

GYAN PRAKASH

SUBALTERN HISTORY

S04

W 1:30-4:20

What is a subaltern history? Referring to power relations between elites and non-elites, subaltern historiography examines history from the point of view of the subordinated, the subaltern.

In this seminar we will look at examples of historical works that examine: (a) events, everyday life, and elite texts and ideologies from the point of view of the subaltern; (b) ways of writing histories of dominated groups – peasants, workers, slaves, women, and minorities.

Originally emerging in the study of colonial India, the influence of this methodology is now visible in the historiography of other regions, and in several other disciplines, including literary studies and anthropology. It has led to new ways of reading evidence from official sources, and generated debates about what it means to write histories of those who did not leave written records or whose thoughts and actions went unrecorded. We will read and discuss key works in this body of historiography ranging across different regions – from Asia to Europe to North and Latin America – to understand its key ideas and methods, the relationship of this methodology with associated approaches, such as “history from below,” and, of course, learn how to write subaltern history.