Modern History of Nepal: A Reading List

By Pratyoush Onta

This reading list is a slightly revised one of the version I used for a history course on modern Nepal at Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut, US in spring 2007.

Course Description
This course will introduce the span of Nepali history from the mid-18th century to the present to students whose working language is English (namely, they can not read texts in the written languages of Nepal). We will discuss the territorial consolidation of the Nepali state along the Himalayas that paralleled the rise of the colonial state in South Asia. The focus will be both on the political history of Nepal and on the important social and cultural issues that have dominated the Nepali imagination. The struggles for democracy that erupted in the 1920s will take us to the present, as will the crucial subjects of development, the post-1990 experiments with multi-party democracy and the Maoist movement.

Books Used

Assigned/Recommended Book Extracts and Articles


**Class Plan and Assigned Readings** [Those within parenthesis are recommended readings]

1st class: Introduction to the course

2: Introduction to Nepal and Nepal in South Asian History
   Whelpton Introduction and ch 1; English 1985

3 and 4: Nepal: the Story of ‘Unification’
   Whelpton ch 2; Regmi 1971; Pfaff-Czarnecka 1991; Stiller 1989

5 and 6: The Implications of ‘Unification’ and the Rana Regime (1846-1951)
   Whelpton ch 3; Stiller 1976; Regmi 1978; Sharma 1977; Gurung 2003; Burghart 1984; Levine 1987

7 and 8: 20th Century Politics – I: Political Economy of the Second Half of Rana Rule and the Movement for Democracy (up to 1951):

9 and 10: 20th Century Politics – II: The 1950s Experiments and the Panchayat State (1960-90)


12 and 13: Development and Social Change I: Foreign Aid, Development Culture and Human Development

14 and 15: Development and Social Change II: Rural Poverty and Long-Distance Labour Migration
   Karan and Ishii 1997; Adhikari and Bohle 1998; Seldon et al. 2002; Graner and Gurung 2003; Yamanaka 2000, [2005]

16 and 17: Development and Social Change III: The Middle-class in Kathmandu
   Whelpton ch 6; Onta 1998; Liechty 2003

18 and 19: The Crises of the ‘Old’ State
   Pfaff-Czarnecka 1997; Lama 2004; Fujikura 2007
20 and 21: Maoist Insurgency
   Thapa with Sijapati 2004; [Extracts from Hutt 2004]; Adhikari 2003

22 and 23: The Political Transition
   Documentary on Royal Massacre of Nepal (available at http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=Royal+Massacre+Nepal&search=Search
   Hutt 2005; Khanal 2006a, Dixit 2007; ICC 2007 [and previous reports available online]

24, 25 and 26: Issues for a ‘New’ Nepal
   Lawoti 2005; Khanal 2006b; Gurung 2005