

EXPLORING A NON-WESTERN CULTURE: THE TAMILS

ANTH 1100, Spring 2002: M-W 12-12:50 in HUMN 150, plus weekly recitations

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GOALS OF THIS COURSE:

This course is designed to fulfill the College of Arts & Sciences Core Curriculum requirement in Cultural and Gender Diversity by helping to overcome ethnocentrism and fostering a greater awareness of the other societies with whom we share the Earth. It will also illustrate some of the basic ideas and methods of cultural anthropology, a discipline that studies and compares different cultures and social systems around the world. My goal is to give lower-division students an intensive ethnographic encounter with one particular non-Western culture, that of the Tamils (pron. Tá-mul), a mainly Hindu ethnic and linguistic group numbering over 60 million found in southern India and in the northeastern region of Sri Lanka, and which is also a growing diasporic community in the USA, Canada, and Europe. As a cultural anthropologist, I have conducted extensive fieldwork in the Tamil-speaking regions of Sri Lanka and south India, so this course will reflect my own experiences and research interests.

THEMES IN TAMIL CIVILIZATION: The Five Segments of the Course

- (1.) At the outset we will cover some basic background information on the geography, ecology, and population of the Tamil regions of India and Sri Lanka, including a map quiz. We will also discuss the challenges of doing fieldwork in Tamil society.
- (2.) Then we will explore the domains of arranged marriage, sex and gender roles, and the Hindu life cycle, using an Indian novel, xeroxed articles, as well as films.
- (3.) After that, we will enlarge our scope of vision by examining Tamil village life, the Hindu caste system, and popular beliefs and rituals in the Hindu religious tradition.
- (4.) In the fourth section of the course, we will examine some of the major achievements of Tamil literature and creative arts, basing our discussion around A.K. Ramanujan's classical translation, *Poems of Love and War*. We'll also study how the Tamil alphabet works and give you a chance to write your name in Tamil.
- (5.) In the final part of the course we will look at Tamil pop culture and contemporary Tamil politics, paying attention to the roots of the bitter Tamil-Sinhalese conflict in Sri Lanka today and exploring aspects of modern Tamil culture on the internet.

Any student eligible for and needing academic adjustments or accommodations because of a disability is requested to speak with the professor no later than Feb. 2.

READINGS, FILMS, & SPECIAL EVENTS

Three books plus a bound xeroxed packet of articles are required reading for this course. R.K. Narayan, *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937), Dennis McGilvray, *Symbolic Heat* (1998), and A.K. Ramanujan, *Poems of Love and War* (1985) are available at the CU Bookstore (in the UMC basement) and at the Colorado Bookstore (on the corner of Broadway & College Ave.) The **xeroxed packet** is available only at the CU Bookstore. Several copies of the required books & readings are also on 24 hr. reserve in Norlin Library, along with maps of the Indian Subcontinent. (You will need to consult a good, up-to-date map or atlas of the South Asian region for the map quiz.) Supplementing the lectures and readings will be a number of films, slide presentations, invited guests, role-playing simulations, and exploratory internet web-surfing assignments. These elements are integral to the course; be sure to attend and take notes so that you can cite them as sources in your essay and exams.

CRITERIA FOR YOUR GRADE: All of these must be completed in order to pass the course.

Map quiz		10%	In class, Feb. 13
Recitation work	20%	Weekly	
Mid-term examination	20%	In class, Wednesday, Feb. 27	
Mid-term essay	20%	Due in class, Wednesday, April 10.	
Final examination		30%	Tuesday, May 7. 10:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

EXAMS, WRITTEN WORK, & OTHER ASSIGNMENTS

The Map Quiz questions will be distributed in advance, along with blank answer sheets, to enable you to locate and memorize the answers. The mid-term exam and the final exam will consist of objective-type questions (T/F, multiple choice, matching), short-answer and fill-in-the-blank questions, and drawing or interpreting some visual diagrams, maps, or symbols. The final exam will primarily cover the portion of the course following the mid-term, with a smaller cumulative section over the entire semester. No blue books will be needed. The essay (5 double-spaced typewritten pages) will be on an assigned topic and will be graded and returned in your recitation section. The essay will be graded for grammar, spelling, and punctuation as well as for clarity, insight, and good use of evidence. Weekly recitation work will vary but it will involve such things as an internet research assignment, a written response to a question from the readings, or participation in a debate or role-playing simulation. Attendance at lectures and active involvement in recitation activities is expected of all students and these will be factored into your recitation grade.

GENERAL POLICIES

- **All absences, missed exams, and late papers must be authorized in advance by the Professor or your Teaching Assistant.**
- **All assignments will lose one full letter grade if not submitted on time, and will lose an additional letter grade for every additional 24 hours they are overdue, weekends included.**
- **All exams, essays, and assignments must be completed in order to receive a passing grade in the course.**
- **Attendance in lecture and recitations is required. Notify the TA in advance of any absences. Attendance may be recorded without notice**
- **Any student found cheating or plagiarizing will receive an "F" in the course and will be reported to campus authorities for additional sanctions.**

**Assigned readings for lectures & recitations
during the week of:**

(*in xeroxed packet from CU Bookstore)

Jan. 14-18 Doing Fieldwork in a Tamil Community

McGilvray, *Symbolic Heat*, 8-19.

*McGilvray, "Excerpts from My Sri Lanka Fieldwork Diary"

*Map quiz materials. Consult a current map or atlas and start learning the answers.

Internet resource guide handout in recitations

Jan. 21-25 Dravidian Cross-Cousin Marriage and Household Types [No Class Jan. 21]

R.K. Narayan, *The Bachelor of Arts* (start)

Explore internet sites for geography, maps, and tourism in South India and Sri Lanka.

Jan. 28 - Feb. 1 The Ideal Tamil Life Cycle

R.K. Narayan, *The Bachelor of Arts* (finish)

Film: *The Fourth Stage*

Explore internet for ashrams and hermitages for gurus, saints, and sanniyasis

Feb. 4-8 Male : Female :: Cool : Hot -- Tamil Concepts of the Body

McGilvray, *Symbolic Heat*, 20-53.

*McGilvray, "Sexual Power & Fertility in Sri Lanka: . . . "

Film: *Bombay Eunuch*

Mid-term Exam Study Guide handout in recitations

Explore internet sites for Hindu medicine & health (Ayurveda, Siddha, etc.)

Feb. 11-15 Family Roles in Tamil Society

*McGilvray, "Households in Akkaraipattu,"

MAP QUIZ IN CLASS, Wednesday, Feb. 13

Arranged marriage data sheets in recitations

Feb. 18-22 Arranged Marriages

*Reynolds, "The Auspicious Married Woman"

*Wadley, "The Paradoxical Powers of Tamil Women"

*Moreno, "A Bride for Raman"

*Matrimonial ads in a south Indian newspaper, *The Hindu*, Madras

Film: *Modern Brides*

Explore internet sites for arranged marriages and gender issues in South Asia.

Feb. 25 - Mar. 1 Loose Ends, Review for Mid-Term Exam

No assigned readings
MID-TERM EXAM, Wednesday, Feb.27

Mar. 4-8 How the Caste System Works

*Moffatt, "Untouchability in South India: A Historical Review"
*Trawick, "The Story of the Jackal Hunter Girl"
*McGilvray, Conceptual Diagram of the Hindu Caste System
Explore internet for caste or anti-caste websites in South Asia.

Mar. 11-15 Basic Concepts in Popular Hinduism

*Eck, *Darsan: Seeing the Divine Image in India*, 2-58.
McGilvray, *Symbolic Heat*, 54-72.
Essay topic handout in recitations
Explore internet sites for Hinduism and other religions in South Asia.

Mar. 18-22 Puja, Pilgrimage, & Possession

*Kapadia, "Dancing the Goddess"
*Nabokov, "Expel the Lover, Recover the Wife"
Film: *Kataragama*
Puja ritual simulation script handout
Explore internet sites for specific temples and shrines

Mar. 25-29 SPRING BREAK. Try to visit Tamilnadu or Sri Lanka if you can!

Apr. 1-5 Doing a Ritual in Class: Puja

*V. Narayan, "Creating the South Indian 'Hindu' Experience in the U.S."
Discuss roles in the puja simulation, Mon. April 1
Puja ritual simulation in class, Wed. April 3
Tamil alphabet handout: read it and bring it to recitation

Apr. 8-12 Tamil Language and Poetry: The Roots of Modern Tamil Identity

Ramanujan, *Poems of Love and War*: First read the "Translator's Note" (xi-xviii) and the "Afterward" (229-297). Then read and savor at least two poems from each section of the book: (Kurinci 3-30, Neytal 31-49, Palai 51-66, Mullai 67-87, Marutam 89-110, Kings at War 113-123, Poets and Dancers 125-135, Chieftains 137-151, Lessons 155-163, War and After 165-193, Poems in a Different Key 195-211, Religious Poems 213-228.)

ESSAY DUE IN CLASS, Wednesday, April 10

Explore internet for sites on Tamil history, language, classical music, art, and literature

Apr. 15-19 Art, Film, Politics, and Tamil Nationalism

*Dickey, "The Politics of Adulation"

Film: *Kasthuri*

Explore internet sites for contemporary Tamil cinema stars and Bollywood film music.

Apr. 22-26 Origins of the War in Sri Lanka

*Manogaran, "Space-related Identity in Sri Lanka"

Film: *Suicide Killers*

Explore internet for background, propaganda, and latest news on Sri Lanka conflict

Apr. 29 - May 3 Final Week of Class: Loose Ends & Review for Final Exam

Final Exam Study Guide and course FCQ evaluation forms, Wednesday, May 1.

Review and discussion in recitations

FINAL EXAM, TUESDAY, MAY 7, 10:30 AM - 1:00 PM, in Humanities 150