



Caste and the City

Spring 2026

Course Title: Caste and the City

Course Code:

Course Credits: 4 Credits

Course Length: 15 Weeks

Course Instructor: Dr. Madhura Lohokare

Email: mlohokare@jgu.edu.in (I respond to emails between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m., on weekdays)

Classroom and class hours: TBD

Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description

This course aims to enable students to understand how formations of caste continue to shape and organize social, economic, affective and spatial lives of Indian cities, against the backdrop of the continuing popular discourse of relegating caste to a “distant” space (the village) and time (the past). An important objective of the course is not just to introduce students to the range of sites/ discourses of the city where caste operates and thrives, but also to demonstrate how operation of caste continues to be central in important ways to the very *cityness* itself of the Indian city.

This reading and writing-intensive course will be relevant to undergraduate and postgraduate students from all disciplines interested in exploring how the workings of the contemporary city in India are marked by the axis of caste and its ramifications for our urban futures. We

will read academic articles, critical non-fiction, watch popular films and documentaries in order to understand the following themes:

- I. **Spatializing caste in urban India:** This module focuses on how caste is embedded in the planning, building and organization of Indian cities.
- II. **Caste, urban economy and infrastructures:** This module demonstrates how caste is deeply incorporated in the labour regimes of the Indian city, shaping not just its everyday workings but also its structural economic upheavals.
- III. **Claiming and belonging to the city:** This module will study how the Indian city is a site of dynamic caste-based contestation, for laying claim on resources, space and a sense of belonging.

Grading Evaluation Breakup

25 marks (long-essay 2000 words, due approx. in week 7/week 8 of the course)

25 marks (creative assignment in the form of a podcast/ photo-essay/ fiction/ creative non-fiction/ interview/movie or documentary review/ policy brief/ syllabus/ Twitter thread informed by insights derived from the course readings and discussions)

30 marks (end-term examination)

20 marks (reflection writing)

Students with less than 70% attendance will not pass this course.

Grade Definition

JGU approves the use of this rubric for FINAL ASSESSMENT grading as indicated below:

Letter Grade	Percentage of Marks	Grade Points	
O	80 and above	8	Outstanding: Exceptional knowledge of the subject matter, thorough understanding of issues; ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles and extraordinary critical and analytical ability.
A+	75 - 79	7.5	Excellent: Sound knowledge of the subject matter, thorough understanding of issues; ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles and critical and analytical ability.
A	70 - 74	7	Very Good: Sound knowledge of the subject matter, excellent organizational capacity, ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles, critically analyse existing material and originality in thinking and presentation.

A-	65 -69	6	Good: Good understanding of the subject matter, ability to identify issues and provide balanced solutions to problems and good critical and analytical skills.
B+	60 - 64	5	Fair: Average understanding of the subject matter, limited ability to identify issues and provide solutions to problems and reasonable critical and analytical skills.
B	55 - 59	4	Acceptable: Adequate knowledge of the subject matter to go to the next level of the study and reasonable critical and analytical skills.
B-	50 - 54	3	Marginal: Limited knowledge of the subject matter and irrelevant use of materials, and poor critical and analytical skills.
P1	45 - 49	2	Pass 1: Pass with Basic understanding of the subject matter .
P2	40 - 44	1	Pass 2: Pass with Rudimentary understanding of the subject matter.
F	Below 40	0	Fail: Poor comprehension of the subject matter; poor critical and analytical skills and marginal use of the relevant materials. Will require repeating the course.

Classroom Punctuality/Conduct:

JGU conducts all classes on a foundation of professionalism. It is expected that students should be present in class and seated within five minutes of the class start time. Students arriving after a ten-minute window from the designated start time will be refused entry/attendance. Please show courtesy to your instructors and co-learners by observing punctuality.

Please also note that the seminar room is a place for free expression and critical thinking and this comes with a responsibility on the part of students to respect opinions expressed and actively participate in the work of the classroom discussion. This course may discuss a range of issues and events that might provoke strong emotional responses. It is critical to ensure that all students collectively benefit from the course, and do not feel disturbed due to either the content of the course or the conduct of the discussions. Therefore, it is incumbent upon all within the classroom to pledge to maintain respect towards our peers and the instructor.

Plagiarism

JGU operates on a zero-tolerance approach to plagiarism. The unacknowledged use of material by others/ AI within your work is a violation of academic integrity and all reported cases will be investigated before potential disciplinary action. Instructors will address methods of citation and presentation within written work.

Disability and mental health support on campus

All students can access support from the JGU Centre for Wellness and Counselling CWCS 24X7 Helpline Number: [+918396907312](tel:+918396907312) or with prior appointment at the Email ID: cwcs@jgu.edu.in. The students can also reach out to the JGU Health Centre Helpline at 8930110722.

The Disability Support Committee at JGU provides a range of accommodations to the conditions identified by *The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016*, available [here](#). And *Mental Health Care Act 2017*, available [here](#). DSC registration is open throughout the year. We prefer that students with long-standing conditions should register at the beginning of the semester so that we can make the necessary arrangements. The DSC will take at least 14 business days to make arrangements with the respective departments. All students with any known disability needing academic accommodation are required to register with the Disability Support Committee dsc@jgu.edu.in. The Disability Support Committee maintains strict confidentiality on the matters under its purview. The registration details are available on the website <https://jgu.edu.in/disability-support-committee/>

JGU policy on sexual harassment

In order to implement the JGU Policy against sexual harassment in accordance with The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013, and the University Grants Commission's Regulation, 2015, JGU has constituted a Committee On Gender Sensitization Against Sexual Harassment (COGSASH). Students and faculty are covered under this policy. The COGSASH can be accessed via email at shc@jgu.edu.in or contacted on their 24-hour helpline at **1800-120-3845**. You can access the JGU policy against sexual harassment at <https://jgu.edu.in/gender-sensitization/>.

Weekly Schedule

Spatialising Caste in Urban India

Week 1

Tonkiss, Fran. 2013. *Cities by Design: the social life of urban form*, Cambridge, Malden: Polity Press (*excerpts*)

Bridge, Gary and Sophie Watson. 2003. ‘City Differences,’ in G. Bridge and S. Watson (eds.) *A Companion to the City*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, p. 251-54

De Neve, Geert and Henrike Donner, eds. 2006. *The Meaning of the Local: Politics of Place in Urban India*, London and New York: Routledge, p. 3-9.

(Podcast) Visaka, Sneha. 2020. Introduction to ‘The Feminist City’,
<https://vidhilegalpolicy.in/podcasts/the-feminist-city-trailer/introduction-to-feminist-urbansim/>

Week 2

Cresswell, Tim. (2004). *Place: a short introduction*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing: p. 102-105

Jesús Francisco Cháirez-Garza (2014) Touching space: Ambedkar on the spatial features of untouchability, *Contemporary South Asia*, 22:1, 37-50, DOI: 10.1080/09584935.2013.870978

Paik, Shailaja. (2014). *Dalit Women’s Education in Modern India: Double Discrimination*. Oxford, New York: Routledge, pp. 189-210

Guru, Gopal. (2012). “Experience, Space and Justice” in G. Guru and S. Sarukkai (eds.). *The Cracked Mirror: an Indian debate on experience and theory*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 89-94

Week 3

Sharaddha Kumbhojkar, ‘Contesting Power, Contesting Memories: the history of the Koregaon memorial,’ *Economic and Political Weekly* 47, no.42 (2012): 103-107

Bairy, Ramesh T.S. (2010), ‘The Modern World of Brahmins’, in *Being Brahmin Being Modern: Exploring the Lives of Caste Today*, London, New York, New Delhi: Routledge, pp. 52-67, 74-81.

Shaikh, J. (2021). *Outcaste Bombay: City Making and the Politics of the Poor*. University of Washington Press, p. 19-38

Thatra, G. (2022). Dalit Chembur: Spatializing the Caste Question in Bombay, c. 1920s–1970s. *Journal of Urban History*, 48(1), p.11-14, 17-19

Week 4

Kumar, V. (2021). Locating Dalit Bastis: The Sites of Everyday Silent Resistance and Works from the Late 19th Century to the Mid-20th-Century United Provinces. In Jha, Pathak, & Das (Eds.), *Neighbourhoods in Urban India: In Between Home and the City* (pp. 119–143). Bloomsbury India.

(*Film*) Murali, Disha, Katiyar and Sharma. 2015. *Mula Vimutti* (Deliverance from Roots), available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GLcrqP9OI7w&t=1005s>

Singh Gayatri, Vithayathil Trina and Kanhu Charan. (2019). ‘Recasting inequality: residential segregation by caste over time in urban India,’ *Environment & Urbanization*, International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), 31(2): 615–634. DOI: 10.1177/0956247818812330

(*Podcast excerpts*) Visaka, Sneha and Naveen Bharathi. 2021. Caste and Religion based Residential Segregation in Indian Cities, <https://vidhilegalpolicy.in/podcasts/the-feminist-city-trailer/caste-and-religion-based-residential-segregation-in-indian-cities/>

(Suggested Additional Reading: Sidhwani, Pranav. (2015). “Spatial inequality in big Indian cities”, *Economic and Political Weekly* Vol 50, No 22, pages 55–62)

Week 5

Thorat, Sukhadeo, A Banerjee, V Mishra and F Rizvi (2015), “Urban rental housing market: caste and religion matters in access”, *Economic and Political Weekly* Vol 50, p. 47-53.

Dyotana Banerjee & Mona G. Mehta (2017): Caste and capital in the remaking of Ahmedabad, *Contemporary South Asia*, DOI: 10.1080/09584935.2017.1329278

Ganguly, Sriti (2018), ‘Socio-spatial stigma and segregation: a Balmiki colony in Central Delhi’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 103 (50): 50-57

(*Film*) Soni, Sachu, Agarwal, Shekhar, Sorte. 2015. *Not Caste in Stone*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wcqByVEPICQ&t=388s>

Week 6

Caste, urban economy and infrastructures

Ranganathan, Malini. (2022). Towards a Political Ecology of Caste and the City, *Journal of Urban Technology*, DOI: 10.1080/10630732.2021.2007203

Thorat, Sukhdeo and Paul Attewell. (2010). “The Legacy of Social Exclusion: A Correspondence Study of Job Discrimination in India’s Urban Private Sector.” In *Blocked by Caste: Economic Discrimination in Modern India*, edited by S. Thorat and K. Newman, 35-51. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Deshpande, Ashwini. 2017. *The Grammar of Caste*, New Delhi: OUP, p. 1-27

Dhanuja, Christina. 2024. Caste at Work: the myth of ‘talent’, *The Swaddle*, available at <https://www.theswaddle.com/caste-at-work-the-myth-of-talent>

Week 7

Dyotana Banerjee (2024): Caste, gig-economy, and youth: the resurgence of a new age caste politics in urban Gujarat, *South Asian History and Culture*, DOI: 10.1080/19472498.2024.2346867 (Wednesday 26th March, student presentation)

S. Shakthi (2023) Corporate Brahminism and Tech Work: Caste in a Modern Indian Profession, *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 46:5, 920-933, DOI:10.1080/00856401.2023.2215137

Thomas, Renny (2020). ‘Brahmins as scientists and science as Brahmins’ calling: Caste in an Indian scientific research institute,’ *Public Understanding of Science*, Vol. 29 (3), 306–318

Kisana, Ravikant. (2025). *Meet the Savarnas: Indian millennials whose mediocrity broke everything*, New Delhi: Penguin, Ebury Press (excerpts)

Week 8

D. Kornberg, ‘From Balmikis to Bengalis: the ‘casteification’ of Muslims in Delhi’s Informal Garbage Economy,’ *Economic and Political Weekly*, 54: 47 (2019) 47–55.

Sharma, M. (2022). Caste of Labour: Dalits, the Industrial Ecosystem and Environmental Politics in Delhi. *Social Change*, 52(1), 7-23. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00490857221079467>

Mosse, David. (2020). The Modernity of Caste and the Market Economy, *Modern Asian Studies*, 54 (4): 1225-1227; 1250-1260

Week 9

Claiming and belonging to the city

(Film) Ranjith, Pa. 2018. *Kaala*

Kisana, Ravikant. (2025). *Meet the Savarnas: Indian millennials whose mediocrity broke everything*, New Delhi: Penguin, Ebury Press (excerpts)

Borisa, Dhiren, Jyoti, Dhrubo, and Daik, Prateek. (2025). *Across the Naala: A Queer Dalit Bahujan Zine of Stories from Delhi*, New Delhi: Project Mukti and USF

Week 10

Chalwadi, R. (2023). (Re)Constructing Spatial and Social Relations: Valmikis of Mumbai and Their Everyday Challenge to Caste, In D. Bhoi and H. Gorringe (eds.), *Caste in Everyday Life: affect and experience in Indian Society*, (pp. 293-308), Palgrave Macmillan (Monday, 31st March, student presentation)

(*Film*) Patwardhan, Gouri. (2020). *Bin Savalyanchya Gaavat* (In the Shadowless City), New Delhi: PSBT, Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pI1wIo_oUyY

Week 11

Pranathi Diwakar. (2023). Placing Caste: Spatialization, Urban Segregation, and Musical Boundary-Making, *Social Forces*, Volume 101, Issue 4, April, pp. 1834–1855, <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/soac103>

Dutt, Yashica. (2019). *Coming Out as Dalit*. New Delhi: Aleph Book Company (*excerpts*)

(*Film*) Rajamani, Rajesh. (2020). *The Discreet Charm of the Savarnas*, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AJBkmtpu1sQ&t=7s>

Week 12

Bhagwat, Vidyut. (1996). 'Bombay in Dalit Literature,' in Sujata Patel and Alice Thornton, (eds.), *Bombay: Mosaic of Modern Culture*, Bombay: Oxford University Press

(*Film*) Patwardhan, Anand. (2011). *Jai Bhim Comrade*, available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3FBqpP6Z_jM

Week 13

Waghmore, Suryakant. (2019). 'Community, not Humanity: Caste Associations and Hindu Cosmopolitanism in Contemporary Mumbai,' *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 42(2): pp. 375-393

Bhatkhande, A. (2023), 'Do Not Talk Like the Other Castes': language and everyday casteism in a Marathi Brahmin household in Mumbai', In *Caste in Everyday Life: experience and affect in Indian society*, eds. D. Bhoi & H. Gorringe, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 271-290

Week 14: TBD (this is to offer us some breathing space from the demands of the syllabus! Sometimes material from earlier weeks tends to spill into the last few weeks of the semester. In the happy event of us covering all the designated material till week 13, we can decide what we want to read a bit more in detail around the theme of our course by consensus).

Week 15: Presentation of student creative projects + debriefing about the course.