

# College of Liberal Arts Newsroom

News from UT Arlington – College of Liberal Arts

## Life, Message of Gandhi in Focus at UTA



Nearly 60 years following his assassination, human rights activist and statesman Mahatma Gandhi continues to fascinate people worldwide. At The University of Texas at Arlington, students have had a unique opportunity to study the man and get a closer look at his legacy.

Study of Gandhi began earlier this semester in an anthropology course taught by Associate Professor Ritu Khanduri ([Sociology & Anthropology](#)). The class – cross-listed with the [Center for African-American Studies](#) – enabled students to review Gandhi's biography, his philosophy and his influence on anti-colonial politics in the early 20th century. The coursework reviewed the lasting impact Gandhi's work had on the U.S. civil rights movements and leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

But UTA student Ivy Lopez says the class looks beyond the popular historical narrative of the man.

“When I used to think about Gandhi all that really came to mind was civil disobedience and passive resistance,” Lopez said. “Of course we all know what a huge impact he had on the world and what a huge influence he was on great leaders like MLK and Nelson Mandela. After taking this class I have a greater understanding of Gandhian ideals; most interestingly, the idea that Gandhi didn’t practice passive resistance at all. While his major tenant was that of non-violence, there was nothing passive about him. His resistance was in fact very active, and meant to force retaliation by the British. It is more accurate to describe Gandhi’s movement as active non-violent resistance.”

In early October, Khanduri and her students met briefly with Sukanya Gandhi Bharat Ram, Gandhi’s great-granddaughter, in North Texas to celebrate “Gandhi Jayanti” (Gandhi’s birthday) with a local Indian group. October 2 is a national holiday in India, and many Indians living in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex celebrated with a peace march and rally at the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Plaza in Irving.

“The timing of Mrs. Sukanya Gandhi Bharat Ram’s visit to the campus was fortuitous as it coincided with the semester I am teaching the Gandhi course,” said Khanduri. “This gave students in my course an opportunity to meet her, and she too was delighted to see them. Mrs. Bharat Ram’s visit also inspired more thinking for a South Asian studies focus on our campus. It furthered conversation on a peace program and Gandhi, and the potential for promising collaborations between organizations in India, UTA and the DFW community.”

As a way to introduce the rest of the campus to Gandhi, several of Khanduri’s students will present original papers at “Global Gandhi” from 12:30-2 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 10, in the Central Library’s Sixth Floor Parlor. Student participants include Kateline Smith, Megan Moore Randall Cox, Morgen Lanueva, Ivy Lopez, Adam Krajweski, Fatima-Ayan Hirsi, and Alondra Smith.

The panel, part of UTA’s Asian Heritage Month, is sponsored by the College of Liberal Arts, the Indian Cultural Council, the Office of Multicultural Affairs and the Charles T. McDowell Center for Critical Languages and Area Studies.

“Each presentation will provoke a rethinking of Gandhi,” Khanduri said. “It is my hope that the panel will prompt the audience to situate Gandhi in a global context and raise interest across the disciplines.”

UTA student Fatima Hirsi hopes the panel presentations will encourage her fellow Mavericks to look more closely at Gandhi and his approach to life.

“The message of peace and nonviolence will always be relevant in our tumultuous world,” she said. “One thing I really respect about Gandhi was his recognition that all religions are equal. He incorporated teachings from the New Testament and the Bhagavad Gita to form a moral code that affected every aspect of life. He was against quests to convert others and thought that every human had a divine spirit deserving of respect regardless of earthly labels. Can you imagine the world if everyone recognized this essence of beauty in others?”

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*(By James Dunning/COLA Communications, [jdunning@uta.edu](mailto:jdunning@uta.edu))*

#### About the College of Liberal Arts

The [College of Liberal Arts](#) at UT Arlington serves more than 4,000 students enrolled in 26 undergraduate and 21 graduate programs. National accreditation includes the Department of Art & Art History through the National Association of Schools of Art & Design and the Department of Music through the National Association of Schools of Music. The College of Liberal Arts employs more than 300 faculty across 12 departments; faculty awards for research and creative activity include a Guggenheim Fellowship, two Pulitzer Prize nominations, a winner of La Cruz Andina de Oro [Andean Golden Cross] from the Bolivian Government, and multiple awards from the Fulbright Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the

National Science Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

### About UT Arlington

The University of Texas at Arlington is a comprehensive research institution of more than 50,000 students in campus-based and online degree programs and is the second largest institution in The University of Texas System. The Chronicle of Higher Education ranked UT Arlington as one of the 20 fastest-growing public research universities in the nation in 2014. U.S. News & World Report ranks UT Arlington fifth in the nation for undergraduate diversity. The University is a Hispanic-Serving Institution and is ranked as a "Best for Vets" college by Military Times magazine. Visit [www.uta.edu](http://www.uta.edu) to learn more, and find UT Arlington rankings and recognition at [www.uta.edu/uta/about/rankings.php](http://www.uta.edu/uta/about/rankings.php).

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