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EXTN- 562

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course will examine the concept of culture as it bears upon the articulation of both group and individual identities. We will interrogate what we mean by ‘identity’ – if it is a thing to be possessed, an essence in the character of a community or people, or something more complex, fluid and changing, or whether it exists at all. Through the course, these questions will be posed with reference to specific historical examples.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Starting from an understanding of the meaning of culture, this course intends to introduce students to some of the major debates on the subject of “identity politics.” From basic concepts and definitions, students will be introduced to contemporary debates on the problem of identity particularly those emerging from post-modernist positions. Are individual and collective identities primordial or are they historically constituted? Are identities fixed or mutable? How do individuals define themselves and their identities through active negotiations with political structures and cultural codes? This preliminary discussion will be followed by more specific case studies that would try to show how our individual and collective identities are born out of collective struggles for power among social groups who seek to impose and define identities of class, gender, caste, nation, religion through varied practices of domination over others.

PRE-REQUISITES
This course is for students who take a more than superficial interest in their society and culture. This is ideally for students who have developed an interest in the themes and problems introduced in the AIS course. This is also for students who enjoy reading, writing and expressing their thoughts on issues that affect their lives not only as students of this Institute but as citizens of this country and the world at large.

**COURSE STRUCTURE**

Classes are organized around a number of themes: including theoretical debates on the “identity question” and “identity categories” – such as gender, race, class, caste, nation etc. It will also introduce students to specific contexts of identity struggles and more significantly to the varied cultural strategies we use to express our identities. Students will be encouraged to explore these themes through discussions around the influences of cinema, popular culture and the vast spectrum of new and old media.

**EVALUATION**

A structure of continuous evaluation will be based on both written papers in response to specific readings (worth 60% of your grades) and an end semester research paper (worth 40% of your grade). The research paper will be based on a topic of your choice and involve the submission of a project report as well an oral presentation.

**COURSE OUTCOMES**

By the end of the course, students will expected to have gained a broad understanding and knowledge of the social, intellectual and political problems relating to modern South Asia. To be able to write critical, well-structured, well-researched and persuasive essays. To have challenged many of their assumptions about culture, identity and politics of South Asia and to be able to think more critically about the present.
Select Readings from:

1) Benedict Anderson- Imagined Communities; Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism, London, Verso, 1983
7) Paul du Gay and Stuart Hall (ed) Questions of Cultural Identity, SAGE 2011