

**Ambedkar University Delhi**

**Course Outline**

**Monsoon Semester (July -December 2017)**

**School:** School of Human Sciences

Programme with title: BA Foundation Elective

**Semester to which offered:** Semester-1

**Course Title:** Introduction to Gender (IG)

**Credits:** 4

**Course Code (new):** FC041

**Course Code (old):** FC041

**Type of Course:** BA Foundation Elective

**For SUS only (Mark an X for as many as appropriate):**

1. Foundation (Compulsory)
2. Foundation (Elective): X
3. Discipline (Compulsory)
4. Discipline (Elective)
5. Elective

**Course Coordinator and Team:**

**Email of course coordinator:**

**Pre-requisites:** BA Semester -1

**Aim:**

The course attempts to introduce undergraduate students to gender. What is gender? The immediate response that comes to mind is that gender is a concept; a force that tells us what to do and what not to do. Gender is a way of making reality appears as it

is, without questioning its bases. It seems the most 'natural' way for a society and ourselves to be organized in it. Men and women seem to be everywhere doing what they are meant to do. Then, why do we need to explain or 'visibilise' gender? And more importantly, what would such unveiling of gender do to our conception of the world and ourselves? As an analytical category, therefore the first part of the course will seek to ask why are societies, power, ideas and everyday life organized around the gender a person is assigned to.

We know from our experience that gender is also the basis of what we can lay a claim to and access and what we cannot. The second part of the course will explore gender as a social category and unveiling of gender will crucially question its relation to social suffering and social disadvantages (such as in terms of caste, class, ethnicity, and religion). Why even as we may recognise societal norms to be oppressive, are we so occupied in the production and execution of our own selves as gendered? The vicissitudes of gender as a social identity will be the focus of this part.

The final part of the course will focus on that which is so deeply personal about gender and which forms the bases of our investment in our gendered selves. Is gender sexual identity/sexual orientation that each of us is born into/choose? That which we fight for and that which we assert? Do these claims have material consequences? This part will focus on the relationship of gender with sexuality and desire.

#### **Brief description of modules/ Main modules:**

### **Module 1: Sex and Gender**

We begin with the idea of gender and what it means. This module would attempt to open the discussion towards what the indifference to the distinction between sex and gender produces and why this difference is important to begin unveiling reality. What are the stakes in the invisibilisation of the sex-gender distinction? And, why are feminists so invested in undoing it?

Texts for discussion:

- Films (sections): Bombay Talkies (Dir. Zoya Akhtar), Jab We Met and Highway
- Temsula Ao's 'The Night,' from "These Hills Called Home" Penguin books in collaboration with Zubaan,

- Kate Chopin, “The Story of an Hour” in *The Awakening and Selected Stories of Kate Chopin* (New York: American Library, 1976).  
[<http://www.katechopin.org/pdfs/Kate%20Chopin,%20The%20Story%20of%20an%20Hour.pdf>]
- Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Five Sexes and Five Sexes Revisited*

## Module 2: Gender and Violence

In this module we would look at how 'violence against women' reduces lives to social statistics and why a more subjective reading of violence may enrich both our understanding of violence and gender. What is the relationship between violence and gender? Is violence something that acts upon women, like power? Or is it constitutive of the very texture of gender? If it is, then are we condemned to live with violence or is it something that we can actively negotiate and mobilise around?

Texts for Discussion:

- Urmila Pawar—The Weave of my Life (sections)
- Anzaldua and Moraga – Bridge called My Back (sections)
- Sohaila Abdulali, “I fought for my life... and won”, *Manushi*, No. 16 (June–July), 1983. [[http://www.manushi-india.org/pdfs\\_issues/articles/I%20Fought%20for%20My%20Life.pdf](http://www.manushi-india.org/pdfs_issues/articles/I%20Fought%20for%20My%20Life.pdf)]
- Films (sections): Rituparno Ghosh (dir.), *Dahan* [film], 1997. And Dhobi Ghat
- Flavia [Agnes] and Women’s Centre, Bombay, *My Story, Our Story: Of Rebuilding Broken Lives* (Bombay: Women’s Centre, 1984).

## Module 3: Sexuality

Taking off from the last module, we would now ask why while race and caste seem social and thus fixed, desire and sexuality seem transgressive? We are also going to interrogate how sexualities come to be personal and the different claims to recognition such desires involve. Finally, we will discuss how such claims have very material consequences. The attempt of the module is to open up gender to its entanglements with sexuality and why a study of their relationship enriches our understanding of sex/gender/sexuality.

Texts for discussion:

- Film (sections): Dhobi Ghat
- Wajeda Tabassum, “Utran [Castoffs]”, in Tharu and Lalita, eds. *Women Writing in India: Volume II: The Twentieth Century* (New Delhi: OUP, 1993).
- Agha Shahid Ali, selections of poems from “The Veiled Suite”, 2009

## **Module 4: Identity**

This module seeks to open up not only the operations and circulation of gender as an identity but also the risky business of identification. We not only look at how some continue to be excluded out of identities but also the difficult negotiations many do to enter these identities. If we recognize gender to be both social and personal identity then how do we negotiate desires within the constraints of identity?

Texts for Discussion:

- S. Joseph, “Identity Card” [poem/trans.], in K. Satyanarayana and Susie Tharu, eds. *The Exercise of Freedom: An Introduction to Dalit Writing* (New Delhi: Navayana, 2013).
- The debates on Gender Neutrality in Anti-Sexual Harassment Codes
- Debates around double mastectomy opted for by actor Angelina Jolie

## **Module 5-6: Questions from the Feminist Movement**

After opening up the difficult transactions and translations of everyday life in identity, we move to how the category of woman is both useful for and an obstacle to feminist politics. Possible fields for this discussion are the debates on the Uniform Civil Code; Sati and protests against December 16<sup>th</sup> 2012 rape case.

Texts for Discussion:

Debates on Uniform Civil Code; Sati and December 16<sup>th</sup> 2012 protest movement

**Tentative Assessment schedule with details of weightage:**

<b>S.No</b>	<b>Weightage</b>	<b>Date/period in which Assessment will take place</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
1	40%	5-October-2017	Assesement 1
2	40%	5-November-2017	Assesement 2
3	20%	6-November-2017	Assesement 3