Proposal for Honors English course:

**Banned Books from Around the World**

Instructor: Sayantani Dasgupta

Abstract: While reasons have ranged from obscenity to religious offense to political bias, some of the most celebrated works of writing have been banned over the years by schools, libraries and even entire countries. In this course, we will examine the whys while examining their backgrounds, context and impact.
**Rationale & Course Description:** The purpose of literature is to raise questions that are difficult to answer. Other purposes include giving an accurate sense of the life of a country and its people, expanding conversations around crucial issues and enabling readers to approach the world through multiple perspectives. The six-book reading list of this course is neither confined to any particular country nor culture, nor is it by any means comprehensive. But it tackles the dual issue of fear and repression and examines the role of social freedom versus political authority.

This course will examine questions such as the following: What causes books to be banned? In what ways do they challenge social, moral, political, or religious mores? How is our worldview impacted by what we can/cannot read openly? Under what conditions would you personally support the banning of any book?

**Class Materials:** In addition to the books they will read, students will also watch relevant documentaries and films. I intend to fully utilize our multicultural and diverse campus and invite international faculty and students to the class as guest speakers. They might not necessarily discuss literature but they will certainly help in furthering our understanding of their cultures and countries. This will surely expose students to perspectives potentially different from their own, thus broadening their understanding of the world.

**Tentative Reading List**

1. Alexie, Sherman: *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*
2. Naipaul, V.S.: *An Area of Darkness*
3. Orwell, George: *Animal Farm*
4. Gordimer, Nadine: *July's People*
5. Gao, Xinjian: *Soul Mountain*
6. Rushdie, Salman: *Joseph Anton*

**Faculty Qualifications:** I have an M.A. in History from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, and an MFA in Creative Nonfiction from the University of Idaho. I have been awarded two educational grants and several scholarships at the UI campus. I won the 2009 Graduate Student Teaching Award. My writings have appeared in several American and Indian journals such as *Praxis, Gulf Stream,* and *SN Review.*

The courses I have developed and taught include:

1. History 404: The Mughal Empire 1526-1757
2. History 404: Riots & Rituals (Modern South Asia since 1757)
3. English 485: Conflict Fiction from South Asia
4. English 485: Contemporary Women’s Fiction from South Asia
5. ISEM/Core 113: Globalization & Food Traditions
6. ISEM/Core 116: The Sacred Journey: Comparative Religions of the World