WOMEN ON THE MARGIN: A LITERARY PERSPECTIVE TO INDIA

Mandakranta Bose

This course will explore marginality as a condition of women's lives in India through literary representations as well as historical, sociological and political studies. While the discourse of and on women in India is of long historicity, it is only in recent times that it has evolved into women's autonomous self-awareness whereby women's action has gained an unprecedented urgency and validation. What women are doing in India today and what is happening to them is of particular interest because the contemporary discourse in India insists on proclaiming the fundamental unity of all marginality, which is why the works we will study will be found to cross gender boundaries in their perception of subjugating social and cultural constructions. They will also help to explain why women's movements in India are uncompromisingly dedicated to a universal programme of self-determination.

Beginning in the early nineteenth century the movement for social reform gained momentum from the nationalist movement in India but it was not until the twentieth century that a conscious and urgent awareness of the meaning of marginality began to develop. This awareness has manifested itself not only in an acceleration of political action by marginalized groups but also in the founding of the discipline that has become famous as Subaltern Studies. Of these groups, women have tended to become the symbolic site of both disempowerment and militant renewal. The growth of women's education through the nineteenth century made women activists and writers of the time—few but increasingly vocal—actively aware of women's roles, work and status. In view of the rising self-awareness of women through the spread both of education and political action, women's place in the world came under increasing scrutiny by writers. In literature, this concern has been reflected in the insistent exploration of social, political and economic relationships. Women's writing and writing about women has become the primary preoccupation of a number of modern writers. This course will explore that discourse and its social background to understand how women's lives are taking shape in India.
Required Texts


Critical Reading


ASSIGNMENTS AND REQUIREMENTS

For presentations and papers students will choose topics in consultation with the instructor.

Class presentation: 20%
Midterm exam: 30%
Research paper: 40%
Attendance and class participation: 10%


**RECOMMENDED READINGS:**


**ASSIGNMENTS AND REQUIREMENTS:**

- Class Presentation: 20%
- Midterm Exam: 30%
- Research Paper: 40%
- Attendance and Class Participation: 10%

**DESIGNATED CREDIT:**

This course can be applied to 3 hours unassigned upper division credits in Sociology and Anthropology.