

Spring 2010  
MWF 9-10

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PAR 27 (MW 10-11)

**Description:**

The recent success of *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008) has reopened discussions about the representation of class and poverty in India. The reactions to the film have been intensely partisan: some of have praised the humanizing of the poor while others have remarked that the fantastic rags-to-riches romance hinders any serious investigation of poverty. At every occasion, though, this discussion of class and poverty has been irrigated by the ideological streams of the middle and upper-classes, especially when it comes to their own solutions to and strategies for dealing with the persistence of poverty. Still, this representation of the poor, the underclass, the peasant, is shrouded in a patina of authenticity: this is how the poor really survive and imagine their life worlds. These aesthetic moves have become even more important in recent years as ruling parties in India have sought to demonstrate the country's viability as a major world economic power. In the 2009 elections, for instance, the Indian National Congress Party ran television ads touting its economic policy credentials, set to the tune of "Jai Ho!" (the final song-and-dance sequence of the film). At the heart of all discussions of poverty are questions of blame, and this course will interrogate how aesthetic strategies intersect with certain ideological moves in the representation of Indian poverty. We will begin the course with Vikas Swarup's *Q&A* (the novel on which *Slumdog Millionaire* was based) and examine alternative representations of poverty from the banal (*English, August*) to the magical (*God of Small Things*), from the gritty (*Delhi Noir*) to the witty (*White Tiger*), in order to map out the range of strategies used to aestheticize and politicize poverty.

**Texts:**

Adiga, *White Tiger*  
Chatterjee, *English, August*  
Chaudhuri, *The Vintage Book of Modern Indian Literature*  
Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*

Mistry, *A Fine Balance*  
Roy, *God of Small Things*  
Sawhney (ed.), *Delhi Noir*  
Sinha, *Animal's People*  
Swarup, *Q&A*

Assignments:

- Paper proposal, 2-3 pages (10%)
- Rough draft, 8-10 pages (25%)
- Annotated Bibliography, at least ten sources (15%)
- Final Paper, 15-20 pages (30%)
- Blog posts, every week, 250 words (10%)
- Participation (10%)

**Annotated Bibliography:**

Part of the goal of this class is to familiarize students with research methods in underrepresented literatures. Students will be asked to produce a bibliography of works relevant to their final paper topics. Sources can include literary criticism, newspapers, journal articles, books, and primary source materials. Annotations should be approximately 100 to 150 words in length.

**Paper:**

There is one research paper in this class divided up into two parts (a rough-draft and a final). The paper should cover at least one of the texts covered in class and should be relevant to the themes of a course on Islam and South Asia. Other than those limits, students are free to choose topics of their own liking. Students wishing for more direction will be provided with prompts for final papers. All papers should be one-sided, with 1" margins, double-spaced, proofread, page-numbered, with consistent MLA style, and in your best academic prose.

**Course Blog:**

You will be asked to contribute to the course blog at least once a week. Your contributions will include both an original post (150-200 words) and a response to a classmate's post (50-100 words). Topics for posts can be: issues not raised by class, alternative directions that a question raised in class could have gone, passages from texts (with commentary) that are intriguing but not raised in class, and disagreements born out of class discussion. The course blog should be seen as a way to continue the discussion in class, especially those ideas and issues that are left underdeveloped in classroom conversations. I will also pick one person each class to post notes from the class discussion to the blog in lieu of his/her post for that week. IT IS HIGHLY RECOMMENDED that you use the blog to test out ideas related to your final paper. Students will have access to the course's Blackboard site through UT Direct.

**Grading Policy:**

Final grades will be determined on the basis of the following rubric. Please note: to ensure fairness, all final grades will be rounded to the nearest whole number (so 89.5 is an A- while an 89.499 is a B+). The University of Texas does not recognize the grade of A+

A= 94-100  
A- = 90-93  
B+ = 87-89  
B = 84-86  
B- = 80-83  
C+ = 77-79  
C = 74-76  
C- = 70-73  
D+ = 67-69  
D = 64-66  
D- = 60-63  
F = 0-59

**Students with Disabilities:**

Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, (512-471-6259)

**Schedule:**

January 20,22: Introductions and *Slumdog Millionaire*

January 25-29: *Slumdog* and *Swarup*

February 1-5: *Swarup*

February 8-12: Chaudhuri

February 15-19: Roy

February 22-26: Roy

March 1-5: Adiga

March 8-12: Adiga

**Paper Proposals DUE on MARCH 8<sup>th</sup>, no later than 5 PM**

March 22-26: Mistry

March 29-April 2: Mistry

April 5-9: Sinha

**ROUGH DRAFT DUE ON APRIL 9<sup>th</sup>, no later than 5 PM**

April 12-16: Desai

April 19-23: Desai

April 26-30: Chatterjee

May 3-7: Sawhney

**FINAL PAPERS DUE on MAY 7<sup>th</sup>, no later than 5 PM**