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*Dharma, Class and Aspiration: The Shifting Religious Worlds of Urban Rajasthani Women*

Tuesday, March 3, 2015
4:30pm
Candler Library 125
Emory University

Jenn Ortegren’s dissertation examines the role of Hindu women’s ritual practices in negotiating middle class identities and values in contemporary urban India. Working in Udaipur, Rajasthan with members of what she calls the “aspirational middle class,” she outlines how upwardly mobile women are reconfiguring their ritual practices in ways that both reflect and create new middle class identities. She proposes that in doing so, women are formulating aspirational middle class models of caste and gender *dharma*, creating new ways of being Hindu that sanction their shifting lifestyles and aspirations. Here, she analyzes the Solah Somwar vrat (16 Monday fast), a newly popular ritual practice among women and young married couples, to highlight an emerging middle class *dharma* of conjugality in which husbands and wives become obligated to one another in new ways.