

## The Progressive Seer – Saadat Hasan Manto

This course is about discovering the subcontinent’s twentieth-century writer, Saadat Hasan Manto, through the lens of his short stories and his controversial writing style. The readings and critical material in the course will allow students to assess whether Manto was a progressive writer that had the power of foresight; if so, why, and if not, why not?

The short stories studied will allow students to divorce themselves from a state narrative that is frequently offered regarding the partition of the subcontinent and delve into deeper questions that arose from that historical moment, which are more often than not, not found in the text book representation of history. Thematically, the course will stimulate students to think about the narrator’s reliability, the relationship between shorter narrative and historical trauma, violence as a gendered and political phenomenon, and the depiction of a crude truth in fiction that mirrors society’s reality.

The course also delves into the relationship between form and content, and between form and context. All of the short stores studied in some way thematise the question of normality or reality, and the boundaries of reality and what lies beyond them. What is it that makes shorter narratives an especially appropriate form to discuss such boundaries and questions?

The following stories will be studied which will develop students’ skills of close reading and analysis. The works will be studied in Urdu, however, translations will also be made available.

- بو (Bū)
- کالی شلوار (Kālī Shalwār)
- 1919 کی ایک بات (It Happened in 1919)
- بلاوز (Blouse)
- ٹوبہ ٹیک سنگھ (Toba Tek Singh)
- ٹھنڈا گوشت (Thandā Gōsht)
- کھول دو (Khōl Dō)
- آرٹسٹ لوگ (Artist Lōg)

The following readings will also be provided to enrich understanding of Manto’s stories and the socio-political context in which he was writing:

- “The Event and the Everyday” in *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary* – Veena Das
- *Hind Swaraj* – M.K. Gandhi
- “1947 – Memories and Meanings” in *Modern South Asia* – Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal

It is imperative that students read the assigned reading before class in either Urdu or in translation as the sessions will be driven by discussion and class participation. Additionally, there will be some reflection writing exercises in some of the classes.