup> paper due Oct. 5** (see separate sheet for details).  
 Read for 10/5: Vir Talwar, "Feminist Consciousness in Women's Journals in Hindi," Recasting, pp. 204-232.  
 Read for 10/7: Minault, Secluded, pp. 105-157 (e-reserve).
- Oct. 12-14 – Early Women's Movements  
 Read for 10/12: Forbes, Women, pp. 64-120.  
 Partha Chatterjee, "The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question," Recasting, pp. 233-53.  
 Read for 10/14: Minault, Secluded, pp. 215-266 (e-reserve).
- Oct. 19-21 – Women and Nationalism  
 Read for 10/19: Forbes, Women, pp. 121-56, 189-222.  
 Read for 10/21: Minault, pp. 267-308 (e-reserve).
- Oct. 26-28 – Women, Independence and Partition  
**Note:** Research topics due Oct. 28.  
 Read for 10/26: Forbes, Women, pp. 223-254.  
 " for 10/28: Ritu Menon & Kamla Bhasin, Borders and Boundaries, pp. 3-165.
- Nov. 2-4 – Working Women in Colonial and Post-Colonial India  
**Note:** Preliminary bibliographies due Nov. 4  
 Read for 11/2: Forbes, Women, pp. 157-88.  
 Nirmala Banerjee, "Working Women in Colonial Bengal," in Recasting, pp. 269-301.  
 Read for 11/4: Vasanta Kanabiran & K. Lalitha, "That Magic Time," in Recasting, pp. 180-203.

Nov. 9-11 – Women and Violence

Read for 11/9: Menon & Bhasin, Borders, pp. 168-260.

“ for 11/11: Hameed, They Hang.

Nov. 16-18, 23, and 30: Students’ presentations of research projects (5 per class); final discussion and evaluation.

**Note:** No class on Nov. 25. Thanksgiving holiday.

Dec. 2: Class party at my home (12/2); time TBA.

**Research papers due, Dec. 4.**