Course Name: Islam in Postcolonial Societies: State, Identity & Gender

Course Code: --

Instructor: Ambreen Agha
Office: 53 (B), New Faculty Offices [Opposite flagpole]

Course Description:

This course will introduce students to the evolution of political and social thought and practice in postcolonial societies; its ramifications on issues of statecraft, community identity and more importantly, gender. The course will focus on colonial and postcolonial periods in an attempt to acquaint students with concepts like Political Islam, Social Islam and . It has been observed that the role of religion in political and social formations, including the role of religion in foreign policy, has been neglected or under-researched. The highlight of this course will be the importance of religion and religious thought in understanding wider political and social discourse in postcolonial societies like India and Pakistan.

Some important questions that this course aims to address are: What has been the nature of interaction between the various facets of Islam? With a state created in the name of Islam [Pakistan], to what extent have the multiple religious and sectarian orientations in the early twentieth century evolved in relation to one another in the twenty first century? Given that community formation has taken place over the bodies of women, what has been its impact on gender and the emergence of a sexual ethics in Islam? Has Islamic modernism undergone decline in the course of identity formation and assertion in colonial and post-colonial India and Pakistan?

Objective:

The aim of the course is to highlight the importance of religious thought in shaping political and social identities and spaces. The course will equip students with nuanced perspectives on the subject of Islam that generally evokes curiosity and will help broaden their understanding on the above mentioned concepts as well as historical background to religious articulations and assertions.

Course Evaluation:

Attendance & Class Participation: 10%

Book Review: 20% [1,200-1,500 words]
Film Review/Discussion: 10% [800-1000 words]
Fortnightly Class Assignment: 10%

End Semester Seminar Paper (2,000-2500 words): 50% [Break up: 40% Written Submission (April 30, 2020) and Presentations: 10% [May First-Second Week]
Course Structure

Section A
Islam: Relevance of the Past

This section will cover the rise of Islam in the context of tribal society and the historical process of transitioning into a state society. The subsequent expansion of the Islamic empire under caliphate and its interface with the new regions led to accommodations and the eventual crisis of caliphate.

Week 1-4

(i) Pre-Islamic history of Empires
Achaemenid (550-330 BC), Parthians (247 BC-224 AD), Sassanians & Contemporaries (224 AD-651 AD)
(ii) Fall of Sassanids & Rise of Islam (10th century A.D)
(iii) Crisis of Caliphate 1(11th-12th centuries A.D)

Section B
Islam in South Asia

Week 5-8

This section will place Delhi Sultanate in larger Islamic history and understand the nature of state and society in medieval India, which will focus on the importance of Sufism as a social force. With the coming of colonialism and subsequent interest in women’s question, this section will look at the creation of homogenised community identities in context of reformism and revivalism. How gender became imperative for class, caste and homogenised community identity formation?

The unit will look at the questions of women’s agency and violence and how women have often played overlapping identities. In context of partition and communal identification of women, any task of reconstruction and rebuilding of community identity fell on women.

(i) Pre-colonial State and Society
(ii) Religious Identities in Colonial India
(iii) Partition, Gender and State

Section C
Post-Colonial* India and Pakistan

Week 9-12

The trajectory of independent India wherein the Constitution declared equality as fundamental right, the rubric will trace the history of feminist politics in India, codification of Hindu Code Bill [1955-56], the question of Uniform Civil Code and Women Reservation Bill.

In context of Pakistan, the Unit will look at Pakistan as the first modern state to be founded in the name of Islam and its journey thereof, with implications on gender and national identity.
Pakistan: Concept of Islamic State, the role of Ulama and the Hudood Ordinance

India: Uniform Civil Code and Women’s Reservation Bill

Week 13-14

Presentations

*Here postcolonial is used in strictly temporal sense which refers to the period soon after decolonisation.

Essential Readings for the Course:

3. Lesley Hazleton, After the Prophet: The Epic History of Shia-Sunni Split, 2010
4. Mohammad Habib, Introduction to Elliot & Dowson’s History of India, Volume 2, 1952
5. Mohammad Habib, Studies in Medieval Indian Polity and Culture: The Delhi sultanate and its Times, 2015 [Introduction]
6. Richard Eaton, Temple Desecration in Pre-modern India, EPW, 2000
7. Peter Jackson, The Delhi Sultanate: A Political and Military History, 1999
8. Sunil Kumar, Politics, The Muslim Community and Hindu-Muslim Relations Reconsidered: North India in Early 13th Century in Rajat Dutta (ed.) Rethinking of Millennium: Perspectives on Indian History: From the 8th to the 18th century: Essays for Harbans Mukhia, 2008
19. Tanika Sarkar, Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation: Community, Religion and Cultural Nationalism, [Chapter 1], 2001