Rupa Viswanath (University of Göttingen)

“The Duty to Feed: Religion, Racial Democracy, and Welfare in Malaysia”

RUPA VISWANATH is Professor of Indian Religions at the Centre for Modern Indian Studies at the University of Göttingen, and a Fellow of Lucy Cavendish College at the University of Cambridge. Prior to arriving in Göttingen in 2011, she taught in the South Asia Studies Department at the University of Pennsylvania. Her research and writing address the practices of secular regimes, histories of slavery in colonial South Asia, the political economy of caste, and comparative studies of racialized governance. Her current research projects are (1) an historical examination of how the concept of a democratic “people” emerged in the vernacular in postcolonial south India, specifically through the governance of intergroup violence and the administration of welfare, and (2) an ethnographic account of how religious and racial identification and state governance serve to underpin a specific ethics of political representation among ex-indentured Indians in Malaysia.