

HIS 340
Women in India

Summer-II

Satisfies: GLO & SBS

Thematic Categories: "Empires, Violence & Global Connections,"
"Law, Politics & Social Justice," "Race, Religion, Gender & Sexualities"

Online Asynchronous

Instructor: Debjani Chakrabarty

This course examines the transformative and contentious history of Indian women in the 19th and early 20th century, focusing on the impact of British colonial rule, social reform movements, and indigenous traditions on women's lives. It explores how colonial policies and patriarchal practices shaped women's subjectivity and agency. Students will investigate key social reform movements that sought to challenge practices such as *sati* (widow immolation), child marriage, and forced illiteracy. The course will highlight the contributions of pioneering women like Pandita Ramabai and Savitribai Phule, who advocated for women's rights and education. We will also examine how women's participation in cultural movements and early nationalist movements influenced the political and social landscape of colonial India. Students will explore how caste, class, and religion influenced women's experiences, highlighting the differing opportunities and challenges faced by upper-caste women versus those from marginalized communities.

Apart from secondary historical scholarship, students will analyse primary sources, such as letters, memoirs, and colonial records, to gain insights into women's perspectives and agency. Primary sources will also include paintings, excerpts from important fictional pieces and film clips. By the end of the course, students will have a nuanced understanding of how 19th and early 20th century Indian women navigated the tensions between tradition and modernity, colonialism and nationalism, and oppression and empowerment. All resources will be provided on Brightspace. No textbook required.