Gender, Law and State In Colonial/Postcolonial India

Janaki Nair

Classes: May 20 - June 30, 2011

This course will introduce students to the links between religion, state and law in the Indian subcontinent specifically focused on transformations of gender relations. Readings and lectures will be focused on the history of the gendered legal subject beginning with the colonial period (approximately 1800-1947) and how that history has left its traces on the contemporary legal status of women (1947 to present).

This is a readings based course. Students will be expected to participate in discussion on the readings assigned for each day. Assessments will be based on classroom discussion, (25%) classroom presentations, (25%) and a short paper (50%).

Class One: Friday May 20, 2011 2-5 p.m.


Bernard Cohn “Law and the Colonial State in India” in Colonialism and its forms of Knowledge (Delhi: OUP, 1997), pp. 57-75.

Class Two: Monday May 23, 2011 9-12 a.m.

Lata Mani Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India (OUP, 1998), pp. 11-41.


Class Three: Friday May 27, 2011 2-5 p.m.


**Class Four: Monday May 30, 2011 9-12 a.m.**


**Class Five: Friday June 3, 2011 2-5 p.m.**


Archana Parashar, “Gender Inequality and Religious Personal Laws in India”


**Class Six: Monday June 6, 2011 9-12 a.m.**


Class Seven: Friday June 10, 2011 2-5 p.m.


Class Eight: Monday, June 20, 2011 2-5 p.m.

Class Presentations of assignment: Reading case law as a historical source

Analysis of Sarla Mudgal Judgement