

Rel & Ident in South Asia

REL 321-001 | Spring 2017 | 3 Credit Hours

Seminar

Dr. Steven Ramey

Contact Information

UA Campus Directory:

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Course Objectives

- Introduce students to the complexity of religions in contemporary South Asia
- Discuss the implications, including violence, of contested identifications
- Consider how to discuss contested identifications in light of the issues of violence and power related to them

Student Learning Outcomes

Students in Rel 321 will be able to

- 1) Describe the complexity of religious boundaries and identities in South Asia.
- 2) Theorize about issues related to identity using data of religions in South Asia.
- 3) Critically discriminate between reliable and less reliable information from a variety of sources providing data about South Asia.
- 4) Apply appropriate scholarly and research methods that pertain to the study of religion to a topic of their choosing.
- 5) Develop effective written communication skills for both academic and popular audiences.

Other Course Materials

Additional readings will be available on Blackboard. These assignments are marked with ** on the Schedule of Readings and Assignments available on Blackboard.

Outline of Topics

INTRODUCING SOUTH ASIA

Jan 17 - What is Identity?

Jan 24 - What is Hinduism?

Jan 31 -What is Islam?

Feb 7 - What is Sikhism?

ROUTINE VIOLENCE

Feb 14 - Violence, Identity, and History

Feb 21 - Identity Politics and Lord Ram

Feb 28 – Marked and Unmarked Indians

THE POWER OF LABELS

Mar 7 – The Indian Census and Labels

Mar 21 – Contesting Labels

Mar 28 – Caste and Social Structure

Apr 4 – Challenging Dominant Labels

EXAMINING SIKHISM

Apr 11 – 1984 and Sikh Identity

Apr 18 – Peer Review and Diasporic Sikhs

Apr 25 – Conclusions and Review

Exams and Assignments

PRESENTATIONS

Each scholar will present and lead discussion on a portion of the readings twice in the semester. Most days with a student presentation will include two students with separate reading assignments. Students can work together on this leadership (developing coordinated questions) but are not required to do so.

If a scholar must miss the session when they are scheduled to lead discussion due to an unexpected emergency, they must notify the professor as soon as possible and make a substitute presentation on a later date.

BLOG ESSAYS

Each scholar will compose three blog essays (750 word max), geared towards an educated but general public audience, applying insights from the class to explain the complexity of identity and related issues. Exceptional examples of these blogs will be published, with the author's permission, to the departmental blog. Blog entries (including an appropriate image, links, title, and tags) should be emailed to the professor by Friday (17 February, 24 March, and 21 April) at 4:00 of the week on which they are assigned. Each scholar should be prepared to discuss her/his example in the seminar on that day as well. The first blog post should address something about the dynamics and complexities of South Asia, the second should develop from issues in Pandey's Routine Violence, and the third should derive from the research completed for the final research papers.

RESEARCH PAPER COMPONENTS

Each scholar must prepare and write a 10 page research paper on a topic of their own choosing that will be graded according to the grading rubric presented in class early in the semester. The selection of topic should take place in consultation with the professor prior to submitting the formal proposal, which is one page describing the topic, the anticipated analysis and, most importantly, the argument that the scholar anticipates making. This proposal is due on 28 February. The second step in the process is to prepare an outline of the paper and a reading list of relevant sources, which is due 28 March.

Scholars will be assigned a peer review writing group. Each scholar must submit a complete draft to the group through Blackboard by 5:00 pm on 17 April. Each group member should review and comment on the other drafts in the group and meet with the group to discuss those drafts, comments, and rubrics during the first portion of class on 18 April.

The final research paper must be a formal academic paper that demonstrates analytical and critical thinking skills, presents a coherent argument, and reflects careful editing. The paper will serve as the final exam and is due by noon on May 2 (an extension beyond the scheduled final exam time of 7 pm on 1 May). I expect quality academic research making use of primary sources, peer-reviewed journals and books in Gorgas Library as appropriate, and the approaches discussed in class. Accurate citations/references are required for any academic paper. When submitting the final paper, scholars must include each component of the paper (proposal, outline and reading list, draft and peer review comments) along with the final draft.

Grading Policy

Assessments		Points possible
Attendance and Participation		100
Student presentation/discussion leadership	2 times, 75 points each	150
Blog essays	3 essays, 100 points each	300
Research Paper Proposal		50
Outline and reading list		50
Peer Review participation		50
Final Research paper		300

The course has 1000 points possible. Final grades will be based on the following ranges: 970-1000 = A+; 920-969 = A; 900-919 = A-; 870-899 = B+; 820-869 = B; 800-819 = B-; 770-799 = C+; 720-769 = C; 700-719 = C-; 600-699 = D; 0-599 = F

All academic work must be the product of the scholar submitting it. Cheating will not be tolerated. Plagiarizing the work of someone else (quoting or summarizing another person's ideas or intellectual labor without giving them credit through proper quotations, citations, and acknowledgment) is a serious offence. If I discover that a scholar has copied the work of another author (whether a peer, classmate, or published author), the case will be referred to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

Policy on Missed Exams and Coursework

Late submissions of any assignments will be penalized significantly, and a late draft of the research paper prohibits proper peer review. More than a week late may result in receiving a 0 on that

assignment. Final papers must be submitted by the due date because of the necessity of submitting final grades.

Attendance Policy

The success of this course requires the contribution of all scholars. When you are absent, you miss an opportunity to learn from the other scholars, and they miss an opportunity to learn from you. More than 2 absences will significantly impact your attendance /participation grade. If the absences are beyond your control due to health or family reasons, let me know as soon as possible. The impact of such excused absences may be reduced. If you are late, please join the class as soon as possible without disrupting the learning experience. Habitual tardiness, however, is unacceptable and can be counted as an absence. You remain responsible for anything that you miss, including announcements.

Your positive participation in the seminar is also vital. Participation goes beyond the number of words someone speaks to include both their contribution to the overall class and their attentiveness. I expect everyone to speak up during classes. Be prepared to ask questions about the readings and class material and/or contribute your own ideas or analysis. Disruptive behavior or disrespect shown to others will not be tolerated.

Statement on Academic Misconduct

Students are expected to be familiar with and adhere to the official Code of Academic Conduct (<http://catalog.ua.edu/undergraduate/about/academic-regulations/student-expectations/code-academic-conduct/>) provided in the Online Catalog.

Statement On Disability Accommodations

Contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) (<http://catalog.ua.edu/undergraduate/about/support-programs/disability-services/>) as detailed in the Online Catalog.

Severe Weather Protocol

Please see the latest Severe Weather Guidelines (<http://catalog.ua.edu/undergraduate/about/support-programs/severe-weather-guidelines/>) in the Online Catalog.

UAct Statement

The UAct website (<https://www.ua.edu/campuslife/uact/>) provides an overview of The University's expectations regarding respect and civility.