

The Wolfe Institute

*The Ethyle R. Wolfe Institute for the Humanities,
presents*

A Wolfe Fellows Series Event

Father at Home and Father of the Nation: Mahatma Gandhi and His Experiments with Education



This presentation examines the role of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948) as a father and a nation-builder in colonial India. Of the many achievements and contributions of Gandhi, the one that still awaits historical attention is his involvement with children and education. Gandhi, as a biological father of four sons and as the “father” of the nation, was committed to a new kind of education involving self-help and one that renounced “modern” scientific training. By foregrounding the role of the father, this talk demonstrates that in the face of colonial subjection, fatherhood became a domain of serious reflection for nationalist leaders like Gandhi. Gandhi’s educational experiments, originating from experiences at home, defied colonial notion of masculinity and domination. As part of a larger research on fathers and children in colonial India, the focus on fatherhood disrupts the separation between the private and the public and brings out the centrality of the home and the domestic in Indian nationalist politics.

Swapna Banerjee is an associate professor of South Asian history at Brooklyn College of the City University of New York. She researches on gender, domesticity, family history, and class relations in colonial India. Her current research is on the history of children and fathers in colonial India with special focus on emerging roles of fathers and ideas of fatherhood as a constitutive element of colonial patriarchy and masculine ideology. Her first book, *Men, Women, and Domesticity: Articulating Middle-Class Identity in Colonial Bengal* (Delhi/NY: Oxford University Press, 2004), employs the lens of employer-servant relationships to examine construction of national identity in colonial Bengal.

**Monday, April 20, 2014
3:40 to 4:55 p.m.
222 Whitehead Hall
Brooklyn College Campus**

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