AJANTHA SUBRAMANIAN
Curriculum Vitae
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PROFESSIONAL APPOINTMENTS

2018-	Chair, Department of Anthropology, Harvard University
2012-	Professor, Anthropology and South Asian Studies, Harvard University
2010-2012	Associate Professor, Cultural Anthropology, Duke University
2010-2012	Morris Kahn Associate Professor, Anthropology and Social Studies, Harvard University (on leave)
2009-2010	Morris Kahn Associate Professor, Anthropology and Social Studies, Harvard University
2008-2009	Associate Professor, Anthropology and Social Studies, Harvard University
2003-2007	Assistant Professor, Anthropology and Social Studies, Harvard University
2001-2002	Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, Cornell University

EDUCATION

2000	Duke University, Ph.D., Cultural Anthropology
1995	American University, Non-degree certificate, Political Economy
1990	Bryn Mawr College, B.A., Religion

RESEARCH/TEACHING INTERESTS

Political Economy; Political Ecology; Postcolonial Theory; Development; State Formation; Space and Sovereignty; Social Movements; Citizenship; South Asia; South Asian diaspora

PUBLICATIONS

Books

The Caste of Merit: Engineering Education in India (Harvard University Press, 2019).

Shorelines: Space and Rights in South India (Stanford University Press, 2009; Yoda Press, 2013).

NAFTA at two years: the human and environmental toll (with John Cavanagh and Sarah Anderson), Washington, D.C.: Institute for Policy Studies, 1995.

Articles

"Meritocracy and Democracy: Indian Reservations and the Politics of Caste," *Public Culture*, special issue on "Interrogating 'Diversity,'" Vol. 31, Issue 2, May 2019.

"Making Merit: The Indian Institutes of Technology and the Social Life of Caste," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 57, 2, April 2015.

"Political Anthropology." *Oxford Bibliographies Online,* 2011.

"Community, Class, and Conservation: Development Politics on the Kanyakumari Coast." *Conservation and Society,* Vol. 1, No. 2 (July-December), 2003, pp. 177-208.

"Modernity from Below: Local Citizenship on the South Indian Coast." *International Social Science Journal*, No. 175, March 2003, pp. 135-144.

"Community, Place, and Citizenship." *Seminar*: Shades of Green, a symposium on the changing contours of Indian environmentalism, No. 516, August 2002.

"Indians in North Carolina: Race, Class, and Culture in the Making of Immigrant Identity," *Comparative Studies in South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East,* Vol. XX, Nos. 1&2, 2000, pp.105-113.

"Is Development Just a Red Herring? Indian Fishworkers, Multinationals and the State," *South Asia Bulletin*, Vol. XIV, No.2, 1994, pp. 108-114.

Book chapters

"Merit and caste at elite institutions: the case of the IIT," in Tarun Khanna and Michael Szonyi eds. *Making Meritocracy in China and India* (Forthcoming, Oxford University Press, 2021).

"Caste and Merit," in Surinder Jodhka and Jules Naudet eds. *Oxford Handbook of Caste in Contemporary/Modern Times*, Oxford University Press, 2021.

"The Meritocrats: The Indian Institutes of Technology and the Social Life of Caste," in Surinder Jodhka, Jules Naudet, and Gilles Verniers eds. *Sociology of Indian Elites*, Oxford University Press, 2019.

"Merit and Caste in Contemporary India," Alf Gunvald Nilsen, Kenneth Bo Nielsen, and Anand Vaidya eds. Indian Democracy: Origins, Trajectories, Contestations, Pluto Press, 2019.

"Recovering Caste Privilege: The Politics of Meritocracy at the Indian Institutes of Technology," in Alf Gunvald Nilsen and Srila Roy eds. New Subaltern Politics: Reconceptualizing Hegemony and Resistance in Contemporary India, Oxford University Press, 2015.

"Indians in North Carolina: Race, Class, and Culture in the Making of Immigrant Identity" [Reprint] in Min Zhou and James Gatewood eds. Contemporary Asian America: a Multidisciplinary Reader, Second Edition, New York University Press, 2007, pp. 158-175.

"Community, Place, and Citizenship." [Reprint] Environmental Issues in India, Pearson Longman, 2007, pp. 444-453.

 "North Carolina's Indians: Erasing Race to Make the Citizen." In James Peacock and Harry Watson eds. The American South in a Global World, University of North Carolina Press, 2005, pp. 192-201.

"Mukkuvar Modernity: Development as a Cultural Identity." Agrawal, Arun and K. Sivaramakrishnan eds. Regional Modernities: the cultural politics of development in India. Oxford and Stanford University Press, 2003, pp. 262-285.

Journalistic essays

(with Paula Chakravartty) "Why is caste inequality still legal in America?" *The New York Times*, May 25, 2021.

"For this aspiring Carl Sagan, merit wasn't upper caste property," *Times of India*, January 24, 2016.

"An anatomy of the caste culture at IIT Madras," *Open Magazine*, June 11, 2015.

"When Students Struggle, They Win: Caste at the Heart of Indian Engineering," *Counterpunch*, June 10, 2015.

"Between the Devil and the Deep Sea: the Dilemma of Artisanal Fisherpeople" (with M. H. Kalavathy), *Frontline Magazine*, November 18, 1994.

"Routes of Tension: Shadow over a Festival." *Frontline Magazine*, October 12-25, 1991.

Interviews

"Liberalization has widened caste differences," *IndiaSpend*, October 13, 2020.

"Sustaining the myth of merit: Interview with Ajantha Subramanian," *Himal Southasian*, October 20, 2020.

Published excerpts of The Caste of Merit

"IIT-Madras and the Long Link to Germany," NDTV.com, January 2, 2020.

"Tamil Brahmins were the earliest to frame merit as a caste claim, and it showed in IITs," ThePrint.in, January 18, 2020.

Podcasts

New Books Network, December 27, 2019.
https://newbooksnetwork.com/ajantha-subramanian-the-caste-of-merit-engineering-education-in-india-harvard-up-2019

Recall This Book, February 6, 2020.
https://recallthisbook.org/2020/02/06/22-ajantha-subramanian-meritocracy-caste-and-class-ef-jp/

AUDIOVISUAL PRODUCTIONS

2000	*Desi: South Asians in New York* (PBS/Glazen Creative Group) Associate Producer
1998	*Fishing in the Sea of Greed* (Director: Anand Patwardhan) Consultant/Interviewer

AWARDS

2015	Everett Mendelsohn Excellence in Mentoring Award
2015	Asia Center Senior Faculty Grant, Harvard University

2015-16	CUNY Graduate Center Distinguished Visiting Fellowship (declined)
2011-12	Fellowship, National Humanities Center, North Carolina
2008	Faculty Research Semester Leave Grant, Weatherhead Center, Harvard University
2008	Junior Faculty Development Grant, Weatherhead Center, Harvard University
2008	Center for the Environment Fellowship, Harvard University
2007	Clark Fund Grant, Harvard University
2005	Das Summer Travel Grant, Harvard South Asia Initiative
2004-2007	South Asia Initiative Grant for Research Module on "Sites of Translation" (proposed with Professors Smita Lahiri and Engseng Ho)
2002-2003	Yale University Program in Agrarian Studies Postdoctoral Fellowship
2000-2001	Rockefeller Humanities Postdoctoral Fellowship in *Creating the Transnational South*, Center for International Studies, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
1998-1999	Harry Frank Guggenheim Dissertation Fellowship
1997-1998	Mellon Predoctoral Fellowship in Transnationalism and Public Culture
1995-1997	Social Science Research Council - Macarthur International Peace and Security Fellowship
1995-1996	American Institute of Indian Studies Research Fellowship (declined)

COURSES TAUGHT
Space and Power
Political Economy
Race and Caste
Ecology and Equity
Empire, Nation, Diaspora: Asians in the United States
Citizenship
Development: History, Theory, Politics
Proseminar in the History and Theory of Social Anthropology

INVITED LECTURES

2021	"Meritocracy and Democracy: the social life of caste in India," Centre for South Asian Studies at the Asian Institute, Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy, University of Toronto, January 14.

Book panel on *The Caste of Merit*, Conversations on South Asia Series, Dartmouth College, January 19.

"Meritocracy and Democracy: the social life of caste in India," Global Racism, State Violence and Activism Lecture Series, Department of Anthropology, Tufts University, April 7.

"Meritocracy and Democracy: the social life of caste in India," Department of Anthropology, City University of New York, April 9.

The Caste of Merit panel discussion, Critical Frontiers Research Group, Department of Engineering Education, Virginia Tech, April 19.

"Meritocracy and Democracy: the social life of caste in India," Department of Anthropology, MIT, April 26.

"Meritocracy and Democracy: the social life of caste in India," Center for South Asia, Stanford University, May 20.

The Caste of Merit panel discussion, India at the Crossroads Endowed Lecture Series, Humanities Center, University of California, Davis, June 4.

2020   "Meritocracy and Democracy: the social life of caste in India," Department of Anthropology, SOAS, January 22.

"Meritocracy and Democracy: the social life of caste in India," Department of Anthropology, LSE, January 24.

Book panel on *The Caste of Merit: Engineering Education in India,* Brown University, South Asia Center, January 31.

"Meritocracy and Democracy: the social life of caste in India," Bangalore International Centre, Bangalore, India, April 24.

Webinar discussion of *The Caste of Merit: Engineering Education in India,* Belongg Book Club, New Delhi, India, April 29.

"South Asia from Afar," Panel discussion, Oxford University, June 23.

"Caste in India," Web panel discussion at Belongg Online Literature Festival, New Delhi, India, July 3.

Webinar of *The Caste of Merit: Engineering Education in India,* Dalit Intellectual Collective, Chennai, India, July 18.

"How Caste Travels," Bay Area Ambedkar King Study Circle webinar on Practice of Caste in the United States, July 23.

"Caste and Merit," MIT South Asian Alumni Association Webinar on Casteism and Majoritarianism, July 30.

"Caste in the diaspora," Ambedkar King Study Circle Press Conference on Caste in the USA, August 12.

"The Caste of Merit," Centre for Public Policy, Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore, August 19.

"How Caste Travels," Caste in Tech Town Hall, Equality Labs, August 22.

"Caste of Merit," Ambedkar Study Circle, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, September 6.

"Meritocracy and Democracy: the social life of caste in India," Chintabar and Ambedkar Periyar Study Circle, Chennai, September 25.

"The Transnational Dimensions of Caste: India and the U.S." Anahita Speaker Series Lecture, Carnegie India, New Delhi, November 25.

"Meritocracy and Democracy: the social life of caste in India," Chintabar, Chennai, November 29.

2019   "Meritocracy and Democracy: the social life of caste in India," South Asia Institute, University of California, Berkeley, March 21.

"Meritocracy and Democracy: the social life of caste in India," Reed College, October 8.

"Meritocracy and Democracy: the social life of caste in India," University of Wisconsin-Madison, November 14.

"Meritocracy and Democracy: the social life of caste in India," Yale University, November 18.

2017   "Meritocracy and Democracy," Department of Anthropology, University of California, Davis, Feb 27.

"Meritocracy and Democracy," South Asia Institute, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, March 31.

"Meritocracy and Democracy," South Asia Center, Columbia University, April 24.

"Meritocracy and Democracy," India at 70 Conference, University of Bergen, Oslo, Oct 4-6.

"Meritocracy and Democracy," Interrogating Diversity Conference, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, Oct. 16-17.

"Meritocracy and Democracy," Department of Anthropology, University of Pennsylvania, Dec. 4.

2016   "Meritocracy and Democracy," Conference on The Sociology of Elites in Contemporary India, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, Jan 4-5.

"Meritocracy and Democracy," Keynote lecture, Caste, Inequality, and Economic Growth conference, Brandeis University, April 29.

"Meritocracy and Democracy," Weatherhead Center Fall Orientation, Harvard University, August 30.

"Law and Rights," Lecture to PhD seminar, Uppsala University, Sweden,

2015   "Meritocracy and Democracy," Keynote address for Border Dialogues conference, Center for Contemporary South Asia, Brown University, April 3.

2014   "The Meritocrats: The Indian Institute of Technology and the social life of caste, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, India, January 9.

            "Meritocracy and Democracy: The Social Life of Caste in India," American Institute of Indian Studies 50th year conference, New Delhi, India, January 10.

            "The Meritocrats:The Indian Institute of Technology and the social life of caste," Harvard Academy, February 20.

            "The Meritocrats: The Indian Institute of Technology and the social life of caste," Southern Methodist University, September 6.

2012   "Gifted: Merit and Caste in the Making of Indian Technical Knowledge," Presented at the Global South Working Group, Chapel Hill, NC, Feb 12.

2011   "Gifted: Merit and Caste in the Making of Indian Technical Knowledge," Presented at the South Asia Center, University of Wisconsin, Madison, October 6.

            "Provincializing Democracy: Space, Ecology, and Rights on India's Southwestern Coast," Co-sponsored by the Certificate in South Asian Studies and the College of the Environment, Wesleyan University, September 20.

2010   "Private Dreams at Public Cost: The Ascendance of Self-Made Man in Neoliberal India," Presented at the MIT Department of Anthropology, April 20.

            "Space as Theory, Method, and Praxis," Presented at the Harvard Graduate School of Design Workshop on "Political Spaces: Re-Vision, Re-Use, Redress," April 17.

            "Space Making and Identification," Presented at MIT School of Architecture Conference on "In the Distance: February 27.

            "Provincialing Democracy: Patronage and Space on India's Southwestern Coast," Presented at Queens University Studies in National and International Development Series, Jan 4.

            "Provincialing Democracy: Patronage and Space on India's Southwestern Coast," Presented at York University Department of Environmental Studies, Jan 3.

2009   "Dialectics of Space and Power," Presented at the Harvard Graduate School of Design Conference on New Geographies: Landscapes of Energy, November 20.

"Provincialing Democracy: Patronage and Space on India's Southwestern Coast," Presented at Harvard University's Justice, Welfare, and Economics Forum, November 5.

"Locality and Nation on India's Southwestern Coast," Presented at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle, Germany, September 25.

2008   "Provincialing Democracy: Patronage and Space on India's Southwestern Coast," Presented to the University of Pennsylvania South Asian Studies Department, April 17.

"Provincialing Democracy: Patronage and Space on India's Southwestern Coast," Presented to the Duke University Department of Anthropology, March 19.

"Provincialing Democracy: Patronage and Space on India's Southwestern Coast," Presented to the Stanford University Department of Anthropology, February 15.

"Provincialing Democracy: Patronage and Space on India's Southwestern Coast," Presented at New York University's Gallatin School, February 8.

2007   "Spaces of Maneuver: Patronage and Rights on India's Southern Coast," Presented to the Brandeis University Department of Anthropology, September 26.

2006   "Spaces of Maneuver: Patronage and Rights on India's Southern Coast," Presented to the Rutgers University Department of Anthropology, December 11.

2005   "Uncivil Majorities: State Spatialization and Differentiated Citizenship in South India," Presented to the Princeton Department of Anthropology, March 29.

2004   "Uncivil Majorities: State Spatialization and Differentiated Citizenship in South India," Presented to the Yale South Asia Graduate Student Colloquium, January 29.

2003   "Church, Class, and Community: Minority Citizenship on the South Indian Coast," Presented at the Program in Agrarian Studies Colloquium Series, Yale University, April 4.

2002   "Ecology, Place, and Citizenship on the South Indian Coast," Presented to the Department of Anthropology, Harvard University, March 15.

2001   "Development, Violence, and Cultural Rights." Presented at the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation Fellows' Conference, London, April 28-30.

"The Cultural Politics of Fisheries Development: local-global dynamics on India's southwestern coast." Invited lecture at the University of Colorado, Boulder Department of Anthropology, March 16.

"Secularism, Development, and Ecology: Contesting 'Community' on the South Indian Coast." Invited lecture at the Cornell University Department of Anthropology, Feb. 23.

2000   "State Secularism and Religious Minorities: Bringing Communities Back Into the Public Sphere." Invited lecture at Haverford College Program in Peace and Conflict Studies, Feb. 18.

1998   "Territory, Identity and Violence in a South Indian Fishery." Paper presented at the
                Workshop on Violence and the Environment, Institute of International Studies,
                University of California, Berkeley, September 24-26.

                "Mukkuvar Modernity: development as a cultural identity." Paper presented at the
                Conference on Environment and Development, Yale University, New Haven, February
                27-March 1.

OTHER WORK EXPERIENCE

1999   Associate Producer, *Desi: South Asians in New York*, PBS/Information Media
                Productions, New York, NY.

1995   Intern, Global Economy Project, Institute for Policy Studies, Washington, D.C.

1994   Organizer, Tamilnadu Fishworkers Union, Kanyakumari, India

1990-92   Activist, Center for Peoples' Movement: an organization of Madras City slum dwellers