

GWSS 490: Gender and Sexuality in India

Monday/Wednesday, 1:30-3:20 p.m.

Savery Hall 138

Instructor: Professor Priti Ramamurthy

What do “gender” and “sexuality” mean in India? What do terms in Indian languages--devdasi, hijra, kothi, bhadramahila, aadavallu, thirunar, for example—conjure? How have these concepts changed in meaning and transformed people’s identities and experiences? What do gender and sexuality as analytical frameworks tell us about the violent and everyday operations of power and difference—especially caste, religious, trans and sexual difference--in India, and beyond? How have feminist movements and movements for gender and sexual freedoms sought and brought about transformations in knowledge, law, and radical social change? How have they been depoliticized? We will develop our thinking along these lines at different moments and recursively by considering: the woman question and colonialism, anti-colonialism and nationalism; the modern girl and transnationalism; the agrarian question and women’s economic role in state-led development; the caste question; masculinities and religious assertion; the new middle class; globalization, financialization and urban informality. We will read “classic” and current essays, books, reports, and documentaries by feminist cultural and social historians, anthropologists, and political economists, artists and novelists.