AAST 498N/ AMST 418X: South Asian American Communities  
Spring 2014 Syllabus  
Tuesdays, Thursdays 9:30AM-10:45AM  
SYM 0215

Instructor: Ms. Deepa Iyer  
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Office Hours: By appointment  
Class ELMS: https://myelms.umd.edu/courses/1067770

COURSE OVERVIEW

South Asians were the fastest growing race group in the United States according to the 2010 Census. Yet, South Asians still occupy a precarious and constantly shifting space in America’s racial landscape. In this course, which will be taught seminar style, we will be active participants in asking and discussing questions of inquiry such as: What are the historical, political, and cultural lenses through which we can view and understand South Asian identity and community formation? What does it mean to adopt and use a collective South Asian American identity or an Asian American political identity? Are South Asians the “other”, or the included, in America’s shifting racial landscape? What can we learn from historical moments and experiences, cultural production, and organizing struggles of communities of color as methods and paths to identity formation? How should South Asians engage with the majority-minority America of the future?

The course will incorporate readings from ethnic studies, law, and academic journals, as well as guest speakers, documentaries, media clips, in-class discussion, and group projects to explore these questions together. While our objectives will be focused on the themes and inquiries detailed above, additional course outcomes will include the development of your critical analytical, writing, speaking, and presentation skills.

Together, we will come up with a class group project that will enable us to create an event on campus to engage the student body on issues with which are grappling.

ABOUT ME

I have spent nearly fifteen years working with Asian and South Asian American communities in the United States on issues such as the post 9/11 backlash, civil rights, immigration reform, language access, and workplace discrimination. As the Executive Director of South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT), the only national non-profit that amplifies the voices and perspectives of South Asians for nearly a decade, I gained experience in building community networks, conducting programs and advocacy, and representing the organization as a spokesperson in ethnic and mainstream media. I have been published in the New York Times, USA Today, and Colorlines, and have been quoted in National Public Radio segments and the Washington Post. I moved to Kentucky from India when I was twelve, and now make my home in Silver Spring, Maryland.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Readings and class discussion prompts will be posted on our class site on ELMS. Please refer to it frequently.

Course Grading. Your final grade is based on the following:

- Active participation including attendance, informed comments and engagement in discussions and in-class assignments – 15%
- Comment Papers – 15%
- Midterm exam - 25%
- Final Paper – 30%
- Class Project - 15%

Class Participation. Class participation is an integral part of a course like this because we will be creating community through our class experiences and interactions. I will look for informed comments that reflect your depth of understanding of the readings and your analytical ability to identify patterns and trends that emerge as we move through the class. As this is a small class conducted seminar-style, I will find different ways for all students to participate.

Comment Papers. A structured component of class participation will include the required submission of three comment papers over the course of the semester. Comment papers will require you to respond in writing to a particular issue or question (included below). Comment papers should not be at minimum 2 pages and no longer than 3 pages in total. Please double space and use 12-point font with 1-inch margins. Please bring a printed copy of the comment paper to the class when it is due. When writing about the assigned readings, keep in mind that your response should include the following:

- Provide a statement of position that responds to the prompt/question provided
- Support your statement of position using information gathered from the readings and in-class discussions. Follow a “rule of three” to help you identify no more than three arguments to support your statement of position.
- End the paper with a paragraph that summarizes your statement of position

Mid-term Exam. The mid-term will be in the short-answer and essay format. The exam will be taken closed-book and closed-notes. Make-up exams are only given in extreme circumstances, with an excused absence, and proper documentation (see the UMCP policy on excused absences in the Undergraduate Catalogue; please note that examinations cannot be rescheduled to accommodate travel).

Final Exam. The final exam will be submitted in the form of a paper that is at minimum 12 pages and no longer than 15 pages long on one of three topics that will be provided by Week 5. You will need to identify the subject of your paper and set up time to discuss your outline with me. I encourage you to identify ways to conduct community-based documentation to buttress your academic research. More information about how to do so will be provided throughout the class.

Class Project. We will together identify a class project that will take the subject matter that we are discussing to the broader student body in the form of an event or discussion. The group project should occur during Week 13.
**GENERAL POLICIES**

Creating a Learning Community

“A learning community is a safe yet challenging environment composed of people who support each other as they explore their differences. Learning and community – both elements of the term are important. Only by learning can people grow. And only when provided a safe environment – in which mistakes are acceptable – can people support each other and draw on each other’s different experiences to expand their own knowledge and capabilities.” (Source: Wasserman & Doran, 1999 in Creating Inclusive Learning Communities)

In order for us to build a respectful learning environment where everyone feels comfortable to voice their thoughts, here are a few guidelines for consideration:

1. Make a commitment to your learning and the group’s development as a whole.
2. Step forward, step back: create space for everyone to share.
3. Expect and be willing to explore differences in experience and thought.
4. Let’s create an atmosphere for dialogue and inquiry.

If you ever feel uncomfortable in class, please speak with me during office hours so we can figure out the best solution to ensure that everyone is able to participate.

Methods for Communication Outside the Classroom

I will post information on our ELMS site if there are any changes such as class cancellation, room changes, or other timely announcements. You are responsible for monitoring the class’ ELMS site regularly.

Limits to Confidentiality in the Classroom

While receiving instruction, advising, or other services at the University, Maryland state law requires advisors/educators/employers to report any incident of past or current child abuse or neglect to Child Protective Services and to the University President’s Designee, the University’s Chief of Police. In addition, if an educator has reason to believe that a vulnerable adult (an adult who lacks the physical or mental capacity to provide for the adult's daily needs) over the age of 18 is in danger, the educator is required to make a report to law enforcement authorities. Health professionals, psychologists, psychotherapists, counselors and mental health professionals are not required to report child abuse neglect to the President’s Designee, but are required by law to make reports to Child Protective Services.

Emergency Protocol

If the University closes for an extended period of time due to an unanticipated emergency, we will continue to conduct class using online methods such as discussions of readings and written papers.

Due Dates

Papers and assignments are due at the beginning of class on the due date. Assignments that are turned in late will be penalized a third of a letter grade for each half day it is late. A paper will not be accepted once it is more than one week late.
Class Attendance and Participation
Students should attend all class meetings, be on time, and be prepared to participate on a substantive and analytic level in discussions of the readings and topics. This means that the reading assignment for each class date in the schedule should be completed before class. According to university policy, absences can be excused for illness, religious observances, participation in University activities at the request of university authorities and compelling circumstances beyond the student's control. Excessive tardiness or absences will negatively affect your grade. You are responsible for getting notes from classmates when you are absent. If you need to be absent from class to participate in a religious observance, please provide a written list of the dates you will need to be absent by the second day of class.

Academic Integrity and the University of Maryland Honor Pledge
Please adhere to the UMD Code of Academic Integrity and Honor Pledge (“I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this assignment/examination.”). Cheating or engaging in any form of academic dishonesty will be reported and subject to university policies regarding academic integrity. According to the UMD Code of Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to:

- Cheating (intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise),
- Plagiarism (intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one’s own in any academic exercise) including writing from other students, websites, and library materials,
- Fabrications of any kind (intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise) including false information in requests for assignment or examination extensions, and
- Facilitating Academic Dishonesty (intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to violate any provision of this Code)
- For more information on academic integrity, please refer to the Student Honor Council website, http://www.shc.umd.edu.

Students with Disabilities
Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a documented disability should inform me of such by the second (2nd) class meeting so that we can discuss making the appropriate and necessary arrangements. Please make an appointment with Dr. Jo Ann Hutchinson or her staff at the Disability Support Services (DSS) in the Counseling Center, 3147682 (Shoemaker 0126). Students in Distress Services for students in various forms of distress are offered by the Counseling Center and the Mental Health Service in the Health Center. During evenings and weekends, the student peer-counseling hotline (4-HELP or 4-4357) is available.

Laptops and Cell Phone
As this will be a small seminar, we will need everyone to be fully engaged and present in class. Laptops are not allowed unless you have a special reason for use (please contact me if you do). Please turn off your cell phones before entering the classroom (no phone calls, texting, or taking pictures during class).
COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: Overview of Course; Developing a Shared Language
T Jan 28  Introduction to course content and requirements; creating a dynamic learning environment; our points of entry.

TH Jan 30  What’s Our Language on Race? Using Race Dominoes
- M. Omi & H. Winant, Ch. 4 (53-76), Racial Formation in the United States

Week 2: Who is Our Community? Self-Naming and Group-Naming
- L. Shankar, Ch. 2 (49-66), A Part, Yet Apart: South Asians in Asian America
- N. Kibria, Ch. 2 (69-78), A Part Yet Apart: South Asians in Asian America

TH Feb 6  A Community of Contrasts: Perceptions and Realities
- Viewing of What Country Do We Want to Live In?, available at: https://www.youtube.com/user/saaltvideo?feature=watch
- Viewing of Hari Kondabolu clip on South Asian Spelling Bee, available here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NZPZ-9qmZkk

Comment Paper 1 Due: Choosing one of the clips above, write your comment paper (see above for guidelines) responding to the following prompt: What messages about racial formation and racial identity does the clip that you chose send to South Asians or to non-South Asians? What could be the impact of those messages, in terms of perceptions and understanding of South Asian communities?

Week 3: Early South Asian Immigrants and Community Constructions
T Feb 11  - J. Jenson, Ch. 12 (246-269), Passage from India: Asian Indian Immigrants in North America,
- N. Shah, Ch. 1 (25-49), The Sun Never Sets: South Asian Migrants in an Age of U.S. Power
- Hindus Too Brunette to Vote Here, available here: http://www.saadigitalarchive.org/item/20101210-148
- Discussion of Group Project Ideas

TH Feb 13  - V. Bald, Ch. 5 (160-188), Bengali Harlem and the Lost Histories of South Asian America
- The Hindoo in the Northwest, available here: http://www.saadigitalarchive.org/item/20110714-238
- Watch preview of Bengali Harlem documentary: http://bengaliharlem.com/?p=24
Week 4: Contemporary South Asian Constructions

T Feb 18 - S. Shukla, Ch. 2 (78-131), India Abroad: Diasporic Cultures of Postwar America and England.
- S. M. Kailta, Ch. 1 (pp. 32-46), Suburban Sahibs
- A. Arif, Ch. 8 (212-230), Salaam America: South Asian Muslims in New York
- Indian Students Go Greek, available here: http://span.state.gov/wwwfspseptoct0656.pdf

Comment Paper 2 Due: Assess the South Asian communities at UMD; how are they organized and constructed? What are your observations and critiques?

TH Feb 20 - B. Mani, Destination Culture: A Critical Look at South Asian Arts and Activism Festivals in North America, Available at: http://www.samarmagazine.org/text/article.php?id=47
- In-class viewing of Hari Kondabolu on Mindy Kaling - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0PCMPDVZ50M

Week 5: Preparing for Midterm and Group Project; Guest Speaker

T Feb 25 No Class. Please utilize this time to meet and identify the group project idea of choice and a plan of action with timeline and next steps to implement it.

TH Feb 27 - Guest Speaker
- Providing Topics for Final Paper; Midterm Review

Week 6: Midterm.

T Mar 4 MIDTERM EXAM

TH Mar 6 In class discussion on group project and reporting on timeframe and next steps.

Week 7: Hate Violence and Discrimination.


View Raising Our Voices: South Asian Americans Address Hate in class

Th Mar 13 Information about AAST Minor provided
View and discuss remainder of Raising Our Voices: South Asian Americans Address Hate

Week 8: Spring Break

Week 9: No Longer on Racial Probation: Community Consciousness after 9/11

- V. Prashad, Ch. 2 (3-47), Uncle Swami: South Asians in America Today
TH Mar 27 - J.Rana, Ch. 13 (325-349), *The Sun Never Sets: South Asian Migrants in an Age of U.S Power*
- *In Our Own Words: South Asian New Yorkers and Profiling*, available here: 

*Comment Paper 3 Due:* Vijay Prashad notes that South Asians are no longer on racial probation after the events of 9/11. In what ways has the elevated racial status of South Asians been undermined since 9/11?

**Week 10:** Ten Years Later

- In class viewing: CNN Unwelcome: Muslims Next Door, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gRlqz3e9OrA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gRlqz3e9OrA)

TH April 3 - In class viewing of: Testimony of Harpreet Singh Saini, available here: 
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=epqfRimgQ5Q](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=epqfRimgQ5Q)

**Week 11:** Immigrant Identities. Please set up time to discuss your final paper with me this week.

T April 8 - *The Life of an Undocumented South Asian Immigrant*, available here: 
- Guest Speaker

TH April 10 *No class. Use time to meet with me or prepare for class activity.*
Week 12: Organizing in South Asian American Communities

T April 15  Workshopping your papers with one another in class. Final preparations for class activity.

TH April 17  -S. Shah, Out and Out Radical, available here: http://samarmagazine.org/archive/articles/60


-M. Maulik, Our Movement is for the Long Haul: Ten Years of DRUM’s Community Organizing by Working Class South Asian Migrants (455-467), Race/Ethnicity, Vol. 4/No. 3 (Summer 2011)

-M. Das Gupta, Ch. 6 (208-254), Unruly Immigrants: Rights, Activism, and Transnational South Asian Politics in the United States

Week 13  No meetings; Class Group Project Activity Occurs

Week 14  Political Power in Majority-Minority America


May 1  Class readings will be posted on ELMS.

Week 15  New Communities; Review

May 6  New South Asian Communities and the Diaspora


-Video clips from Rajkumari Cultural Center on Indo-Caribbeans http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Miz7bNKjRGw


May 8  Wrap-Up, Evaluations, and Presentation of Paper Outlines in Class

Week 16: What Next and Final Papers Due

May 13  -V. Prashad, Ch. 5 (105-126), A Part Yet Apart: South Asians in Asian America

May 15  No Class. Final Papers Due via email by 6PM