“#Mainlandsplaining”! Frustrated by the systemic marginality of life-worlds, social complexities, politics, challenges, and aspirations of the region denoted only in relation to its geographic relationship with New Delhi, several ‘Northeastern’ scholars have taken to this hashtag. This is a course intended for the curious to develop an overall competency on the heterogeneity of issues facing the region, and to appreciate the homogeneity with which the region is approached in the Indian national imagination.

We see how the region has evolved into a space of exception, against which normalcy is defined and legitimacy is claimed in most of mainland India. Though the histories and dynamics of individual states/provinces can be useful, this course takes a thematic approach. We use the lenses of Territory, Identity, Resources, People, and Security to rove across time-lines and spaces.

We see how and why Mizoram was the first state in India to vehemently oppose the Citizenship Amendment Bill, why the people of Arunachal Pradesh speak better Hindi than the rest in the region, why it took the women-the Meira Paibi of the Meitei’s and the Naga Mother’s Association to avert civil wars between Manipur and Nagaland. We see how the demographic changes in Tripura animate a part radical, part xenophobic Assamese reaction to ‘outsiders’, and what AFSPA and counter-insurgency has to do with Manipur having the highest rates of HIV infected people in India. We study the farce of the democratic process in Nagaland, and ravages of uranium mining in Meghalaya. We examine the evolution of India’s Look-East policy, ask why every mainland account of the region features the word ‘ethnic’, and the dynamics of state-nonstate cooperation in cross-border narco-politics.

This is a reading-heavy course; it relies extensively on class participation and deep and sustained interest on your part. Evaluation will overwhelmingly be research oriented.

Indicative Reading List


