

“Brand-name Capitalism and Professional Advertising in India”

**Professor Douglas E. Haynes
Dartmouth College**

On the lecture

This lecture discusses the advent of the global advertising profession in India during the interwar period. It examines the efforts of multi-national firms to develop markets for *brand-name* products, efforts that required that Indian consumers abandon their use of unbranded products and adopt new bodily practices involving the use of mass-manufactured items. Though the promotion of brand-name capitalism was a global project, it rested in great part on a claim of advertising agencies to devise *cultural strategies* to fit the cultural, social and economic particularities of regions they were trying to influence. In India, advertising agencies asserted not only that they possessed a mastery over the latest secrets of the American and European advertising professions but also that they held a special understanding of the subcontinent and its peoples that manufacturing firms could not generate on their own. This lecture examines the ways advertising firms attempted to play a role as cultural mediators between multi-national businesses and the Indian market, gathering “knowledge” about the cultural proclivities of consumers and devising advertising campaigns that would reflect, and reshape, those proclivities. The lecture will be based primarily on the records of the advertising agency J. Walter Thompson Company and the British consumer products firm Unilever (the predecessor of the major business, Hindustan Unilever).

On the speaker

Professor Haynes specializes in the history of South Asia, and teaches courses on modern South Asia, on Gandhi, and on Dalits and Untouchables in India. He also has a strong comparative interest in colonialism and in anti-colonial struggles as is suggested by his recent course offerings: Colonialism, Nationalism and Revolution in Southeast Asia; Colonialism, Development and the Environment in Africa and Asia; and Colonialism and Culture in Asia and Africa. Focusing in his research on the history of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century western India, he has covered such topic areas as cities and urban politics, artisans and merchants, capitalism, consumption and advertising, masculinity, conjugality and sexuality. A recent book, *Small-Town Capitalism in Western India: Artisans, Merchants and the Making of the Informal Economy, 1870-1960* (Cambridge University Press) won the John F. Richards Prize of the American Historical Association for the most distinguished book in English on South Asian history for 2012. He previously completed *Rhetoric and Ritual in Colonial India*, a study on the cultural accommodations of elites in Surat to colonial domination. The author of many essays, he has co-edited *Contesting Power* (1991, with Gyan Prakash) on "everyday resistance" in South Asian society and history, *Towards a History of Consumption in South Asia* (2010, with Abigail McGowan, Tirthankar Roy and Haruka Yanagisawa) and a special issue on the urban history of the Indian subcontinent during the mid-twentieth century published in the journal *South Asia* (2013, with Nikhil Rao). Along with Veronika Fuechtner of the German Department at Dartmouth, he organized a major Humanities Institute at Dartmouth in the Summer of 2013, funded by the Leslie Center for the Humanities, on the global history of sexual science; a collected volume of essays on this topic, edited by Haynes, Fuechtner and Ryan Jones is due out in late October 2017. His current work, on the history of advertising in western India and its role in shaping modern conjugality from 1918 to 1950, was awarded a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities for the 2014-15 academic year. Prof. Haynes is currently finishing his book manuscript on this topic.