Sociology 309 (Revised)
Critical Intesections: Race, Class, Gender and the Nation
FALL 2007
W 2:50-5:20
PNE 430

Prof. Smitha Radhakrishnan
sradhakr@wellesley.edu
PNE 300
Office Hours: M 2:30-3:30, W 10-11 or by appt.

I. Overview
In an increasingly borderless world of open markets and global economies, how and why does nationalism continue to be a powerful force? How are old and new nations built and sustained? How does globalization challenge these dynamics? To tackle these questions, we bring to bear the vocabularies of feminist and critical race theory and postcolonial critique. Using these tools, we will learn to think about how nations work to ultimately come to an understanding of the continued power of a sense of belonging.

The readings will develop the idea of the nation as an ultimately tenuous synthesis of gendered, racial, religious, and class meanings that work together differently in various historical and spatial contexts. This synthesis must be constantly rebuilt, refreshed, and reframed to conceal its own contradictions. We will explore how the nation as a set of cultural meanings interacts with the institutions of the state. To do this, we employ a transnational approach in this course—shifting away from comparisons across contexts towards a practice of drawing connections between contexts. The course is broadly divided into two sections that necessarily overlap: a theoretical section in which we attempt to look at race, gender, and nation in isolation, and an empirical section in which we will examine the mutual constitution of race, gender, religion, class, and nation in practice.

II. Course Requirements:

1. Readings: The following books are available from the campus bookstore and should be purchased for use in this course. These items are also on reserve at the Clapp library:


2. Course participation:

This course is a seminar that will only be useful and successful if each of us comes to class having completed the assigned readings and ready to engage in discussion. Many of the readings assigned here are dense and are designed to push your reading and critical analytical skills, so rise to the challenge! Class discussions will be a dialogue not only between you and I, but also, just as importantly, between you and your other colleagues in the class. If you are too shy to speak up in class, please set up appointments to meet with me individually. Since this is a weekly seminar with only 13 class meetings, attendance is MANDATORY. More than one absence during the course of the term will dramatically affect your participation grade.

3. Written Assignments

a) Reading responses: In this course, we will have a total of twelve weeks of reading. Each student must turn in eight reading responses by the end of the term, which can apply to any week of reading. A reading response must briefly outline the main arguments of the readings (and how they relate to each other), and critical questions that came up during the course of the readings. Reading responses must be posted to Soc 309’s course conference by 9AM on the Wednesday mornings and will be used to frame our afternoon discussion. Please give me a hard copy of your responses in class. Word limit: 350-500 words.

b) Term paper: Each student will be required to write a 15-20 page paper as the final project for this class. There are two kinds of papers you may write:

   i. Analytic paper: This type of paper will be based primarily (or perhaps exclusively) on the readings within the class and will aim to more deeply explore the topics discussed in class through close readings and careful theoretical writing.

   ii. Historical paper: This type of paper will be based primarily on sources outside of the class readings. Students must begin with a concept or theme developed in class to research a particular nation-state or nationalist group. This assignment will be most useful to students who are interested in a particular area of the world or a particular ethnic or national group. A successful paper will explore and explain how a sense of belonging was created and legitimized within the group or nation being studied.

III. Grading

Grades will be based upon all of the course requirements. The breakdown will be as follows:
Participation: 20%
Reading Responses: 30%
IV. Course Outline and Readings (Revised)

PART I: Theorizing the Nation

September 5th – Week 1: Introduction and Outline of the Course


September 12th – Week 2: What is the nation?

- Anderson, Benedict. Imagined Communities. Chapters 1-5, 7

September 19th – Week 3: Colonialism and the Nation


September 26th – Week 4: Theorizing a Racial Nation

- Marx, Anthony. Making Race and Nation. (selections TBA)

October 3rd – Week 5: Theorizing a Gendered Nation

- Heng, Geraldine. “A Great Way to Fly”: Nationalism, the State, and Varieties of Third-World Feminism. (on e-reserve)
- Ramaswamy, Sumathi. 1999. “Virgin Mother, Beloved Other: The Erotics of Tamil Nationalism in Colonial and Post-Colonial India.” In Signposts: Gender issues in post-independence India. (to be distributed in class)
- Paper topic proposals (1 page) due

October 10th – Week 6: Citizenship and the Nation


PART II: CRITICAL INTERSECTIONS

October 17th – Week 7: Race, Gender, Class and the Imperial Nation

- McClintock, Anne. 1995. Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the colonial conquest. (chapter 1,3)
• Davidoff, Leonore and Catherine Hall. 1987. “‘The nursery of virtue’: domestic ideology and the middle class.” (on e-reserve)

**October 24th – Week 8: The Multicultural Nation-State**

**October 31st – Week 9: Women’s Movements and Democratic Nationalist Movements**
• Annotated Bibliography for final paper to be peer-reviewed in class

**November 7th – Week 10: Diasporic Nations**
• Bernal, Victoria. 2006. “Diaspora, cyberspace, and political imagination: The Eritrean diaspora online.” *Global Networks.* Vol 6 (2) pp 161-179 (to be on e-reserve)

**November 14th – Week 11: Diasporic Nations II**
• Special Guest, Vijay Singh, filmmaker, historian, writer
• Readings to be distributed
• In class film: *One Dollar Curry,* followed by discussion

**November 28th – Week 12: Globalization and Religious Nation-Building**

**December 5 – Week 13: Paper workshop**
• Rough drafts to be brought to class and peer-reviewed
December 20th – Final papers due at 330 Pendleton, 4:30 PM
(absolutely no late papers accepted)