South Asian Visual Culture (REL 280)

Fall 2012  PROFESSOR:  Andy Rotman
MW 2:40–4:00  OFFICE:  Pierce Hall 203
OFFICE HOURS:  MW 4:30–5:30 or by appointment
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REQUIREMENTS
1. Attend class regularly. If you are unable to attend a class, please tell me in advance, in
person or via email. Attendance is a crucial part of your class participation grade, and more
than two unexcused absences will significantly hurt your grade.

2. Listen actively and speak thoughtfully. Be prepared to discuss the assignments in depth.
Keep in mind Wittgenstein’s aphorism, “Even to have expressed a false thought boldly and
clearly is already to have gained a great deal.” To this end, students will be asked to
introduce the readings for each class.

3. Make regular postings on Moodle, responding to the assignments as well as to the postings
of other students. I expect you to post 250+ words each week, in one post or more, as a way
to engage class discussion. Your postings should demonstrate a thoughtful and rigorous
engagement with the material. Creativity is encouraged, rambling is not. Although you are
welcome to focus on a particular article or passage within a week’s assignment, you should
try to contextualize that material within the rest of the week’s readings. Postings for each
week should be submitted by Friday at midnight of that week. In short, postings made during
a particular week should be posted in the folder for that week. At the end of the semester, you
will be expected to print out all of your posts and submit them to me along with your final
paper.

4. Write a 10-page research paper. You must have your topics approved by me, in person, by
November 30th. During the last week of the semester, you will present your research as a
work in progress. Final papers are due on December 19th.

5. If you have any questions about an assignment or need help or an extension, please let me
know. Just send me an email or stop by during my office hours. I will do my best to be
accessible, and I’m happy to make special arrangements to meet.

In summary, your grade will be determined by the quality of your participation in class
(35%), your postings on Moodle (30%), and your research paper (35%).
REQUIRED READING


•Books are available at Grécourt Bookshop in the Campus Center.
•All other readings will be found in the source book or will given to you as handouts. Source books are available at Paradise Copies, 21 Conz Street, (413) 585–0414.
WEEK 1 (9/10, 9/12)
i. INTRODUCTION

ii. VISUALITY AND THE FUNCTION OF OBJECTS IN INDIA
  “Living Images,” 14–50 (handout)

WEEK 2 (9/17/, 9/19)
i. WAYS OF SEEING 1
  Selections, 1–81
• Appadurai, Arjun and Carol Breckenridge. In *Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture*. Edited by Ivan Karp, Christine Mullen Kreamer, and Steven D. Lavine.
  “Museums are Good to Think: Heritage on View in India,” 35–55 (handout)

VIEWING
Look at Indian portraiture at [http://www.oldindianphotos.in/search/label/Portrait](http://www.oldindianphotos.in/search/label/Portrait).

ii. WAYS OF SEEING 2
  Selections, 83–155
  “Looking at Film Hoardings,” 59–76 (handout)

VIEWING

WEEK 3 (9/24, 9/26)
i. PHOTOGRAPHY: POWER AND POLITICS 1
  Prologue, 11–16
  1. “Stern Fidelity” and “Penetrating Certainty,” 17–71

ii. PHOTOGRAPHY: POWER AND POLITICS 2
  2. Indian Eyes, 72–107
INDIA THROUGH THE LENS—SELECTIONS AND PRESENTATIONS FROM:
  • http://www.oldindianphotos.in/
  • http://Harappa.com/photo3/index.html
  • http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/advanced_search.aspx

note: Try “India” for category and, say, “tribal photograph” for free text.

…and so on

WEEK 4 (10/1, 10/3)
i. PHOTOGRAPHY: POWER AND POLITICS 3
  Epilogue, 210–213

ii. PHOTOGRAPHY: POWER AND POLITICS 4
City of Photos; 60 minutes. Directed by Nishta Jain. 2005

WEEK 5 (10/8, 10/10)
i. AUTUMN RECESS—NO CLASS

ii. DARSHAN: THOUGHTS ON SEEING AND BEING SEEN
  “Seeing the Sacred,” 3–31 (handout)
  “Seeing and Knowing: Semiology, Semiotics and the Art of India,” 193–207 (handout)

VIEWING
• Tour temples at http://www.360spin.co.uk/qtvr/bolton/hindutemple.htm and http://www.360spin.co.uk/qtvr/bolton/hindutemple2.htm.
WEEK 6 (10/15, 10/17)
i. THE POWER OF IMAGES
  “The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology,” 40–66

VIEWING
Tour Sanchi at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JFrlTL4RB3s and http://www.shunya.net/Pictures/NorthIndia/Sanchi/Sanchi.htm.

ii. THE CYBER POWER OF IMAGES
  “Bordering Realism: The Aesthetics of Sai Baba’s Mediated Universe,” 139–162
• Elison, William. 2012. Social Science Research Committee, Grant Proposal.

VIEWING
Take online darshan at http://www.ganesh.us/online-darshan.html.

WEEK 7 (10/22, 10/24)
i. LORD RAM AND MEDIATED RELIGION 1
  “The World of Amar Chitra Katha,” 76–106
  entire book

VIEWING

ii. LORD RAM AND MEDIATED RELIGION 2
  “All in the (Raghu) Family: A Video Epic in Cultural Context,” 217–253
  Excerpts from “Mediating Modernities: The Ramayan and the Creation of Community and Nation,” 166–170, 199–204, 210–217

VIEWING
Watch Ramanand Sagar’s Ramayan (1986), episode 76: “Ram and Sita Meet” and “Sita’s Trial By Fire” (39 minutes; http://onlineramayana.blogspot.com/).
WEEK 8 (10/29, 10/31)
i. LORD RAM AND MEDIATED RELIGION 3
  “The Iconography of Rama’s Chariot,” 27–54

VIEWING
Watch “Hey Ram Hey Ram – Lord Rama Prayer” (8 minutes; http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v0s0anVD104).

ii. ART AND NATIONALISM

WEEK 9 (11/5, 11/7)
i. PICTURING THE NATION 1
  “Visions of the Nation: Theorizing the Nexus Between Creation, Consumption, and Participation in the Public Sphere,” 35–75

VIEWING

ii. PICTURING THE NATION 2
  “The Body and the Bomb: Technologies of Modernity in Colonial India,” 51–65 (handout)

VIEWING
View images of Bhagat Singh (http://www.christopherpinney.com/Bhagat_Singh.php) and watch (at least some of) “Animated Movie For Kids - Shaheed Bhagat Singh – English” (40 minutes; http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zg3fb_LzFRw).
WEEK 10 (11/12, 11/14)
i. PICTURING THE NATION 3
  1. Prologue: Yearning for Form, 1–12
  2. Formal Concerns, 13–72
  3. Enshrining the Map of India, 151–176

ii. PICTURING THE NATION 4
  4. Between Men, Map, and Mother 177–236
  5. Daughters of India, 237–282

VIEWING

WEEK 11 (11/19, 11/21)
  Sunday, 7 pm (location to be announced)

ii. THANKSGIVING RECESS—NO CLASS

WEEK 12 (11/26, 11/28)
i. VISUAL PRESENTATION: DRESSING THE PART 1
  2. Searching for a Solution in the late Nineteenth Century, 23–61
  3. Gandhi and the Recreation of Indian Dress, 62–93
  4. Is Khadi the Solution? 94–127

ii. VISUAL PRESENTATION: DRESSING THE PART 1
  Preface, xvi–xxi
  6. Some Brahman Dilemmas, 168–201
WEEK 13 (12/3, 12/5)
i. VISUAL PRESENTATION: DRESSING THE PART 3  
   8. Some Pastoralist (Bharwad) and Scheduled Case (Harijan) Dilemmas, 251–283  

ii. BRANDING INDIA  

VIEWING  
Explore: Incredible India (<http://www.incredibleindia.org/> ) and watch this Kerala Tourism video (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=szNPnrrPq9g>). FYI: The model is Swedish, the vocals are Senegalese, and the score is composed by a British concept band.

WEEK 14 (12/10, 12/12)
i. PRESENTATIONS  

ii. PRESENTATIONS