Dr. Shruti Kapila

This wide-ranging new option explores the ideas, individuals, and practices that have informed democracy in India since the important yet largely neglected 1970s. Sustained periods of rapid economic growth have moved India from the periphery to the centre of narratives of global change, as we enter the second decade of the much-heralded but ambiguous 'Asian Century.' The special subject will historically locate the rise of Indian democracy. While scholars and journalists alike commonly attach the now-clichéd descriptor ‘the world’s largest democracy’ to India, the life and career of democracy in India have made significant departures from its Western counterparts, and have had markedly more radical outcomes. Discussions will encompass varieties of democracy including republican, representative, deliberative, republican and agonistic ones that have shaped its form in India.

A primary focus will be an interrogation of India’s experiments with some of the biggest questions of global political modernity. These include affirmative action and social justice, linguistic diversity, territorial sovereignty, religious and cultural recognition, and the ways both socialism and capitalism were thought anew in India. Scholars writing in the last four decades have consistently described Indian democracy as in a state of crisis, but this course seeks instead to understand this ‘crisis’ in terms of the often conflictual democratization of Indian society, and to understand how conflict and crisis, in this sense, is both threatening to but importantly, generative of democratic change.

Moreover, while India boasts high levels of voter action and the state is an important site of democratic competition, this special subject seeks to explore the life and career of democracy beyond the state in India. The mass anti-colonial mobilizations of the interwar period informed and in many ways made possible the radical and ambitious project of republican democracy. The course will explore the ways in which the Constitution of India adopted in 1950 to found the Republic has had lasting consequences on and imbued a logic to the postcolonial trajectory of democracy, both in regard to the state and society. The role of the press,
mobilizations, campaigns and election manifesto rhetoric would be explored in this Paper.

By highlighting the role of ideas in driving historical change in India, the course will explore important thinkers of India's political modernity, including but not limited to prominent figures such as Jawaharlal Nehru and B.R. Ambedkar. While most scholarship has approached India as a ‘culture’ or ‘society,’ this course will explore India as a locus of the generative and transformative potential of political ideas and their impact in making India an enduring democracy.

The sources for the course are diverse including Collected Papers of major political figures, extracts from newspapers, election manifestos, official reports and contemporary secondary literature.

The format will be introductory lectures followed by class-based discussion with relevant sources discussed each week. There will be an informal (out of class hours) film programme to complement the teaching programme. Revision and further gobbet discussion will be organised for the final term.

A course pack of sources (barring those from published and online collected works) will be provided.

(Members of the Constituent Assembly, 1946 that drafted the Constitution and India’s democratic architecture)
**Proposed Themes and Classes:**

Week One:

**Introduction to Postcolonial India**

Week Two:

**Ideas and Forms of Democracy**

*Constituent Assembly Debates (1946-49)*, 170 pages

Week Three:

**Foundations and Thinkers of Indian Democracy, Part I: Gandhi**

*CWMG* (Collected works of Mahatma Gandhi): 110 pages: online selections

*BAWS*: 3 (B R Ambedkar Works and Speeches): 60 pages

Week Four:

**Foundations and Thinkers of Indian Democracy Part II:**

**Ambedkar, Patel and Republican Democracy**

Sunderlal Report: 20 pages

*BAWS*: 60 pages


Week Five:

**Nehru: The State of Democracy and the Conservative Challenge**

Nehru, *SWJN* (Selected works of Jawaharlal Nehru): 80 pages

Rajagopalachari, C. *Birth of Swatantra Party (Freedom)*: 40 pages

Dar Commission, 30 pages
Week Six:

**Communism, Socialism and Democracy**
Lohia, R *Marx, Gandhi and Socialism*, 40 pages
Nehru, *SWJN*: 20 pages
*Selected works of Charu Majumdar*, 30 pages
Ranadive, B.T. *Collected Works*, 40 pages
Communist Party of India (Marxist), *Selected Documents and manifesto*: 10 pages

Week Seven:

**Indira and Indian Populism**
Gandhi, Indira *Selected Speeches of Indira Gandhi*, 30 pages
Mrs. Gandhi’s 20-point programme, 10 pages
Shah Commission, 40 pages

Week Eight:

**Violence and Democracy**
194 Riots:http://www.pucl.org/Topics/Religion-communalism/2003/who-are-guilty.htm, plus newspaper clipping, all online
Approx: 160 pages

Week Nine:

**New India and Coalition Democracy or the Second Democratic Upsurge**
Savarkar, V.D. *Hindutva: who is a Hindu?*, 20 pages
Lokniti National Election Surveys, 1992-2002, 60 pages
Rao, P.V. Narasimha *Ayodhya 6 December 1992*, 20 pages
Advani, L.K. *My Country, My Life*, 15 pages
Kanshi Ram, online speech, 3 pages
Election manifesto BSP (1992-2002), 20 pages
Mandal commission, 20 pages

Week Ten:

**Power and Corruption in Indian Democracy**

India Corruption Study, 2005, Transparency International, 35 pages
Ethics Committee, Rajya Sabha, (Upper House), 2002, 30 pages
Kejriwal, Arvind India Against Corruption, Swaraj document, 35 pages

Week Eleven:

**The New Economy and Maoism**

Commanding Heights, 2000, Speech and Interview with Manmohan Singh on economic reforms, 15 pages
Sanhati (journal): 20 pages, Liberation (journal), 20 pages

Week Twelve:

**The Peasant and Indian Democracy**

SP election manifestos, 1990-2007, 10 pages
Week Thirteen:

**The City and Indian Democracy**


Plus city memoirs of Bombay/Delhi/Calcutta/Madras/Bangalore: 12 pages

Week Fourteen:

**The Environment of Indian Democracy**

Medha Patkar et al *India’s Environment*, 40 pages


Save Narmada (biggest dam and anti-dam movement) aims and literature, [http://www.narmada.org](http://www.narmada.org)

Approx: 10 pages

Plus documentary by

Van Maximillian Carlson’s film on Union Carbide and Bhopal Gas tragedy [http://www.bhopalthemovie.com](http://www.bhopalthemovie.com)

Week Fifteen:

**Cinema and the Pleasures of Democracy**

Discussion and selected viewing of

Television series on the *Ramayana*, (1980s)

Anurag Kashyap’s *Gangs of Wasseypur*, (2012)

Prakash Jha’s *Rajneeti* [Politics] (2005)

Shyam Bengal’s series on the Indian constitution (2013)
Week Sixteen:

**Internationalism and India as the world's largest democracy**

Nehru, *CWJN*, on Non-alignment, 25 pages

Mrs Gandhi on Bangladesh War, with Chris Panos, 28 mins

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F3RLKYYXQ39M](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F3RLKYYXQ39M)

PM Vajpeyi on Nuclear India, 7 mins

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1eSlyYQhnso](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1eSlyYQhnso)

US –India nuclear Deal 20 pages


Approx: 1668 pages, plus clippings

---

**Primary Sources**

**Writings of Major Political Figures:**

Ambedkar, B.R.  *Collected Works*

Azad, Maulana Abul Kalam *Selected Speeches and Writings*, Syed Shahabuddin, editor (New Delhi, 2007)

*Communist Party of India* (Marxist): Documents, proceedings and History

Gandhi, Indira *Selected Speeches of Indira Gandhi* (New Delhi)

Gandhi, M.K.  *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule* (Ahmedabad, 2001 [1938]) and *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (New Delhi, 1969-94)

Lohia, Ram Manohar *Collected Works of Dr. Lohia* (New Delhi, 2009); *Marx, Gandhi and Socialism* (Hyderabad, 1963)

Masani, M.R.  *Congress misrule and the Swatantra alternative*, foreword by C. Rajagopalachari (Bombay, 1966)

Narayan, Jayaprakash *Selected Works*, Bimal Prasad, editor (New Delhi, 2000-9); *Three Basic Problems of India: From Socialism to Sarvodaya* (London, 1964); *Towards Total Revolution* (Bombay, 1978)
Nehru, Jawaharlal *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* (New Delhi)

Patel, Vallabhbhai *For a United India: Speeches of Sardar Patel, 1947-1950* (Delhi, 1949); *Sardar Patel – In Tune with the Millions*, 2 vols., (Ahmedabad, 1975-76)

Rajagopalachari, C. *Birth of Swatantra Party (Freedom): Protect Farm and Family* (Madras, 1959); *21 Principles of the Swatantra Party* (Madras, 1959); *Swarajya* (journal)

Ranadive, B.T. *Collected Works*

Rao, P.V. Narasimha *Ayodhya 6 December 1992* (New Delhi, 2006)

Savarkar, V.D. *Hindutva: who is a Hindu?* (Mumbai, 1999); *Hindu Rashtra Darshan* (Bombay, 1949)

Tandon, P.D., ed., *Vinoba Bhave: The Man and His Mission* (Bombay, 1952)

**Biographies and Autobiographies**

Advani, L.K. *My Country, My Life* (New Delhi, 2008)


Frank, Katherine *Indira: The Life of Indira Nehru Gandhi* (London, 2001)


Gandhi, Rajmohan *Rajaji: a life* (New Delhi, 1997)

Nehru Jawaharlal *An Autobiography: with musings on recent events in India* (London, 1989 [1936])

Sundarayya, P. *An Autobiography*, Atlury Murali, editor (New Delhi, 2009)

**Official Commissions and Reports**

Constituent Assembly Debates (1946-49)

Sunderlal Report (1948) – on Hyderabad


Report of the Linguistic Provinces Commission (1948) – i.e. Dar Commission

Annual reports of the Commissioner of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (c. 1950-1984)

**Election Studies**


Lokniti National Election Surveys (1967-2009)


**Secondary Sources:**


Banerjee, Abhijit and Duflo, Esther *Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the Way to Fight Global Poverty* (New York, 2011)

Bardhan, Pranab *The Political Economy of Development in India* (Delhi, 1998)


Bayly, C A, *Recovering Liberties: Indian thought in the age of Liberalism and Empire* (Cambridge 2012)

‘The ends of liberalism and the political thought of Nehru’s India’ MIH forthcoming, and podcast available online on King’s India S Gopal Annual lecture


editor, *Wages of Freedom: Fifty Years of the Indian Nation-State* (Delhi, 1998)

Das, Veena *Critical Events: An Anthropological Perspective on Contemporary India* (Delhi, 1995)

*Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary* (Berkeley, 2007)

*Mirrors of Violence: communities, riots and survivors* (Delhi, 1990)


Dwyer, Rachel *Bollywood’s India: Hindi cinema as a guide to modern India* (London, 2014)

Giri, Saroj ‘The Maoists and the Poor: Against Democracy?’ *Economic & Political Weekly*, XLIV, 49 (December 2009)

‘Whither Maoists?’ *Sanhati* (28 April 2010)


Gupta, Dipankar *Interrogating Caste: Understanding Hierarchy & Difference in Indian Society* (New Delhi, 2000)

Held, David *Models of Democracy* (Cambridge, 2006)

Jayal, Niraja Gopal *Citizenship and its Discontents: An Indian History* (Cambridge, MA, 2013)

Kapila, Shruti and Devji Faisal (eds.), *Political thought in Action: The Bhagavad Gita and Modern India* (Cambridge, 2012)

Kapila, Shruti, ‘Global Intellectual History and the Indian Political’ in McMahon and Moyn (eds.) *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History*

Kaviraj, Sudipta *The Imaginary Institution of India: politics and ideas* (New York, 2010)

Khilnani, Sunil *The Idea of India* (New York, 1997)

Khilnani, Sunil, et al, *Nonalignment 2.0: A Foreign and Strategic Policy for India in the Twenty First Century* (New Delhi, 2012)

Khilnani, Sunil and Sudipta Kaviraj, eds., *Civil Society: History and Possibilities* (Cambridge, 20013)

Khosla, Madhav *The Indian Constitution* (Oxford, 2012)

Kohli, Atul *The Success of India’s Democracy* (Cambridge, 2001)

- *Democracy and Development in India: From Socialism to Pro-Business* (New Delhi 2010)
- *Democracy and Discontent: India’s Growing Crisis of Governability* (Cambridge, 1990)

Kothari, Rajni *Politics in India* (Boston, 1970)


McMahon Darrin M. and Moyn Samuel (eds) *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History*, (New York, 2013) essays by Moyn and Breckman


Mehta, Uday “The Social Question and the Absolutism of Politics,” *Seminar*, 615 (November 2010)

Michelutti, Lucia *The Vernacularisation of Democracy: Politics, Caste and Religion in India* (New Delhi, 2008)


Raghavan, Srinath *War and peace in modern India* (Basingstoke, 2010)

Rajagopal, Arvind *Politics after Television: religious nationalism and the reshaping of the Indian public* (Cambridge, 2001)

‘The Emergency as Prehistory of the New Indian Middle Class,’ *Modern Asian Studies*, 45, 5 (September 2011), pp. 1003-1049


‘The People Need to Breathe,’ *Outlook* (27 August 2012)

‘Bastar, Maoism and Salwa Judum,’ *Economic & Political Weekly*, 41, 29 (July 2006), pp. 3187-3192

Tarlo, Emma *Unsettling Memories: narratives of the emergency in Delhi* (London, 2003)

Varshney, Ashutosh *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India* (New Haven, 2002)

Vasudevan, Ravi *The Melodramatic Public: Film Form and Spectatorship in Indian Cinema* (Basingstoke, 2011)


Sample Questions

How and why was democracy an outcome of Indian nationalism?

Why was independent India declared a Republic?

How important was the Indian liberal tradition in preparing the ground for independent India’s democratic path?

How important were one of the following in creating the structures of Indian democratic politics and values a) M K Gandhi b) Jawaharlal Nehru c) B. R. Ambedkar d) Vallabhbhai Patel.

‘The Constitution of 1950 has above all produced political absolutism in India.’ Discuss.

Has democratic government transformed the status of the economically or socially disadvantaged Indians? You may answer either for the period between 1950 and 1980 or between 1980 and 2010.

How far was the ending of Mrs. Gandhi’s 'Emergency' a triumph of democratic government?

How important are ‘middle class’ politics to Indian democracy and how have they changed since the 1970s?

Why and in what ways has caste become a political category?

Are the concepts of ‘majority’ and ‘minority’ useful for understanding Indian democracy. If so, why?

Why did even India’s Communist governments in Bengal and Kerala maintain full representative government?

‘Increased urbanization has hindered the democratization of Indian society.’ Discuss.

In what ways has the idea of ‘revolution’ continued to be an important political concept since 1947?

Is the tension between ‘development’ and the environment essentially one of different conceptions democracy?
What role has violence played in democratic competition?

‘Mass media has democratized Indian democracy since 1990.’ Discuss.

Explain the causes and consequences of the ‘second democratic upsurge’ in India since 1992.

‘Republican but agonistic.’ Discuss this view of Indian democracy.