GENERAL SEMINAR

Dr Durba Mitra
Assistant Professor of Studies of Women, Gender, and Sexuality at Harvard University

will give a talk titled:

“Indian Sex Life: Female Sexuality and the Origins of Modern Social Thought”

Abstract

Ideas of deviant female sexuality, often named as the “prostitute,” were foundational to modern social thought in and about colonial India. In this talk, I analyze a genre of popular texts produced in early twentieth-century Calcutta on “Indian sex life” that linked the control of women’s sexuality to the evolutionary progress of society. In these new sciences of society, increasingly narrow, strict understandings of sexual norms were transplanted into the language of objectivity and science. These claims to social scientific expertise by Bengali social analysts was exclusive and exclusionary, where patriarchal monogamy, upper-caste dominance, and Hindu supremacy were recast as pure, objective science. I ask: how might we write more robust histories of social thought by reframing the prostitute as a concept critical to modern disciplinary knowledge? This history reveals a dangerous civilizational logic that sits at the heart of modern social thought built on the control and erasure of women’s sexuality.

Date: Tuesday, 10 March 2020; Time: 3 – 5 pm

Venue: CSSSC Seminar Room 2, Patuli Campus

Maidul Islam
(Convener, Seminar Committee)
All are welcome to attend.