Program: UW in India  
Course Title: Gender, Caste, Community: Urban Geography in Context  
Course Equivalencies: Environmental Studies – Gaylord Nelson Institute 115, Anthropology 307, Languages and Cultures of Asia 252, Sociology 252, Womens Studies 329  
Total Hours: 45  
Recommended Credits: 3  
Suggested Cross Listings: Anthropology, History, Religious Studies, Sociology, Geography, Urban Studies, Women and Gender Studies  
Language of Instruction: English  
Prerequisites/Requirements: None

Description
This multi-disciplinary course unfolds Varanasi’s many layers through the lenses of gender, caste, and community. How does the built landscape intersect with the geography of identity? How are gender, caste, class, regional and religious identities articulated within the urban space? How do we tease out the many cities within the city—temporally, spatially, and culturally? In bringing together the tools of urban studies, women’s and gender studies, ethnography and sociology, and blending classroom instruction with faculty-led field visits, this course offers students an opportunity to carefully observe, question, and explore their new surroundings, and to develop nuanced, thoughtful techniques to understand and skillfully navigate it.

Objectives
This course will use a variety of tools, including physical exploration and mapping, direct observation, conversations and experiential learning, as well as historical and ethnographic texts, to develop students’ familiarity and relationship with the ancient city that will be their home for a semester or more.

By the end of the course, students are expected to:
- Be able to navigate the dense and winding gulleys, to correctly identify distinct ghats and their unique histories, and to distinguish historical layers that have grown up around (and on top of) this older core;
- Be able to describe and analyse distinct communities in Varanasi as they are defined geographically and temporally, and to be able to understand them through the lenses of caste and gender;
- Use their understanding of Varanasi to attempt to theorize about cities, their varying historical and cultural lives, and about patterns of urbanisation in general.
CET Syllabus of Record

Course Requirements
There are no pre-requisites for this course. Students are expected to approach this complex, often difficult, always interesting city with energy and a spirit of adventure, and also to be prepared to read through and critically analyse textual material about the city. Given the multi-level approach to learning employed by the course, missing even one session could set a student back substantially in terms of learning outcomes. Therefore, all absences, apart from unavoidable ones resulting from illness or other emergencies, could result in grade reductions.

Course completion requirements will include the following:
- Attendance and participation in class
- Participation in all field-based activities and excursions
- Weekly discussions of assigned readings
- A regular mapping exercise: on an almost weekly basis every week, students add one new location they have visited in Varanasi, along with a brief caption or other resource (a photo, audio or video clip), to a personalized map of the city
- A regularly-maintained journal of impressions about the city
- A mid-term exam
- A final project/ 8-10-page paper: this submission could take the form of a formal paper, a studio or performing arts project, poetry or fiction

Methods of evaluation
- Responses to and participation in discussions about readings......................... 15%
- Map posts........................................................................................................ 20%
- City Journal posts............................................................................................ 20%
- Mid-Term Exam.................................................................................................. 20%
- Final Paper/ Project............................................................................................ 20%
- Final Presentation................................................................................................. 5%

Primary Texts
CET Syllabus of Record

Press 1998
Glushkova, Irina, ‘Banaras, the Concept of the tristhal-yatra) and the Inflow of the Marathas: An alternative view’, in Keul, Istvan ed., Banaras Revisited: Scholarly Pilgrimages to the City of Light, pp. 113-132, Harrassowitz Verlag 2014
Massey, Doreen, ‘Space, Place and Gender’, in Miles et al ed. The City Cultures Reader, Urban Reader Series, pp. 307-310, Routledge 2009
CET Syllabus of Record

Supplementary Texts
Singh, Birendra Pratap, Life in Ancient Varanasi: An Account Based on Archaeological Evidence, Sandeep Prakashan 1985
Singh, Rana P.B., Cultural Landscapes and the Lifeworld: Literary Images of Banaras, Indica 2004
Singh, Rana P.B., Banaras (Varanasi): Cosmic Order, Sacred City, Hindu Traditions, Tara Book Agency 1993

Outline of Course Content
Each of the topics listed below will be supplemented by group field visits as well as structured individual explorations; each topic will be covered over 2-4 weeks.

Topic 1: Varanasi as imagined geography
- Focus on references to the city in mythology and early literary traditions
- Why is Varanasi so important to worshippers of Shiva?
- Relevance of the city to early India
- Many ways of mapping and imagining the city

Topic 2: Early historical geographies
- Varanasi as a site of sun worship and the place of women in the landscape
- Buddhist and Jain Varanasi

Topic 3: Varanasi through the medieval period
- Early Hindu and Islamic traditions, and ways in which they added shape and texture to the city’s layout and emerging visual landscapes

Topic 4: Early modern and colonial Varanasi
- Focus on how much of the city as we now know it was part of a deliberate politico-religious project of the late 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries

Topic 5: Cities with a city: explorations of the many distinct neighbourhoods of the city
- The city’s distinct regional enclaves, and the ways in which traditions that belong to faraway and often long-forgotten parts of the country are maintained in local enclaves
- Divisions along religious and/or professional lines
- Divisions along caste
- Gender and the roles of women in the city’s history
- The Varanasi of the pilgrim and the tourist
- How all the different cities interface or co-exist with each other

Topic 6: Modern Varanasi: physical geography
- Newer layers, and how they interact with the old
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- Newer divisions and interfaces

Topic 7: Modern Varanasi: issues
- The environment
- Pollution and the River Ganga (Ganges)
- Crowd management on the ghats
- Urban planning and the growing city