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RLST 353.01B: Topics in South Asian Religions - The Life and Times of Mahatma Gandhi

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SPECIAL TOPICS IN SOUTH ASIAN RELIGIONS
THE LIFE & TIMES OF MAHATMA GANDHI
RLST 353
TR 3:40-5:00
Liberal Arts 106

Dr. Brad Clough

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It has been sixty years on, since India gained its independence from the British Empire, and the time seems appropriate to reflect upon the life, ideas, work, and legacy of perhaps the single most important figure in that national freedom movement, and surely one of the most remarkable figures anywhere in the past century, Mohandas K. ("Mahatma") Gandhi. This course will examine some of Gandhi's own major writings, as well as different analyses of Gandhianism put forth by various critics inside and outside of India. We will begin with two of Gandhi's own writings, the autobiographical *Story of My Experiments with Truth*, and his seminal treatise on politics and civilization, *Hind Swaraj*. Then, we will investigate a variety of interpretive approaches to his life and work, ranging from the dramatic (Richard Attenborough's Academy Award winning film "Gandhi") and the fictional (Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*) to the documentarial ("The Making of the Mahatma") and the social-scientific (Susanne and Lloyd Rudolph's *Gandhi: The Traditional Roots of Charisma*). Gandhi's spiritual life and its place in his politics will also be examined, as will his social activism. Finally, we will consider aspects of Gandhi's ongoing influence within and without India, such as the impact of his life and teachings on social activists and reformers like Sunderlal Bahugana in India and Martin Luther King, Jr. in America.

Course Books (all available at the campus bookstore):

Dalton, Dennis. *Mahatma Gandhi: Nonviolent Power in Action*

Gandhi, Mohandas K. *Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth*

Gandhi, Mohandas K. *'Hind Swaraj' and Other Writings*

Rao, Raja. *Kanthapura*

Rudolph, Susanne and Lloyd. *Gandhi: The Traditional Roots of Charisma*

Requirements:

1. **Class attendance, preparation, and participation.** This aspect of the course cannot be emphasized enough. Because this is a discussion-oriented course, each class is a true joint-learning venture, the success of which depends on every member not only having completed the assigned reading for the day, but also having digested and reflected on it, and being prepared for discussion. To facilitate this, for each class each student will prepare a typed list of at least three questions or

topics for discussion, which will be handed in, after being used in class. Finally, it should go without saying that you cannot be considered a participant in class if you do not actually attend class! The choice to attend class is of course yours, but missing more than two classes without an excuse will seriously affect your final grade. Any excused absence requires written authorization for Health Services, a doctor, an advisor, a counselor, or administrator. Class participation will count for 25% of your final grade.

2. **Analytic, interpretive writing.** The first paper, 7-8 pages in length, will be a response to one topic from a list of suggested topics distributed by the professor. This paper will count for 25% of your final grade. The second paper will be a 12-15-page research paper, due at the end of the semester. Here, the choice of the topic will be yours, in consultation with the professor. This paper will count for 50% of your final grade

Class Meetings and Assignments:

I. Gandhi on Himself

- Tues. 8/27 Introduction to the Course
- Thurs 8/29 Autobiography: Introduction and Part I, chapters I-XXI
- Tues. 9/3 Autobiography: Part I, chapters xxii-xxv; and Part II (all)
- Thurs. 9/5 Autobiography: Part III (all)
- Tues. 9/10 Autobiography: Part IV (all); and Part V, chapters I-V
- Thurs. 9/12 Autobiography: Part V, chapters VI-XLIII; and Farewell

II. Interpretations of Gandhi: Documentary

- Tues. 9/17 Film: The Making of the Mahatma

III. Gandhi the Politician

- Thurs. 9/19 Gandhi's Earliest Political Manifesto
 Hind Swaraj: Editor's Introduction to the 1997 Edition, pp. xxv-xxix, xxxvi-xlv, lxiii-lxx, and pp. 13-55
- Tues. 9/24 *Hind Swaraj*: pp. 56-117

Thurs. 9/26 The Indian Independence Movement: Historical Background
Heehs: Chapters 1-6

Tues. 10/1 The Indian Independence Movement (cont.)
Heehs: Chapters 7-12

Thurs. 10/3 Gandhi's Political Campaigns
Dalton: Introduction and chapter 1

Tues. 10/8 Gandhi's Campaigns (cont.)
Dalton: Chapters 2 & 3

Thurs. 10/10 Gandhi's Campaigns (cont.)
Dalton: Chapter 4

Tues. 10/15 Gandhi's Campaigns (cont.)
Dalton: Chapter 5

IV. Gandhi's Religion

Thurs. 10/17 selections from Gandhi's religious writings

Tues. 10/22 selections from Gandhi's religious writings

V. Interpretations of Gandhi: Cinema

Thurs. 10/24 Richard Attenborough's "Gandhi," Part I

Tues. 10/29 "Gandhi," Part II

****Final Paper Bibliography and Proposal Due****

VI. Interpretations of Gandhi: Literature

Thurs. 10/31 Rao's *Kanthapura*, chapters 1-6

****FRI. 11/1: FIRST PAPER DUE****

Tues 11/5 Rao, chapters 7-13

Thurs. 11/7 Rao, chapters 14-19

VII. Gandhi and Social Activism

Tues. 11/12 selections from Gandhi's writing's on nonviolence (*ahimsa*) and "truth force" (*satyagraha*)

Thurs. 11/14 selections from Gandhi's on "village programmes" and the "uplift of all" (*sarvodaya*)

VIII. Interpretations of Gandhi: Social-Scientific

Tues. 11/19 The Rudolfs' *Gandhi: The Traditional Roots of Charisma*, Preface and pp. 3-61

Thurs 11/21 The Rudolfs: pp. 62-95

Tues. 11/26 No class. Instructor away at a conference

Thurs 11/28 No class. Thanksgiving Day

III. The Legacy of Gandhi

Tues. 12/3 Writings on and from contemporary Gandhian movements in India

Thurs. 12/5 Writings on Gandhi by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

****MON 12/9: FINAL RESEARCH PAPER DUE****