This course will explore the fascinating paradox that history and culture in India have both empowered and constrained women. It will examine contemporary India's women in terms of issues and imagery, using both historical and analytical perspectives. We will probe the role women play in socio-economic life and politics in the context of their contribution to the nation's freedom from British rule, and of their own wide ranging struggle for political and constitutional rights in independent India. We will look at the role and status of women as reflected in the imagery of religion, mythology, films, literature and art. The course will follow a seminar format, with lectures, discussions, and wherever possible, relevant out-of-class activities.

Major topics for study:  
- Demographic Profile of Women in India/India: an Introduction  
- Women in the Work Force  
- Religion, Culture, the Family  
- Depiction of the Female in Indian Art  
- Women in Indian Cinema  
- Literature and Poetry: eg. Kamala Das, Anita Desai, for contemporary fiction  
- Mahatma Gandhi's Vision for Women's Role in National Life  
- Rebels, Revolutionaries and the Independence Movement  
- Post-Independence India (1947 on): From Lobbying to Militancy  
- The Indian Women's Movement Today: Problems and Strengths

REQUIRED READING:

Required and recommended readings will either be placed on Reserve in the Library or be photocopied for a reading packet (available at cost). These would include material from: Devaki Jain (ed), Indian Women; B.R. Nanda, (ed), Indian Women: From Purdah to Modernity; Gail Minault, The Extended Family as Metaphor: Women's Political Participation in India.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

There are no quizzes, tests, or examinations for this course. Rather, it will emphasize class participation and skills of comprehension and presentation. The approximate grading breakdown will be:
- 40% for an end-of-term Project selected by each student (about 10 typed pages in length) and orally presented as well to the class;  
- 40% for 3 or 4 short (1-3 typed pages) papers spread over the semester. These could vary in nature and be book reviews, film critiques, or essays.  
- 20% for class participation.

THIS COURSE IS ALSO DESIGNATED FOR SOCIOLOGY CREDIT IN 86-3