

Northern Arizona University
College of Arts and Letters

Spring 2013
Department of History

HISTORY 520 READINGS IN ASIAN HISTORY: SUBALTERN SUBJECTS AND "POSTCOLONIAL" HISTORIES

Instructor: Sanjay Joshi

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Description, Background, and Objectives

The Subaltern Studies project originally emerged from a group of historians dissatisfied with the ways in which traditional historiography erased histories of subordinated groups in South Asia. Over time, however, Subaltern Studies has become intellectual hot property across the world and also developed a broad interdisciplinary following. Much of the current global interest in Subaltern Studies comes from the ways the project intersects with, and contributes to, a larger "postcolonial" critique. Historians and scholars from a variety of disciplines today regularly cite Subaltern Studies in their work, or use the Gramscian category of "subaltern" as it has been deployed by Ranajit Guha and other members of the Subaltern Studies collective. The postcolonial turn in Subaltern Studies, while contributing to its immense popularity within the realms of western academe, has also generated its share of critiques and disagreements. A number of scholars have questioned the premises, implications, as well as the results which the "postcolonial" turn has produced in "Subalternist" historical writings. These critiques of the Subaltern Studies parallel, though are not identical to, the sorts of questions being raised about postcolonial writing in the humanities, liberal arts and social sciences more generally

Through exploring the changing nature of the Subaltern Studies project, the course provides us an opportunity to evaluate the significance of "postcoloniality" in a specific historical and historiographical context. Why and how did the project move from studying subalterns to a study of "subalternity"? What does this shift mean for the scholarly and political agenda of Subaltern Studies? Has "postcoloniality" enhanced or attenuated the agenda of the Subalternists and historiography in general? Has "theory" overwhelmed "narrative" in the writing of history? What have been the global implications of the contributions of the Subaltern Studies project? These are some of the basic questions that the course hopes to explore.

Prerequisites

The course is open to graduate students from a variety of disciplines. A background in South Asian history or culture is not a pre-requisite. But given that much of the course does deal with historical and historiographical questions relating to South Asia, some understanding of South Asian history and culture will necessarily accompany our efforts to understand the debates

surrounding "subalternity." Familiarity with current debates in cultural theory or social and cultural history, particularly as they relate to the colonial and post-colonial contexts, is desirable.

Readings

We cover a substantial amount of reading in this course. In addition to books listed below, students will be required to read certain articles for assessing the historiographical debates concerning the "Subalternists." These will be available on electronic reserve either via BBLearn or the course webpage. The following required texts have been ordered at the NAU Bookstore.

Required Texts

Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Spivak ed. *Selected Subaltern Studies*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

Ranajit Guha ed. *A Subaltern Studies Reader, 1986-1995*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

Said, Edward W., *Orientalism*, 1st Vintage Books ed (Vintage, 1979).

Morris, Rosalind C., *Can the Subaltern Speak?: Reflections on the History of an Idea* (Columbia University Press, 2010).

Sarkar, Sumit. *Writing Social History*. (Oxford University Press, 2006).

Dipesh Chakrabarty. *Provincializing Europe*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

Partha Chatterjee. *The Black Hole of Empire: History of a Global Practice of Power*. (Princeton University Press, 2012).

Cooper, Frederick, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*, 1st edn (University of California Press, 2005).

Sinha, Mrinalini, *Specters of Mother India: The Global Restructuring of an Empire* (Duke University Press Books, 2006).

Stoler, Ann Laura, ed., *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History* (Duke University Press Books, 2006).

Recommended Texts (Provisional)

Students will be asked to make TWO oral presentations (and submit written transcripts or other forms of documentation [e.g. power points]) on texts that supplement the course readings. The first presentation is on a book of their choice from one the scholars who are part of or closely associated with the Subaltern Studies project. The second presentation attempts to capture the global reach of the Subalternist/Postcolonial project. I make some recommendations below, though will be happy to entertain other suggestions from you. For alternative books for the

second presentation, please write a brief paragraph justifying what you see as the connection between your chosen work and the themes of this course. Submit that recommendation for my approval **by the third week of classes** so that we can finalize the presentations list before the fifth week of the course.

I have set out the readings in pairs. While you are not compelled to choose a pair of readings, I would recommend you do so, as there are thematic connections between the paired set of recommended readings.

First Presentation	Second Presentation
Ranajit Guha. <i>Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in India</i> . Durham: Duke University Press, reprint, 1999.	Scott, James C., <i>Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts</i> , 1st edn (Yale University Press, 1992)
Chatterjee, Partha, <i>Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse</i> (University Of Minnesota Press, 1993) OR —, <i>The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories</i> (Princeton University Press, 1993) OR —, <i>A Princely Imposter? The Strange and Universal History of the Kumar of Bhawal</i> . Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002.	Rafael, Vicente L, <i>The Promise of the Foreign: Nationalism and the Technics of Translation in the Spanish Philippines</i> (Duke University Press Books, 2005) OR Rafael, Vicente L., <i>White Love and Other Events in Filipino History</i> (Duke University Press Books, 2000) OR Duara, Prasenjit. <i>Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China</i> . University Of Chicago Press, 1997.
Gandhi, Leela, <i>Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought, Fin-de-Siècle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship</i> (Duke University Press Books, 2006)	Stoler, Ann Laura, <i>Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things</i> (Duke University Press Books, 1995)
Shahid Amin. <i>Event, Metaphor, Memory: Chauri Chaura, 1922-1992</i> . Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.	Scott, James C. <i>The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia</i> . Yale University Press, 2010.

Nicholas Dirks. <i>Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India</i> . Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.	Glassman, Jonathon. <i>War of Words, War of Stones: Racial Thought and Violence in Colonial Zanzibar</i> . Indiana University Press, 2011.
Ghosh, Amitav. <i>In an Antique Land: History in the Guise of a Traveler's Tale</i> . Vintage, 1994.	Ho, Engseng. <i>The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility Across the Indian Ocean</i> . 1st ed. University of California Press, 2006.
Pandey, Gyanendra. <i>The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India</i> . 2nd ed. Oxford University Press, USA, 2006.	Scott, James C. <i>Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed</i> . New ed. Yale University Press, 1999.

Assignments and Evaluation

In addition to regular attendance and participation, students will be required to write one formal paper, write six reviews of regular readings, make two oral presentations to the class based on the recommended readings, above, and submit weekly questions/responses to class readings.

Paper

The final paper for this class should be a substantial *historiographical review* between fifteen and twenty pages in length. For this paper, students may focus on either:

- a. An intellectual biography outlining the changing intellectual and/or political concerns of any one of the Subaltern Studies scholars. **OR**
- b. How particular historical themes (e.g. nationalism, ethnic ["communal"] conflict, gender relations, or the use of archives) are dealt with in the corpus of "Subalternist" writings. **OR**
- c. The contributions, significance, and/or the problems associated with using some **SPECIFIC** contribution of the Subaltern Studies approach in the historiography of another region of the world (or the theoretical/empirical literature of another discipline) with which they are familiar.

The final version of this paper is **due April 30th**, and will be worth up to **35 % of the course grade**. A preliminary topic outline (1-2 pages, typed), is due by **January 29th (no points)**. A detailed typed proposal for this paper, that includes a summary of the objectives, thesis, some

indication of the content, including a preliminary bibliography, is **due March 12th (worth 5 %)**. Overall the paper and related assignments will account for **40% of the course grade**

Regular Reviews

To ensure that students are well prepared for discussion, the course demands that students write a three page (double-spaced) review of SIX of the main readings between January 22nd and February 26th and March 12th and April 16th. The review should provide a summary or overview of the theme of the week's readings, pose one *substantive* question relating to this theme, and provide an answer in outline form. Students should be prepared to elaborate on the outline orally in class. These will count towards **30% of the course grade**. I urge you to write more than six of these reviews, so that the best six can count toward your final grade. The reviews are due in class and *cannot be accepted* after class discussion of materials.

Oral Presentation

In addition, on March 5th and April 23rd, each student in the class will make an oral presentation of around ten to fifteen minutes on texts that supplement the course readings. Each presentation needs to be accompanied by either a written transcript or other forms of documentation [e.g. power points]). For most part, the choices of readings for presentation will be allocated on a "first come, first served" basis. The presentation should summarize the argument of the reading and relate it to previous course readings. As with any work in a graduate seminar, I will also expect your own analysis and evaluation of the reading you report upon in your presentation. I will expect you to bring in a written outline of your presentation, which you will submit to me at the end of the presentation. Each oral presentation will be worth **5 points**, with both accounting for **10% of the course grade**.

Reading Responses

By 10 am on the day of *each week* of assigned readings ALL students must submit a very brief explanation (in one or two sentences) of the main argument of the readings that week, and two questions aimed at stimulate discussion in the seminar or to address issues that are not clear to you. You may submit these to me via e-mail. **Together, these will count toward 10% of your course grade.**

Participation

Participation is key to any seminar experience. You are expected to come to class having read, thought about, and **READY TO DISCUSS** the readings assigned for each week of the seminar. Just because you have decided not to submit a written review for a particular week of class, **DOES NOT MEAN** that you are not obliged to read or be ready to discuss the readings for any week. **10% of the total grade** will be based on my subjective evaluation of the students' participation in the seminar. Absences from class **FOR ANY REASON**, will be penalized.

The grading scale will be as follows:

90% + = **A**; 80-89% = **B**; 70-79% = **C**; 60-69% = **D**; below 60% = **F**.

Provisional Course Schedule (subject to modification)

I. INTRODUCTIONS

January 17 *Course Introduction*

January 24 *Subaltern Studies: INTRODUCTIONS*

Readings

1. Ranajit Guha, "Preface" and "On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India," *Selected Subaltern Studies* (henceforth *SSS*).
2. Ranajit Guha, *Subaltern Studies Reader* (henceforth *SSR*) "Introduction."
3. Edward Said, "Foreword." (*SSS*).
4. David Ludden, *Reading Subaltern Studies*, "Introduction."
<http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~sj6/LuddenIntroduction.pdf>
5. Sanjay Seth et. al. "Postcolonial Studies: a beginning." *Postcolonial Studies*, (Vol. 1, No. 1, (1998) pp. 7 - 11. <http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~sj6/sanjaysethetcpostcolonialintro.pdf>

II. FROM SUBALTERN TO THEORIZING OF SUBALTERNITY

January 31 *Writing the Subalterns into South Asian History*

Readings

From *SSS*.

1. Ranajit Guha, "Prose of Counter Insurgency."
2. Gyanendra Pandey, "Peasant Revolt and Indian Nationalism."
3. Shahid Amin, "Gandhi as Mahatma."
4. Gyanendra Pandey, "Encounters and Calamities."

AND

5. David Hardiman, "Coming of the Devi." (*SSR*)

OUTLINE OF PAPER TOPIC DUE

February 7 ***Toward the Postcolonial Turn***

Reading

Edward Said, *Orientalism*.

February 14 ***Subaltern Studies and Postcolonial Criticism***

Readings

1. Rosalind O'Hanlon, "Recovering the Subject: Subaltern Studies and Histories of Resistance in Colonial South Asia." <http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~sj6/OHanlonRecovering.pdf>
2. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography." (SSS)
3. Gyan Prakash, "Subaltern Studies as Postcolonial Criticism." *American Historical Review* 99, 5 (December 1994).
<http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~sj6/prakashpostcolonialAHA.pdf>
4. Gyanendra Pandey, "In Defense of the Fragment: Writing About Hindu-Muslim Riots in India Today." (SSR)
5. Ranajit Guha, "Chandra's Death." (SSR)

February 21 ***Betraying the Subaltern?***

Reading

Sumit Sarkar, *Writing Social History*.

February 26 ***Can the Subaltern Speak? Some Reflections***

Readings

Rosalind Morris, ed. *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (Selections)

March 7 **STUDENT PRESENTATIONS (First Set of Recommended Readings)**

March 14 *Subalternity, History, and Empire*

Reading

Partha Chatterjee, *Black Hole of Empire*.

FORMAL PAPER PROPOSAL DUE

March 21 **SPRING BREAK**

March 28 *Provincializing Europe*

Reading

Dipesh Chakrabarty. *Provincializing Europe*.

Dipesh Chakrabarty, "[The Politics and Possibility of Historical Knowledge: Continuing the Conversation](#)." *Postcolonial Studies* 14, 2 (2011) pp. 243-50.

III. BEYOND SOUTH ASIAN FRAMES

April 4 *Colonialism and Power*

Reading

Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*.

April 11 *History Beyond the National*

Reading

Mrinalini Sinha, *Specters of Mother India*.

April 18 *The Postcolonial at "Home"*

Reading

Laura Ann Stoler, *Haunted by Empire*. (Selections)

April 25 **STUDENT PRESENTATIONS (Second Set of Recommended Readings)**

May 2 PAPER DUE **IN HARD COPY** to my box in the main history office.