

**Centre for Historical Studies  
2019**

**Work, Culture and Politics:  
The Historical Meanings of Work**

Lecture Course open to 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> semester MA and MPhil students

**Course Instructor:** Janaki Nair

**Readings:**

Students are required to complete **AT LEAST TWO** of the recommended readings before the class each week.

Two tutorials (25 percent each, 1 grade point, MA, half grade point MPhil each) and one end of term examination (50 per cent, MA or 2 grade points; one grade point for MPhil).

**Course Description**

This course will explore the historical meanings of work, as they have changed over the last two centuries, since the beginning of industrial capitalism. Moving away from labour history's earlier focus on the workplace and moments of collective action, the course will turn to changing ideas about a "work ethic" and "rationalized" leisure, formality and informality, time-discipline and "horseplay", co-operation and trust, antagonism and struggle, or even questions of attention and distraction that have marked the industrial and post industrial age. In order to address such themes, the course will go beyond the workplace and neighbourhood/home, thus far the classic sites of labour history, to the fields of law, religiosity, language, and visual/performative representations of work/workers. As such, while many readings will relate to the Indian experience, discussions and insights from other locations will be a large part of this course.

1. *From Labour History to a History of Work*

Chitra Joshi "Histories of Indian Labour: Predicaments and Possibilities" *History Compass* 6/2 (2008): 439–454

Joan W. Scott "The "Class" We Have Lost" *International Labor and Working-Class History*, No. 57 (Spring, 2000), pp. 69-75

Marcel van der Linden "The "Globalization" of Labor and Working-Class History and Its Consequences" *International Labor and Working-Class History*, No. 65, Agriculture and Working-Class Formation (Spring, 2004), pp. 136-156.

## 2. *Industrial Bodies and Work Ethics*

Tamara K. Hareven "Family Time and Historical Time" *Daedalus*, Vol. 106, No. 2, The Family (Spring, 1977), pp. 57-70

Keletso Atkins, 'Kafir Time: Preindustrial Temporal Concepts and Labour Discipline in Nineteenth Century Colonial Natal' *Journal of African History*, vol 29, 1988, pp. 229-244.

Jane Humphries "... The Most Free From Objection..." The Sexual Division of Labor and Women's Work in Nineteenth-Century England" *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 47, No. 4 (Dec., 1987), pp. 929-949.

## 3. *Skill as "property" and the capacity to labour*

E. J. Hobsbawm and Joan Wallach Scott "Political Shoemakers" *Past & Present*, No. 89 (Nov., 1980), pp. 86-114.

Jacques Rancière "The Myth of the Artisan: Critical Reflections on a Category of Social History" *International Labor and Working-Class History*, No. 24 (Fall, 1983), pp. 1-16.

David Goodhew "Working-Class Respectability: The Example of the Western Areas of Johannesburg, 1930-55" *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (2000), pp. 241-266

## 4. *The work of Religion*

EP Thompson "The Transforming Power of the Cross" *The Making of the English Working Class*, pp. 350-400.

Michael Taussig *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America* (2009) Part II .

## 5. *Coercion and/or contract*

Harold Wolpe, "Capitalism and Cheap Labour Power in South Africa: From Segregation to Apartheid," *Economy and Society* 1 (1972), reprinted in William Beinart and Saul Dubow, eds., *Segregation and Apartheid in Twentieth-Century South Africa* (London: Routledge, 1995).

Robert J Steinfeld *Coercion, Contract and Free Labor in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2001), Chapter 2.

Chitra Joshi "Fettered Bodies: Labouring on Public Works in Nineteenth Century India" in Marcel van der Linden and Prabhu Mohapatra eds. *Labour Matters: Towards Global Histories* (Tulika 2009) pp. 3-21.

## 6. *Intersections: Beyond Production*

David Levine “Punctuated Equilibrium: The Modernization of the Proletarian Family in the Age of Ascendant Capitalism” *International Labor and Working-Class History*, No. 39 (Spring, 1991), pp. 3-20

Kumar, Radha (1998), 'Sex and Punishment Among Mill-workers in Early- twentieth -century Bombay” in Michael Anderson and Sumit Guha ed. *Changing Concepts of Rights and Justice in South Asia* (Delhi).

Mohapatra, Prabhu, 'Restoring the Family": Wife Murders and the Making of a Sexual Contract for Indian Immigrant Labour in the British Caribbean Colonies 1860- 1850, *Studies in History*, xi:2, July-Dec, 1995

## 7. *The Stigma of Work*

Shashi Bhushan Upadhyay “Dalits and the Ideology of Work in India”in Marcel van der Linden and Prabhu Mohapatra, eds. *Labour Matters Towards Global Histories: Essays in Honour of Sabyasachi Bhattacharya* (Tulika Books, 2009), pp. 152-171.

Shahana Bhattacharya “Rotting Hides and Runaway Labour: Labour Control and Workers’ Resistance in the Indian Leather Industry, c. 1860-1960”, in Ahuja ed. *Working Lives and Workers’ Militancy” The Politics of Labour in Colonial India* (Tulika Books, 2013), pp. 47-96.

Anupama Rao “Stigma and labour: remembering Dalit Marxism” *Seminar*, accessible at [www.india-seminar.com/2012/633/633\\_anupama\\_rao.htm](http://www.india-seminar.com/2012/633/633_anupama_rao.htm)

## 8. *The Strike as Weapon*

Rajnarayan Chandavarkar, ‘Questions of Class: The General Strikes in Bombay, 1928-1929’ in Jonathan Parry, Jan Breman and Karin Kapadia ed. *The Worlds of Indian Industrial Labour* (Sage, 1999).

Michele Perrot, *Workers on Strike: France, 1871-1890* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

## 9. *Languages of Law*

Aditya Sarkar, “The Work of Law” *Trouble at the Mill 1881–1884*, (OUP 2018), pp. 247-279.

Samita Sen 'Unsettling the Household: Act VI (of 1901) and the Regulation of Women Migrants in Colonial Bengal'. *International Review of Social History*, 1996, Spl. Issue 'Peripheral Labour? Eds. Shahid Amin and Marcel van der Linden.

Sonya Rose “Factory Reform in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Gender, Class and the Liberal State,” pp. 193-210 in Laura Frader and Sonya Rose, eds., *Gender and Class in Modern Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

#### 10. *Informality and formality*

P. P. Mohapatra, “Regulated Informality: Legal Constructions of Labour Relations in Colonial India 1814–1926”, in S. Bhattacharya and J. Lucassen (eds.), *Workers in the Informal Sector: Studies in Labour History 1800–2000* (New Delhi: Macmillan 2005).

M. Anderson, “India, 1858–1930: The Illusion of Free Labor”, in D Hay and P Craven eds., *Masters, Servants, and Magistrates in Britain and the Empire* (University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

#### 11. *Spaces of work*

Rob Turrell, “Kimberley Labour and Compounds, 1871-1888,” *Industrialisation and Social Change in South Africa: African Class Formation, Culture and Consciousness 1870-1930*, ed Shula Marks and Richard Rathbone (London, 1982)

Charles von Onselen “The Compound system” and “Social Control in the Compounds” *Chibaro: African Mine Labour in Southern Rhodesia, 1900-33* (Pluto Press, 1980) pp. 128-194.

Sharad Chari “Can Subalterns Accumulate Capital?” *Fraternal Capital: Peasant Workers, Self-Made men, and Globalisation in Provincial India*” Stanford University Press, 2004: pp 182-239.

#### 12. *Domestic Work*

Carolyn Steedman ” *Social History*

Karen Tranberg Hansen “Body Politics: Sexuality, Gender, and Domestic Service in Zambia” *Journal of Women's History*, Volume 2, Number 1, Spring 1990, pp. 120-142.

Raka Ray and Seemin Qayum “ Cultures of Servitude” : Modernity, Domesticity and Class in India” Stanford University Press, 2009, pp. 1-64.

#### 13. *Working and Leisure*

Alf Ludtke, “Cash Coffee, Horseplay: *Eigensinn* and Politics among Factory Workers in Germany circa 1900”, in *Confrontation, Class Consciousness, and the Labour Process*, ed. Michael Hanagan and Charles Stephenson (New York 1986).

Jonathan Parry “Lords of Labour: Working and Shirking in Bhilai” *Contributions to Indian Sociology* February 1999 vol. 33 no. 1-2, pp. 107-140.

14 “Representing labour”

Donna Loftus, “Investigating Work in late Nineteenth-century London” *History Workshop Journal*, Issue 71, Spring 2011, pp. 173-193.

Bhattacharya, S, 'The Outsiders: A Historical Note' in Ashok Mitra ed. *The Truth Unites: Essays in Tribute to Samar Sen* (Calcutta 1985)

Dipesh Chakrabarty “Trade Unions in a Hierarchical Culture” *Subaltern Studies III* (1982) pp. 116-152.

15. *Work as enchantment, liberation, resistance*

Alf Lüdtke “People Working: Everyday Life and German Fascism” *History Workshop Journal*, No. 50 (Autumn, 2000), pp. 74-92

Aihwa Ong, “Spirits and Discipline in Capitalist Transformation” *Spirits of Resistance and Capitalist Discipline: Factory Women in Malaysia*, SUNY Stonybrook, 1987.

**General Readings**

Chakrabarty, Dipesh, *Rethinking Working Class History* (Princeton, 1989): 65-154

Chandavarkar, Rajnarayan, *The Origins of Industrial Capitalism in Colonial India* ((Cambridge 1994) 72-123; 168-238.

Foster, John, *Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution: Early Industrial Capitalism in three English Towns*. (London: Methuen and Co, 1974) 73-160

Harries, Patrick, *Work, Culture and Identity: Migrant Labourers in Mozambique and South Africa, c 1860-1910* (Johannesburg, 1994) 48-109.

Jones, Gareth Stedman, *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History 1832-1982* (Cambridge 1983): 179-238.

Joshi, Chitra, *Lost Worlds: Indian Labour and its Forgotten Histories* (Permanent Black 2003): 100-176; 208-236

Moodie, Dunbar *Going for Gold: Men, Mines and Migration* (Berkeley, 1994) 44-179

Nair, Janaki, *Miners and Millhands: Work, Culture and Politics in Princely Mysore* (Sage 1998). 41-150.

Onselen, Charles Van *Chibaro: African Mine Labour in Southern Rhodesia 1900-1933* (London 1976), 128-194

Thompson, E. P, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth 1968,[1963])  
Chapters 11,15, and 16.

Sen, Samita, *Women and Labour in Late Colonial India: The Bengal Jute Industry* (Cambridge  
1999) 89-176

Simeon, Dilip, *The Politics of Labour under Late Colonialism: Workers, Unions and the State in  
Chota Nagpur 1928-1939* (Manohar1995).

Piya Chatterjee *A Time for Tea : Women, Labor, and Post/Colonial Politics on an Indian  
Plantation* ( Zubaan 2003).

Tutorial Topics:

Tutorial One:

1. How has the question of freedom/unfreedom been rethought by labour and working class historians in the last two decades?
2. What is the place of religion in more recent understandings of work/work ethic/working class action? Discuss with reference to India.

Tutorial Two:

3. The law has been vital to the protection of working class rights in the workplace, and plays more than just a regulatory role. Discuss with reference to India/England.
4. How have concerns about non-work sites/processes reconfigured the history of work? Discuss with reference to India/Southern Africa.