Jan Plan in India 2010, MU 267: Professor Steven Nuss (Music), Music Associates Michael Albert (violin) and Nicole Rabata (flute)
"Contact Zone": Musical and Literary Integration and Challenge in Contemporary India.

The majority (2.5 weeks) of the course will be based in a remote town (Kalimpong) in Northeast India at the Gandhi Ashram, a Catholic (Jesuit) elementary and junior high school that offers a free education (in English) to the poorest of the local poor: students at the lowest end of the Indian caste system who would otherwise not receive a quality education. In addition to the unique socio-economic profile of the Ashram student body, the school is also unique in that all its students receive intensive instruction in violin performance and Western classical music. (This aspect of the school’s curriculum was featured in a recent news report on PBS.) Using Mary Louise Pratt’s concept of “contact zone”—a site of interchange and tension among language, history, tradition and authority—Colby students will examine and assess the variety of musical, colonial, socio-economic, cultural and political dynamics at play in both the Ashram and wider Kalimpong communities as the Gandhi Ashram provides its students with personal, musical and educational experiences that have the potential to radically alter their lives and the social and cultural matrix of the community in which they live.

In order to develop a deep understanding of the Ashram’s environment and students, Colby students will organize classes (5 hours of team teaching daily) for Ashram students in music, theater, English conversation, creative writing, and art, as well as providing tutoring in math and science. Through close readings and discussions of passages from relevant works by Indian authors and international scholars whose various musical and political/colonial themes parallel in direct and metaphorical ways the issues raised and conveyed by the cultural and musical tensions observed in the Ashram’s musical life, Colby students will be required to articulate in a final essay an interdisciplinary view of globalization, diversity, narrative, ownership, appropriation, hybridity and authority that departs from the tired old "orientalist" approach to the “exotic.”

During the remainder of the JanPlan the class will travel to Delhi where students will have the opportunity to compare their Kalimpong experience with life in this teeming metropolis, and discuss the emergence of new forms of urban culture, language, and music in contemporary India. The Delhi experience will serve as a challenge to students to further extend and refine their thinking and writing begun in the hills of Kalimpong and to consider an alternative to the "globalizing" discourses of modernity by identifying an "Indian way" that blends Indian and Western artistic techniques, forms and educational approaches as a way to overcome the pervasive vestiges of an oppressive colonial past.

Selected Texts:

Jacques Derrida, *Monolingualism of the other*
Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*
Deborah Root, *Cannibal Culture*
Vikram Seth, *An Equal Music*
Jeff Titon, *Worlds of Music*

**Grading:** Grades for the class will be based on a combination of class participation, punctual and regular attendance at all Jan Plan events, and a final paper.

**Class size:** 23 students