This course, divided into six rubrics, offers a broad overview of themes and debates central to the study of ‘tribes’ in India. It introduces students to the emergence of the category of ‘tribe’ in official and missionary writings in colonial India; the location of the term within and across the disciplines of anthropology, sociology and history; a study of tribal economies and practices; the nature of tribal/adivasi movements in the nineteenth and early-twentieth century; and the ways in which tribal groups in recent decades have related to the contending categories of ‘Scheduled Tribe’, ‘Adivasi’ and ‘Indigenous Peoples’. Drawing on diverse sources in the form of ethnographic, missionary and anthropological texts, visual material, local pamphlets and petitions and oral narratives, it discusses the methodological challenges of writing histories of marginalized groups and fractured pasts. As a background to the course, I discuss the emergence and development of anthropology as a discipline in the West, and also introduce students to literature pertaining to ethnicity in different parts of the world.

1. **Introduction: situating tribal studies**

   This theme will discuss the emergence of tribal/adivasi studies as a field in Indian historiography, and identify the debates central to it.

2. **From Evolutionary to Critical Anthropology**

   This theme will map the way the idea of the ‘tribe’ has been framed within ethnographic and anthropological studies in the west from the late nineteenth century. It will also introduce students to the discipline of anthropology and track some of the important shifts within the discipline.

3. **Colonial Conceptions**

   This theme will look at the way colonial officials and missionaries viewed and related to the ‘tribe’. It will trace a historical process through which a variety of pre-colonial categories – *aranyakas, mlecchas, jangli jati* - came to be replaced by the word ‘tribe’. In this context, I will discuss photographs that accompanied ethnographic and missionary texts, and objects that were sent to the museums in Britain. The sub-themes will be as follows:
   - Official Writings
   - Missionary understandings

4. **Within and Across Boundaries of Disciplines**

   This theme will discuss how tribes’/adivasis and tribal societies have been studied within the field of anthropology, sociology and history in the Indian context. The sub-themes will be as follows:
5. Livelihoods, Economies and Practices

From a discussion of categories, ideas and representations, explored in earlier lectures, this theme will move to a study of the working of tribal economies, and their relationship to the wider world of commerce and industry. The sub-themes will be as follows:

- Forest societies
- Pastoralists
- Crafts production and tribal economies
- Adivasis/tribals as ‘Peasants’
- Mobility and Migrations (focus on plantations, steel/coal industries and other spaces)

6. Power, Politics and Protests

The theme, which cuts across the colonial and contemporary, will discuss the way adivasi/tribal movements spread in the nineteenth and early-twentieth century, and continue even today. It will analyze the visions and ideals of the leaders and followers, their organizations and practices. It will also look at the way nationalists sought to relate to tribal/witchi movements. Finally, it will discuss the recent debates around the contending categories of ‘Adivasi’, ‘Scheduled Tribe’, and ‘Indigenous Peoples’. The sub-themes will be:

- Colonialism and tribal/witchi protest (focus on Santhal Hul, Jitu Santhal’s movement, Birsa’s Ulgulan, the Devi movement and the Tana Bhagat movement)
- Tribe, nation and nationalism
- Politics of self-representation: Adivasi and Indigenous Peoples
Reading List:

(Some of the readings are useful for more than one section. This reading list will be updated periodically.)

Topic 2


**Topic 3**


**Topic 4**


……………..*Elements of Peasant Insurgency*, Delhi, 1984.


**Topic 5**


**Topic 6**


**Method of evaluation**

Credits: 4

50% of the grade will be awarded on the basis of two tutorials of 2000 words each, and 50% of the grade will be awarded on the basis of the end-semester examination.