Social History of Early India (M21420)

Four credits

Course instructor: Kumkum Roy

The course introduces students to some of the major themes that have been explored in early and early medieval social history. Each theme is discussed in the course of three to four lectures, and in each lecture, space is created for an interactive discussion based on a small excerpt from a primary source in translation, to familiarize students with the bases on which historical generalizations are made. These excerpts are made available prior to each semester when the course is offered.

Fifty percent of the evaluation for the course is on the basis of tutorials (approximately 2000 words each) and active participation in discussion on the tutorials. The remaining fifty percent of the evaluation is on the basis of the end semester examination. Separate readings are suggested for the tutorials, and these are notified at the beginning of the semester.

Themes discussed in the course include varna-jati formations and their significance within a broader framework of social stratification and a focus on attempts to reconstruct histories of marginalized groups; kinship structures and rites of passage including the asrama system; issues of gender and sexuality. These themes are presented as intersecting and overlapping rather than as watertight compartments.

Recommended readings

General/ background


Social stratification and identities


Brajadulal Chattopadhyaya, *Representing the Other? Sanskrit Sources and the Muslims (Eighth to Fourteenth Centuries)*, New Delhi, Manohar, 1998.


**Kinship Structures and Rites of Passage**


**Gender and Sexuality**


Ruth Vanita and Saleem Kidwai (eds.), *Same Sex Love in India: Readings from Literature and History*, New York, St. Martin’s, 2000.

Kumkum Roy

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