

Politics of Solidarity: South Asians in America

This class examines solidarity as a political and affective experience, embodied by South Asian immigrants in the United States across the twentieth and into the twenty-first centuries. Examining a wide range of interdisciplinary texts, including history, ethnography, documentary films, literary texts and cultural criticism, we will explore what it means to identify as a racial minority in the United States. Linking these texts together is our concern with how “solidarity” operates as a political objective and as an aspirational ideal, a means of belonging to America that critically engages with and resists dominant structures of power.

Two questions will guide our readings and discussion: First, what does it mean to identify as “South Asian?” Second, how are South Asian identities and communities produced through acts of solidarity, across differences of national origin, language, class, gender and sexuality?

By thinking through the representation and lived experience of South Asian Americans, we will examine how first- and second-generation immigrants create new forms of cultural identity and citizenship. At the same time, we will discuss how dominant discourses of multiculturalism inflect the shape of solidarity – and the ways in which South Asian American communities are produced in relation to the U.S. state. Throughout our readings, we will examine how collective notions of ethnic identity emerge in relation to differences of gender, religion, sexuality and class.

Potential Texts:

Ayad Akhtar, *Disgraced*

*Vivek Bald, *Bengali Harlem and the lost histories of South Asian America*

*Monisha Das Gupta, *Unruly Immigrants: Rights, Activism, and Transnational South Asian Politics in the United States*

*Gayatri Gopinath, *Impossible Desires: Queer Diasporas and South Asian Public Cultures*

Jhumpa Lahiri, *Interpreter of Maladies*

*Karen Leonard, *Making Ethnic Choices*

*Sunaina Maira, *Missing: Youth, Citizenship and Empire*

*Bakirathi Mani, *Aspiring to Home: South Asians in America*

Vijay Prashad, *The Karma of Brown Folk*

*Shalini Shankar, *Desi Land*

Seema Sohi, *Echoes of Mutiny: Race, Surveillance, and Indian Anticolonialism in America*

*Junaid Rana, *Terrifying Muslims*

*Sharmila Rudrappa, *Ethnic Routes to Becoming American*