

Introduction to South Asia
A-5: South Asia through the Lens of Literature
Contemporary Short Stories from the South Asian Region

Duration: Fridays, 11 am – 1 pm; 20 January – 24 February 2017

Credits: 1

Course Instructor: Dr Promodini Varma

Note: The course is limited to a maximum of 25 students on a first-come-first-served basis. The course will not be offered if a minimum of ten students have not opted for it.

Rationale:

The attempt will be to better understand South Asia – its similarities and dissimilarities, its problems and strengths, its attitudes and assumptions and to study, through the work of its contemporary short story writers, the complex relationship between the myriad cultures of South Asia which are both similar and dissimilar. We will try and explore as many regions as we can within the limited time available.

Unit 1: What is literature and why read it; narrative as a meaning-making device; how to read the short story

Unit 2: Some recurring themes and what these short stories tell us about ourselves.

Unit 3: Identity and Modernity, or does location and locale change anything?

Unit 4: The power of the word and yet the word is not the thing: the importance of language and its limitations;

Unit 5: The short story in South Asia, from the *quissa* of *Arabian Nights* to Intizar Hussain via O Henry (or how the genre has changed over the years and in relation to the region)

Unit 6: Writing as a Political Act (and not just gender, race, caste and class)

Evaluation: 50 marks

2 written assignments of 10 marks each

End semester exam of 30 marks. (4 short questions of 5 marks each and 1 question requiring a long answer or a similar combination of long and short answers)

Reading List: Will be provided in class.