

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

MODULE HANDBOOK

2010-2011

**RACE AND SOCIETY IN COLONIAL INDIA,
1780-1930**

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This module is taught on Wednesdays from 10 to 12 in Term 2

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Module Aims

The relationship between race and empire can be viewed in many different contexts, in relation to many different places and periods of time. This module takes up for consideration the history of race in India from c. 1780 (when the English East India Company was becoming established as the ruler of a large part of the Indian subcontinent) until c. 1930 (when the anti-colonial nationalist movement was already a powerful force). It seeks to understand and explain why it was that race became so central to the British – as part of their administrative practice as well as their social interaction – but also why it was that race became so powerful a factor in Indians' own understanding of their past, their current identities and their future aspirations.

'Race and Society in Colonial India' is an investigation of both imperial and Indian history and of the changes that occurred over an extended period of time. By drawing upon the extensive secondary literature, it seeks to introduce students to some of the major controversies surrounding race and empire but also to suggest ways in which India under British rule produced distinctive social, cultural and political conditions that were distinctive from most other imperial situations.

Intended Learning Outcomes

- To form a critical historical understanding of the meaning of 'race'
- To gain an understanding of the principal changes affecting race relations in India between 1780 and 1930
- To evaluate the role of both ideas and practices in the making of race in an imperial context
- To assess the different and changing attitudes to race by both the British and Indians
- To identify and evaluate the role of scientific ideas and administrative practices in the formation of racial ideas and policies
- To analyse and assess the main historiographical approaches to the history of race and society in colonialism India

ASSESSED and NON-ASSESSED WORK

Students are required to produce two pieces of written work for this module. The first is a *non-assessed* essay of no more than 2,500 words to be handed in to the module tutor by tba (Week 7).

You are also required to write an *assessed* essay of 5,000 words for this module (the word length, which *excludes* footnotes, should be clearly given on your essay). You should consult the Department's Postgraduate Student Handbook for requirements and penalties for plagiarism and for late or over-length work.

The Department sets the date for the submission of the assessed essays: for term 1 option modules this is tba; **for term 2 modules, such as this, it is noon, tba.**

The seminar discussions listed below provide a basis for essay topics. The following is a list of suitable questions for both and short and the 5,000 word essay, but if you wish to write on another topic or to approach it in a different way, especially for the assessed essay, you can certainly do so but only after having discussed it with the module tutor and with his explicit approval.

Suggested essay questions:

1. How and why Anglo-Indians (Eurasians) become 'poor relations' in India between 1780 and 1850?
2. To what extent did European society in India see itself 'in an Indian mirror'?
3. To what extent did racial solidarity among Europeans in India replace or reinforce class divisions within white society?
4. How central was race to the Orientalist/Anglicist debate of the early nineteenth century?
5. To what extent did issues of gender inform or qualify questions of race in 19th-century India?
6. What was meant by the term 'Aryan' in the Indian context and how did the meaning of the term change over the course of this period (1780-1930)?

7. Was 1857 a 'race war'?
8. How far did the Indian Mutiny and Rebellion transform racial attitudes in India?
9. Why and how did the increasing medicalization of India change racial perceptions and practices?
10. Why was prostitution and its regulation such a contentious issue in colonial India?
11. What was the connection between race and religion in nineteenth-century India?
12. How were ideas of race embodied in the army and other institutions of British rule in India?
13. Had 'race' acquired a distinctive meaning in British India by the late nineteenth century?
14. How and why did Indians internalize European racial ideas in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries?
15. Did the rise of the nationalist movement by 1930 intensify or diminish racial antagonism in India?
16. What were Gandhi's attitudes to the race question?

Syllabus: Seminar Discussion Topics

Seminar 1: Race, Colonialism and Indian Society: An Overview

For discussion

- 1: What is meant, now and in the past, by the term 'race'? How does the concept of race emerge historically and is it an exclusively (or predominantly) Western concept? Does it have precedents and parallels in Indian society? What is the connection between race and European empires from the 15th century onwards?
- 2: To what extent can race be understood as *both* an idea (and ideology) and as a social practice? How does race become a mark of self-identification as well as a way of representing others? How does race differ from other forms of identification, categorization and discrimination (such as gender, age and disability)?

Readings:

The works listed in section 1 of the bibliography are central to this discussion. Particularly important in thinking about race (and racism) in general are the works by Malik [13] and Stepan [16]: Hudson's article [9] helps to set the idea of race in a long-term historical perspective. The books by Bolt [3] and Kiernan [11] are decidedly dated but still contain some useful material. There is, of course, a vast literature on race – especially in connection with slavery and the Atlantic world: it is worth consulting this literature but also thinking about how and why colonial India might be different. Edward Said's pathbreaking and much critiqued book *Orientalism* [15].

There are a number of other ways in which the history of race and empire in India (as elsewhere) can be investigated – for instance through works of fiction [e.g., 59, 63, 67, 68] or through paintings and photographs of the period, e.g. Tobin [79] and Bayly [26].

Seminar 2: The 'White Mughals': Myth or Reality?

Dalrymple's 2002 book [36], subtitled 'Love and Betrayal in Eighteenth-Century India', has been a bestseller and serves as a point of entry to the wider discussion of race and society in the early period of the British empire in India. It is worth taking note of Dalrymple's Introduction in particular and the kinds of sources and critical apparatus he employs. How typical is this case? Does Dalrymple sentimentalize empire and race relations and is he using this case to try to critique Said's *Orientalism* (1978) [15] and to reconfigure the understanding of empire more generally?

But it is possible to go beyond Dalrymple's work to look at other accounts of early colonial race relations. Other sources include the works by Collingham [33], Ghosh [43] and Marshall [60] listed in the bibliography. Spear's *Nabobs* (first published in 1932) [78] provides an older version of the Dalrymple story.

You might also consult Jasanoff's *Edge of Empire* [49] and Robb [74].

A related set of questions here and in the following topic concerns 'poor Europeans' (orphans, vagrants, prostitutes etc) and their place in the social/racial hierarchy: on this see the articles by Arnold [23, 24] and Fischer-Tiné [39, 40].

Dalrymple's book also raises the question of the relationship between race, gender and empire, a topic on which there is now an extensive and important literature [28, 29, 32, 47, 57, 62, 76, 77].

Seminar 3: The Changing Fate of the Eurasians

The questions of the origins, status and fate of the Eurasians follows on from the previous topic. What place did Eurasians (or Anglo-Indians or East Indians) come to occupy in the early colonial order and how did this shift, especially between the 1790s and 1830s, as European society became more racially exclusive? In some colonial societies people of mixed race were important social and cultural go-betweens between white and non-white society: why in India did they rapidly lose status? Or did they retain a peculiar, if not very prestigious, intermediary role up until the early 20th century? And is the 'Eurasian' category anyway misleading in as much as it contained very different social/ethnic elements and questions can anyway be raised about how watertight such racial categories were (on this later point, see Ann Stoler's *Race and the Education of Desire* [18] and her (and Fred Cooper's) Introduction to the *Tensions of Empire* volume [34]. For background try Furber [42], then Hawes' *Poor Relations* [46].

Seminar 4: Orientalism and Aryanism

This topic takes us back to some fundamental questions of identity, terminology and the historical processes by which ideas of race and 'otherness' came into existence. For a start it is best to consult Said's *Orientalism* [15] (and to consider how far race enters into his polemical account of East and West) and Inden's Saidian *Imagining India* [48] as well perhaps as such scholarly critics of Said as well as Irwin [10] but also Dalrymple's polemic against Said [Introduction to 36].

More substantial from an India perspective is the discussion of the rise of the Aryan idea and its long term consequences for race ideology: on this see Joan Leopold's article from 1974 [55] and Trautmann's *Aryans and British India* [80]. The essays in

Kaiwar and Mazumdar's *Antimonies of Modernity* [50] are also useful in getting a sense of how the Aryan idea has evolved into more recent times.

Seminar 5: The Mutiny and Rebellion of 1857: A Race War?

The rising of 1857 is one of the most written about episodes in India's colonial history: it is seen as a sepoy revolt, a proto-nationalist insurgency and a peasant uprising. Perhaps surprisingly the racial aspects of the revolt have received less attention: why? Does 1857 serve to show the strength of underlying racial feelings (on both sides?) or did it do more to accentuate and consolidate racial antipathies?

There are accounts of 1857 and its impact in such works as Bolt [3], Kiernan [11] and Metcalf's *Ideologies of the Raj* [61]. More suggestive perhaps are Dalrymple's book, *The Last Mughal* [37], about the last King of Delhi, Paxton's article on 'Mobilizing chivalry' [67] and especially Mukherjee's 'Satan' article [64].

Seminar 6: Health, Medicine and the Science of Race

The realms of health and medicine were among those where racial ideas (and practices) were most widely employed both with respect to Europeans and to Indians. The spatial reorganization of Indian cities was one aspect of this, as was the development of ideas of disease causation and transmission linked to race and the perceived vulnerability of Europeans in a 'tropical' environment.

There is a vast literature on this, but among the most useful works here are Harrison's *Climates and Constitutions* [45] and Levine's book on *Prostitution, Race and Politics* [56] one of several accounts of the relationship between race, prostitution and (venereal) disease: see also Ballhatchet's book *Race, Sex and Class* [25] I've also written about this topic, including my *Colonizing the Body* [22] and 'An Ancient Race Outworn' [24], which looks at the malaria issue.

A related issue is how race came to be understood as 'scientific' and how it became entangled with ideas of what constituted civilization: see Adas [1].

Seminar 7: Race as Government

This topic takes into consideration of how the colonial regime in India used race – for purposes of social categorization and discrimination but also as a tool of recruitment, particularly for the ‘martial races, or for criminalization, as with the so-called ‘criminal tribes’. How central, then, was race to the way in which the British organized and ran India and why did race (as well as religion, caste and community) become so important to them?

For the martial races ideology (and its practice), see Metcalf, *Ideologies* [61], Omissi, *Sepoy and the Raj* [66], and Streets’ *Martial Races* [18] see, too, the articles by Kausik [52] and Peers [69, 70] for the Indian Army There is some useful discussion of colonial ideas and practices in the work of Cohn [5]. The use of caste categories and the rise of the ‘criminal tribes’ is discussed in the article by Nigam from 1990 [65] and by Dirks in his *Castes of Mind* [38]. From an anthropological perspective, see too Christopher Pinney, ‘Colonial anthropology in “the laboratory of mankind”, in Bayly, *The Raj*, pp. 252-63 [26], and Susan Bayly, ‘Caste and race in the colonial ethnography of India’, in the Robb, *Concept of Race* volume [73], also Guha [44].

Seminar 8: Race and the Rise of Indian Nationalism

In part this topic overlaps with the earlier one on Orientalism and Aryanism, but is concerned with how and why (some) Indians in the 19th and early 20th centuries came to adopt and develop a race ideology and identity of their own. Sinha’s book on *Colonial Masculinity* [77] offers some answers as do the articles by Rosselli on ‘The self-image of effeminess’ [75] and my malaria article (‘An ancient race outworn’) [24]. The more recent growth of Aryanism is to be seen in the Kaiwar and Mazumdar volume (especially the Introduction) [50], in Kapila’s recent essay [51] and in Leopold’s 1974 article [55].

Seminar 9: Race and the Late Colonial Order

This topic is partly intended as a review of the discussion so far, but more especially as a way of assessing how far the issues and practices surrounding race had been transformed by the 1920s and 1930s, especially in the light of the growth of the Gandhi-led Indian nationalist movement. Had the racism of the high colonial period been replaced by a more accommodating attitude (as through Indianization of the services) or was the effect of the rise of nationalism to make racial hostility more entrenched than ever? On Indianization, see Potter [71]. Of relevance, too, is again the question of gender and how far sexual relations assuaged or accentuated racial antipathy and colonial difference (see Hyam’s controversial study [47] and Forbes’ more gender-sympathetic account [41]).

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[1] Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology and Ideologies of Western Dominance*

[2] C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914*

[3] Christine Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race*

[4] Jan Bremen (ed.), *Imperial Monkey Business: Racial Supremacy in Social Darwinist Theory and Colonial Practice*

[5] Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India*

[6] Joanna de Groot, '“Sex” and “race”: The construction of language and image in the 19th century', in Catherine Hall (ed.), *Cultures of Empire*, pp. 37-60

[7] D. Gilmore, *Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity*

[8] D. Goldberg (ed.), *The Anatomy of Racism*

[9] N. Hudson, 'From “nation” to “race”: The origin of racial classification in eighteenth-century thought', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 29, 1996, pp. 247-64 **[E]**

[10] Robert Irwin, *For Lust of Knowing: The Orientalists and Their Enemies*

[11] V. G. Kiernan, *The Lords of Human Kind: European Attitudes to Other Cultures in the Imperial Age*

[12] Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*

[13] * K. Malik, *The Meaning of Race: Race, History and Culture in Western Society*

[14] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*

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[19] Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857-1914*

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[21] * Clare Anderson, *Legible Bodies: Race, Criminality and Colonialism in South Asia*

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[25] K. Ballhatchet, *Race, Sex and Class under the Raj: Imperial Attitudes and Policies and their Critics, 1793-1905*

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[28] Alison Blunt, "'Land of our mothers': Home, identity, and nationality for Anglo-Indians in British India, 1919-1947', *History Workshop Journal*, 31, 2003, pp. 1-28

[29] Elizabeth Buettner, *Empire Families: Britons and Late Imperial India*

[30] Antoinette Burton, *At the Heart of the Empire: Indians and the Colonial Encounter in Late Victorian Britain*

[31] Indrani Chatterjee, 'Colouring subalternity: Slaves, concubines and social orphans in early colonial India', in Gautam Bhadra, Gyan Prakash and Susie Tharu (eds), *Subaltern Studies X*, pp. 49-97

[32] N. Chaudhuri, 'Memsahibs and motherhood in 19th-century colonial India', *Victorian Studies*, 31, 1988, pp. 517-36 **[E]**

[33] Elizabeth Collingham, *Imperial Bodies: The Physical Experience of the Raj, c. 1800-1947*

[34] Frederick Cooper & Ann Laura Stoler (eds), *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*

[35] Jeffrey Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines: Christianity and Colonial Power in India*

[36] * William Dalrymple, *The White Mughals: Love and Betrayal in Eighteenth-Century India*

[37] ----, *The Last Mughal: The Fall of a Dynasty, Delhi, 1857* [naW]

[38] * Nicholas Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India*

[39] Harald Fischer-Tiné, "'White women degrading themselves to the lowest depths': European networks of prostitution and colonial anxieties in British India and Ceylon', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 40, 2003, pp. 163-90 **[E]**

[40] ---, 'Britain's other civilising mission: Class prejudice, European "loaferism" and the workhouse-system in colonial India', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 42, 2005, pp. 295-338 **[E]**

[41] Geraldine Forbes, *Women in Modern India*

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- [43] Durba Ghosh, *Sex and the Family in Colonial India: The Making of Empire* [naW]
- [44] Sumit Guha, 'Lower strata, older races, and aboriginal peoples: Racial anthropology and mythical history, past and present', *Journal of Asian Studies*, 57, 1998, pp. 423-41 [E]
- [45] * Mark Harrison, *Climates and Constitutions: Health, Race, Environment and British Imperialism in India, 1600-1850*
- [46] * C. J. Hawes, *Poor Relations: The Making of a Eurasian Community in British India, 1773-1833*
- [47] Ronald Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience*
(for a review, see M. Berger in *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 17, 1988, pp. 83-9, and Hyam's reply, *ibid.*, pp. 90-8)
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- [63] Bart Moore-Gilbert (ed.), *Writing India, 1757-1990*
- [64] Rudrangshu Mukherjee, "'Satan let loose upon earth'", *Past and Present*, 128, 1990, pp. 92-115 **[E]**
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In addition to these published sources, you can also consult **electronic resources** available to you through the University Library, especially: **Empire on Line** and **India, Raj and Empire**. These give you access to government documents and reports as well as diaries, journals and other sources (such as Parliamentary Papers) that will be useful for your essay topic and give you a taste of the primary sources available. At the end of the day, there is no substitute (once you know what you're interested in) in visiting the British Library in London (for books, printed materials and manuscript sources) or a major research library like that of the School of Oriental and African Studies in London to which you have free access via **SCONUL** and whose catalogue is available online.