Course Description
Informal leaders are pervasive and integral figures in postcolonial and developing countries. Often, they constitute a critical link between the sovereign state and its citizens, facilitating interactions and providing access to scarce information, public goods and services to ordinary people. They also act as a buffer against harassment and extraction by state agents and help mobilize public opinion to challenge unfavorable political actions.

However, the continued relevance of informal leadership in developing countries makes us confront the vested interests such leaders may have in sustaining systems of inequality, patronage and dependence.

This course examines forms of informal and quasi-political leadership in postcolonial, developing countries. The primary theoretical aims of this course are:

a) to grasp the structural conditions that necessitate the rise of informal leaders, and
b) to consider the how such leaders impact the social system in which they intervene.

This course relies primarily on ethnographic case studies and employs an anthropological framework to pursue these objectives. Students will read ethnographies from South Asia, particularly India, (complemented with relevant case studies from Africa and South America) that outline the myriad roles of informal leaders in enabling people to access state benefits and economic resources and opportunities, and to avoid harassment. Subsequently, we grapple with the more questionable aspects of informal leadership examining the power and politics that undergird informal leadership and the motivations of such leaders to ensure that status quo is maintained.

The course is designed to equip students with a holistic understanding of informal leadership in developing countries by paying equal attention to structural factors and personal motivations, and to the positive and negative manifestations of informal leadership.

**Course readings will be made available on blackboard. Some readings are electronically available; they are mentioned in the syllabus along with a link. It is the responsibility of each student to ensure that assigned readings are accessible. If you are unable to access a reading through the link provided, please inform the instructor by 2 pm on the day before class.**

Objectives

By the end of the course, students will become familiar with:

*Methods*
a) qualitative research methods, like ethnographic data collection
b) how to read and treat data collected through ethnography, intensive fieldwork and participant observation
c) ethical issues involved in research, especially that which involves human subjects and participants

**Theory**
This class will equip students with anthropological theories on informal leadership. Students will:

a) become familiar with governance and political-economic systems in developing, postcolonial countries that engender informal forms of leadership
b) develop a critical approach and understanding of leadership

**Syllabus Design**
Assigned class readings are mandatory. In addition, if recommended readings are listed, students are strongly advised to read them but can exercise their discretion. Students will be required to submit response papers that comprise 2-3 questions and observations based on readings a day prior class. Discussion topics for the class will be drawn from these questions. Assignments are divided between oral presentation and written papers. Class attendance and participation carry weight.

**Assignments**
The final assignment is term paper on a topic of choice that engages with questions of leadership. Throughout the course, we will work towards this aim. Detailed prompts for each assignment will be provided through the course of the semester.

**Assignment #1 (5%)**: Formulate a research question (250-300 words) and identify 10 secondary literature references that can support your research. The research question MUST be finalized in discussion with the instructor. One meeting with me during office hours is mandatory for this assignment. Please be mindful of the date of submission for this assignment and ensure you meet with me well in advance to have time to complete this assignment.

**Assignment #2a (10%)**: 10 minutes class presentation to explain your research question, area of research, and to discuss 5 sources of literature that support your proposed project.

**Assignment #2b (20%)**: Submit a 2000-2500 words literature review (5-7 academic sources) for your term project. Two academic sources MUST be from the course reading list.

**Assignment #3 (35%)**: Submit a 3000-3500 words final paper that explains: (1) the topic of your project; (2) the significance of that research topic; (3) literature you will enter into dialogue with; (4) your hypothesis, findings, and conclusion. Remember, all of these need to be substantiated by proof, either of secondary sources (existing literature, news, events etc) or strong and meaningful personal observations.

**Class Attendance and Participation (15%)**
- Class attendance and participation are mandatory. After 1 absence from class, students will be penalized 0.5% from their final grade for each unexcused absence.
- The classroom is a safe learning environment for students. All of us must collectively work towards ensuring that everyone feels secure and confident to participate in classroom discussions.
- Students must be respectful and receptive towards the viewpoints of their peers, and be mindful of the fact that their peers come from diverse backgrounds. Disagreements must be expressed thoughtfully and in ways that do not constitute personal attacks, ridicule or discriminatory behaviors.
- Students are expected to complete their assigned readings and come to class prepared to discuss these readings.

Response Papers (15%)
- Response papers help me determine that students have done their readings and what they have understood from the readings. These set the tone for class discussions and are therefore, absolutely essential.
- Unless explicitly stated otherwise, students are required to submit a response paper on the day of each class (by 11:00 am on the day of class). These response papers will comprise 2-3 questions or observations on the scheduled readings. They should be emailed to me at rbhandar@richmond.edu
- Students can miss up to 1 response paper per semester. Failure to turn in response papers as per schedule will affect your grades.

Policies:
  a) Use of electronic gadgets (phone, laptop, ipad) is NOT permitted during class. If students need an exemption from this rule, they need to get my permission and will have to furnish credible reasons for the same.
  b) Make-up exams and extensions will only be granted in cases of extreme duress like documented medical emergencies and/or religious observance.
  c) If some form of academic accommodation is needed, students should contact me at the earliest with documented proof to support accommodation and to discuss whether such accommodation can be provided.
  d) Please familiarize yourself with the school’s policies on Academic Integrity and Plagiarism.
**Class Schedule**

**AUGUST 28:** Introductory Class. Discussion on the Courses aims, objectives and assignments.

**What is Ethnography?** Introduction to Anthropological Research Methods.

**AUGUST 30:**
- What is Ethnography (http://www.americanethnography.com/ethnography.php)

**SEPTEMBER 4:**

**Structures of Governance: Why Informal Leaderships Prevail in Developing Countries.**

**SEPTEMBER 6:**

**SEPTEMBER 11:**

**Structures of Governance – Continued. Overlaps between Leadership and Brokerage in Developing Countries**

**SEPTEMBER 13:**
- Class Cancelled.

**SEPTEMBER 18:**
- Watch selected parts from, Special 26.

**Getting Things Done: Informal Leadership in the Vacuum of the State**

**SEPTEMBER 20:**
- Chelsey Kivland. 2014. Becoming a force in the zone.
SEPTEMBER 25:
- Veena Das & Michael Walton. 2015. Political leadership and the urban poor.
- Anastasia Piliavsky. 2016. The ethics of efficacy in North India’s *goonda raj*
- **Recommended:** Jaffe and Cummings. A battle for hearts and minds?
- **Assignment #1** to be Completed. Students should have research questions ready and should have visited with me to get a go-ahead for the proposal.

*Leadership through the Lens of Criminality: Understanding Intersections of Power, Identity and Democracy*

SEPTEMBER 27:
- Criminal Voting in India: Milan Vaishnav Selected Readings.

OCTOBER 2:

*Review and Submission*

OCTOBER 4&9:
- **Assignment #2a:** Each student will make a 10 minutes presentation on their research proposal to discuss their research question, research method, location of research, and 5 literature sources that are relevant to their proposed work.

OCTOBER 11: Class cancelled. Submit **Assignment #2b**.

--- FALL BREAK ---

*Coming Home – Structural Gaps and Informal Leadership in the United States*

OCTOBER 18:

OCTOBER 23:
- Visit by Jason Terry, Director, Exchange Programs, Global Ties-US, to talk about gender, sexuality and policing in the US.
Leadership and Change

OCTOBER 25:
- The Insurgent [http://www.caravanmagazine.in/reportage/insurgent](http://www.caravanmagazine.in/reportage/insurgent)

Women and Leadership

OCTOBER 30:
- Lady Singham’s Mission against Love. [https://medium.com/@snigdha.poonam/lady-singham-mission-against-love-73e4efc1a1dd](https://medium.com/@snigdha.poonam/lady-singham-mission-against-love-73e4efc1a1dd)

NOVEMBER 1:
- The women behind #blacklivesmatter: [https://stories.californiasunday.com/2015-03-01/black-lives-matter/](https://stories.californiasunday.com/2015-03-01/black-lives-matter/)
- The matter of black lives: [https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/03/14/where-is-black-lives-matter-headed](https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/03/14/where-is-black-lives-matter-headed)

Leadership and Trans Rights

NOVEMBER 6:

NOVEMBER 8:
- Visit by Carver Weakly, Writing Instructor, VCU, on writing research proposals and ethnographies

Critical Overview of Leadership
NOVEMBER 13:
- Watch film, *The Act of Killing* (available in the library for live streaming and as DVD)

NOVEMBER 15:
- At-home assignment to be submitted electronically by the end of class.

NOVEMBER 20:
- Discussion: *The Act of Killing*

--- THANKSGIVING BREAK ---

Course Review and Finals Prep

NOVEMBER 27: Ethics and Ethnography – How Do We Trust the Data?

- Selected Readings: *Dreamers.*
- Course Review.

DECEMBER 4:
- Class discussions on Assignment #3

DECEMBER 10:
- Submit Assignment #3