



HIMALAYA, the Journal of the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies

Volume 29
Number 1 *The Tarai: History, Society,
Environment No. 1 & 2*

Article 12

2010

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Recommended Citation

. 2010. Call for Occasional Seminar Series in Kathmandu. *HIMALAYA* 29(1).
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/himalaya/vol29/iss1/12>

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CALL FOR OCCASIONAL SEMINAR SERIES IN KATHMANDU

As part of its ongoing collaboration, the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies (ANHS) and the Social Science Baha (SSB) would like to invite scholars associated with ANHS to conduct short workshops/seminars for Nepali students, researchers, scholars and the public in general on topics of their choice during their visits to Nepal.

Many in Nepal seek knowledge that is unavailable either within the existing educational institutions or through self-study (since the resources they would require are not available in Nepal). The intention of the Occasional Seminar Series is to help to meet this need, and to provide opportunities for Nepali scholars and graduate students to immerse themselves in a topic of broad interest for a few days. Apart from providing the experience of taking a class in a seminar setting, which itself would be quite novel for most people in Nepal, it is hoped that the seminars will spark the interest of the participants to explore the subject in greater depth as well as lead to informed engagement with it.

As an exploratory effort, a seminar on “Ethnicity and Identity in South Asia” was conducted by Arjun Guneratne in early December 2009. This was a two-day event, consisting of four three-hour sessions. As anticipated, the response to the notice was quite overwhelming. We received a total of 60 applicants for the 20 available seats. In addition to the genuine interest in knowledge, the administrative fee of Rs. 300 made the opportunity affordable to everyone. The goal was to organize an academic seminar which cost attendees only a nominal amount. Lunch and other expenses associated with funded events were dispensed with altogether; participants were only provided with a set of the required readings. Everyone enjoyed the seminar thoroughly and requests have been made for more of such events to be held in the future.

ANHS and SSB believe such seminars are a way in which ANHS members can “give back” intellectually to Nepal, a desire which many foreign-based scholars have expressed in the past, but have not had an appropriate venue for doing so. The seminar series can serve as one such venue.

The seminars need not be rigidly structured. While the two- or three-day model is one that might work best for working people who would not be able to absent themselves from work for longer, there is also the possibility of stretching these to morning or evening sessions over more days, depending on the preference of those leading the seminars. SSB will provide all the logistical support required to run the seminars.

Please contact Mahendra Lawoti <mlawoti@hotmail.com> or Deepak Thapa <dthapa@soscbaha.org> if you would like to conduct a seminar.