

## 5. Rereading Epic Narratives

Hours: 60 hours

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### Course Description:

This course aims to closely look at the cultural politics of Indian society and bring to light the importance of the role of humanities in education. When the Government imposed lockdown as a Covid precautionary measure, Ramanand Sagar's Ramayan was re-aired. The much celebrated TV series fetched new viewership, reportedly holding a world record of 7.7 crore single-day viewership. Such cultural currency needs to be examined and addressed.

The stories from the epics that are written, told and retold are stories that are memorialised as invincible. This course preempts a 'why' and a 'who' before every such writing, telling, and retelling.

### Course Objectives

This course aims to:

- Understand the socio-political and historical contexts that produce myths
- Identify universal and cross-cultural patterns in myths
- Understand the processes to envision a retelling through performance

### Expected Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Develop an interdisciplinary perspective
- Develop critical and reflective thinking and effectively articulate the same
- Understand cultural relativity through the retellings that clearly pronounce diversity and plurality of the narrative traditions
- Display socio-cultural and political reflections as prompted by the instructor through a creative process
- Critically engage in varied debates and discourses surrounding contemporary epic narratives

## Course Plan

Module/Topic	Schedule	No. of Hours	Remarks
<b><u>Module 1</u></b> <b>Symbols and What to Make of Them</b>	Weeks 1-5		
a. Introduction to the course		2 hours	Introduction to the syllabus, CIA announcements, assessment rubrics and course work expectations
b. Devdutt Pattanaik: myth=mithya		4+1 hours	4 hours of interactive sessions with presentation + 1 hour of watching relevant video
c. John Fiske: Myths and Myth-Makers		2+1+1 hours	2 hour lecture + 1 hour of discussion + 1 hour of reading
d. Sheldon Pollock: "Ramayana and Political Imagination in India"		2 + 4 hours	2 hours of close reading with lecture presentation + 4 hours of Screening of Raam ke Naam intervened with

			lectures
e. The Hero with a Thousand Faces by Joseph Campbell		3 hours	3 hours of close reading with lecture
<i>CIA1 submission</i>			
<b><u>Module 2</u></b> <b>Exploring Retellings of Indian Epics</b>	Weeks 6-10		
a. AK. Ramanujan: "Three Hundred Ramayanas: Five Examples and Three Thoughts on Translation"		3 + 1 hours	3 hours of interactive lecture sessions + 1 hour of group discussion
b. Asura: Tale of the Vanquished: The Story of Ravana and His People, by Anand Neelakantan		2 + 2 hours	2 hours of select reading with discussion + 2 hours of group discussion with notes submission
c. Chithra Devakaruni: Palace of Illusions		2 + 2 hours	2 hours of reading with group discussion + 2 hours of group presentations
d. Transforming a Brahmin: Shudra Tapasvi (excerpt) by "Kuvempu"		4 hours	4 hours of close reading and lecture

Kuppalli Venkata Puttappa, Kannada [Translated by Girish Karnad and K. Marulasiddappa]			
e. Shambuka's Story Anew: Basavalingaiah Re- presents Shudra Tapasvi : Performance essay, Kannada [Translated By Paula Richman]		4 hours	4 hours of close reading by students in assigned CIA groups
<i>CIA Part1 Submissions</i>			
<b><u>Module 3</u></b> <b>Living Currents of Cultural Memory</b>	Weeks 11-12		
a. Students will decide the texts/course content for two hours		2 + 1 hours	Student -led discussions + 1 hour of lecture with summaries
b. Sita Sings the Blues dir. Nina Paley. 2008.		2 + 2 + 1 hours	2 hours of film screening + 2 hours of discussion + 1 hour of lecture

<b><u>Module 4</u></b>	Weeks 13-16		
a. It is Sita's story, not Rama's, that is told by women in Karnataka's villages: Article on Sanntimmi's Ramayana, performance by Du. Saraswati		1 hour	Reading
b. CIA: Presentations			Presentations
Revision Week	Week 17	4 hours	Discussion, self study, reading

### **Assessment**

After discussions of the various ideas that the instructor exposes the students to, in groups of 8-10, they are expected to submit a creative project that exhibits their own retelling of any epic tale. The final submission could be in the form of a play, a short film, a radio documentary, street play, or any other creative format approved by the instructor in advance. This re-envisioning project is to enable students to see through the politics of the existing retellings and to correct them through a creative process. The submissions ought to be socio-politically and culturally sensitive.

CIA part 1:

A proposal, minutes of the meetings and work division for the final submission (Detailed rubrics will be made available in the first week)

CIA part 2:

Final submission/performance of their creative retelling of any epic tale (Detailed rubrics will be made available in the first week)

CIA part 3:

The class will collectively set up a blog for this course in week 1.

The whole process and the intent behind the final performance will be individually journaled in a notebook. Finally, it has to be entered in the class blog as an article of about 500 words by each student

- To assess comprehension of concepts and ideas, construction of logical arguments, critical thought and reflection, and analytical skills of students.

### **Learning outcomes of the CIA:**

At the end of the assessment, students would be able to:

- Demonstrate observational, interpretative and creative skills
- Acquire different modes of gaining insights as well as producing knowledge

Become more aware of the politics