Stanford



Sharika Thiranagama

Professor of Anthropology

Curriculum Vitae available Online

Bio

BIO

Sharika Thiranagama's work has consistently explored how political mobilization and domestic life intersect, focusing on highly fraught contexts of violence, inequality, and intense political mobilization. This work and broader comparative theorization rests on understanding how people actually live together, often in highly fractious and unequal ways, situating these processes in specific historical formations of vernacular “privates” and “publics” in South Asia.

Her work is based in Sri Lanka and in Kerala, South India. In Sri Lanka, her book "In My Mother’s House: Civil War in Sri Lanka" (UPenn Press 2011) was on civil war, political violence, home, displacement, militarization, family particularly intergenerational and gendered relations in wartime and post war life. This work takes these themes through the lives of Sri Lankan Tamil and Sri Lankan Muslim minorities. Other work includes the history of railways, the BBC world service, masculinity, leadership and popular militancy, etc.

Her work in Kerala focuses on the long-lasting legacy on enslavement and caste in the lives on contemporary agricultural Dalit laboring families. Articles examine the house, public and private in India, inheritance as inequality, and caste and neighborliness. Her book "The Monster in Your Path: The Private Life of Caste in India" (University of California Press 2026) examines caste, gender, household economies, house and neighborhood spaces through their inheritance and future affordances.

Her future work will return to Sri Lanka for new fieldwork in Jaffna with Tamils and Muslims after Sri Lanka’s recent economic collapse and postwar caste conflicts.

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

- Professor, Anthropology

ADMINISTRATIVE APPOINTMENTS

- Professor of Anthropology, Stanford University, (2026- present)
- Associate Professor of Anthropology, Stanford University, (2019- present)
- Assistant Professor of Anthropology, Stanford University, (2013- present)
- Visiting Assistant Professor of Anthropology, Stanford University, (2011-2013)
- Assistant Professor of Anthropology, The New School for Social Research, (2009-2012)
- Visiting Research Fellow, Department of Social Anthropology, London School of Economics (LSE), (2007-2010)

- Research Consultant, Open University (UK) and ASSR, University of Amsterdam, (2007-2009)
- Economic and Social Research Council of Great Britain (ESRC) Postdoctoral Fellowship, Edinburgh University, (2005-2006)
- Nancy L Buc Postdoctoral Fellow, Pembroke Center, Brown University, (2005-2006)

HONORS AND AWARDS

- Undergraduate Teaching Award, Department of Anthropology, Stanford (2025-2026)
- Co-Organizer with Denise Gill “Writing the Life Process”, Stanford Humanities Center Research Workshop (2024-2027)
- Faculty Fellow, Feminist Gender and Sexuality Studies, Stanford (2023-2024)
- Visiting Fellow, The New Institute, Hamburg Germany (2023)
- Stanford Humanities Center Faculty Fellowship, Stanford Humanities Center (2021-2022)
- Stanford Asian American Faculty Award for contributions to undergraduate and graduate community., Asian American Studies, Stanford (2021)
- Founding Co-Director (With Sylvia Yanagisako), Center for Global Ethnography,, Institute for Research in the Social Sciences (IRISS) and Dept. Anthropology (2019-2021)
- Sakurako and William Fisher Family Faculty Scholar, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Stanford (2018-2019)
- Grant for project: The Local Level Social Life of Global Ideologies (Kerala), The National Science Foundation. Cultural Anthropology Program (2015-2017)
- Post PhD Research Grant, Wenner Gren Foundation (2015-2016)
- Nancy L Buc Postdoctoral Fellowship, Pembroke Center, Brown University (2004-2005)
- ESRC Overseas Award for study abroad - taken at Department of Anthropology Johns Hopkins University, Economic Social Research Council of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (2004)
- ESRC Postgraduate Studentship, Economic Social Research Council of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (2001-2005)
- Davidson Prize, St Johns College, Cambridge University (2000-2001)
- Isaac Newton Trust Bursary, St Johns College, University of Cambridge (2000)
- Rajiv Gandhi Commonwealth Travelling Scholarship, University of Cambridge (2000)
- Scholar of St Johns, St Johns College, Cambridge University (2000)
- Isaac Newton Trust Bursary, St Johns College, University of Cambridge (1999)
- Rajiv Gandhi Commonwealth Travelling Scholarship, University of Cambridge (1999)

BOARDS, ADVISORY COMMITTEES, PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- Elected representative, South Asia Council, Association for Asian Studies (2026 - present)
- President (elected twice), American Institute for Sri Lankan Studies (2017 - 2024)
- President, American Institute for Sri Lankan Studies (2020 - present)
- Co-Director, Center for Global Ethnography, IRISS, Stanford (2018 - 2020)
- Elected Director, Board of Directors, American Institute of Sri Lankan Studies (2013 - present)
- Elected Director, Board of Directors, American Institute of Sri Lankan Studies (2010 - 2013)
- Institutional Representative, New School, Board of Directors, American Institute of Sri Lankan Studies (2010 - 2011)
- Reviewer, Dialectical Anthropology Medical Anthropology, Anthropology and Education Quarterly,
- Reviewer, Modern Asian Studies, American Ethnologist, Ethnography, JRAI,
- Reviewer, Feminist Review, South Asia Diaspora, Contemporary South Asia, Culture Medicine and Pyschiatry,
- Manuscript Reviewer, Stanford University Press, Routledge, Indiana University Press,

PROGRAM AFFILIATIONS

- Center for Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity (CCSRE)

- Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

- Ph.D., University of Edinburgh , Social Anthropology (2006)
- MSc by Research, University of Edinburgh , Social Anthropology (2002)
- B.A. (Hons), St John's College, Cambridge University , Social Anthropology (2001)

LINKS

- In My Mother's House: Civil War in Sri Lanka: http://www.amazon.com/My-Mothers-House-Ethnography-Political/dp/0812222849/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1434046755&sr=8-1&keywords=sharika+thiranagama
- Traitors: Suspicion, Intimacy and the Ethics of State Building: http://www.amazon.com/Traitors-Suspicion-Intimacy-Ethics-State-Building/dp/0812222377/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1434046755&sr=8-2&keywords=sharika+thiranagama
- Zubaan Books - Indian Edition of In My Mothers House: Civil War in Sri Lanka: http://zubaanbooks.com/shop/in-my-mothers-house-civil-war-in-sri-lanka/
- The Monster in Your Path: The Private Life of Caste in India: https://www.ucpress.edu/books/the-monster-in-your-path/paper

Teaching

COURSES

2026-27

- Bodies and Persons: Anthropological Perspective: ANTHRO 173 (Spr)
- History of Anthropological Theory, Culture and Society: ANTHRO 301 (Aut)
- Introduction to Cultural and Social Anthropology: ANTHRO 1, ANTHRO 201 (Win)

2025-26

- Ethnicity, Race, and Violence: Anthropological Perspectives: ANTHRO 27N, CSRE 27N (Aut)
- Introduction to Cultural and Social Anthropology: ANTHRO 1, ANTHRO 201 (Win)
- War and it's Worlds: ANTHRO 320 (Aut)
- What is Authority: ANTHRO 393 (Spr)

2024-25

- Bodies and Persons: Anthropological Perspective: ANTHRO 173, SOC 171 (Aut)
- Inheritance: ANTHRO 315, CSRE 315 (Aut)
- Introduction to Cultural and Social Anthropology: ANTHRO 1, ANTHRO 201 (Win)
- Palestine Across Disciplines: An Introduction: ANTHRO 33, CSRE 33 (Win)
- Proposal Writing Seminar in Cultural and Social Anthropology: ANTHRO 308 (Spr)

2023-24

- Emancipation: Theories and Experiences: ANTHRO 365A (Aut)
- Ethnicity and Violence: Anthropological Perspectives: ANTHRO 27N (Aut)
- Graduate Workshop: Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies: ARTHIST 499, FEMGEN 299 (Spr)
- Introduction to Cultural and Social Anthropology: ANTHRO 1, ANTHRO 201 (Win)
- Proposal Writing Seminar in Cultural and Social Anthropology: ANTHRO 308 (Spr)

STANFORD ADVISEES

Maciej Karasinski-Sroka, Rachelle Zavalza-Arellano

Doctoral Dissertation Reader (AC)

Salma Alkhoudi, Marlon Ariyasinghe, Miray Cakiroglu, Munir Gur, Rachael Healy, Bilal Nadeem, Poornima Rajeshwar, Isabel Salovaara, shandana waheed

Doctoral Dissertation Advisor (AC)

Reem Badr, Deniz Demir, Zaith Lopez

Orals Evaluator

Yeseul Byeon, Mahishan Gnanaseharan, Karventha Kuppusamy

Doctoral Dissertation Co-Advisor (AC)

Mercedes Martinez Milantchi, Sunidhi Pacharne

Doctoral (Program)

Reem Badr, Deniz Demir, Huzaafa Huzaafa, Mercedes Martinez Milantchi, Sunidhi Pacharne

Publications

PUBLICATIONS

- **THE MONSTER IN YOUR PATH: THE PRIVATE LIFE OF CASTE IN INDIA** *Atelier: Ethnographic Inquiry in the Twenty-First Century*
  Thiranagama, S.
  University of California Press.2026
- **Inheritance and Caste Formations in Kerala** *DALIT JOURNEYS FOR DIGNITY, VOL. 2*
  Thiranagama, S.
  edited by Rawat, R. S., Satyanarayana, K., Mohan, P. S.
  2025: 208-243
- **The names of the leader: the political deification of prabhakaran** *RELIGION*
  Thiranagama, S.
  2022
- **Figures of Menace: Militarisation in Post-War Sri Lanka** *SOUTH ASIA-JOURNAL OF SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES*
  Thiranagama, S.
  2022
- **Protestant Textuality and the Tamil Modern: Political Oratory and the Social Imaginary in South Asia (Book Review)** *ANTHROPOLOGICAL QUARTERLY*
  Book Review Authored by: Thiranagama, S.
  2021; 94 (4): 725-735
- **Afterword: A "Division of Laborers"** *ANTHROPOLOGY OF WORK REVIEW*
  Thiranagama, S.
  2020; 41 (2): 133–37
- **The Leader as Image: Prabhakaran and the Visual Regimes of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam".**
  Thiranagama, S.
  Tasveerghar: A Digital Network of South Asian Popular Visual Culture .
  2020
- **Respect Your Neighbor as Yourself: Neighborliness, Caste, and Community in South India** *COMPARATIVE STUDIES IN SOCIETY AND HISTORY*
  Thiranagama, S.
  2019; 61 (2): 269–300
- **Rural Civilities: Caste, Gender and Public Life in Kerala** *SOUTH ASIA-JOURNAL OF SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES*

Thiranagama, S.
2019; 42 (2): 310–27

- **The civility of strangers? Caste, ethnicity, and living together in postwar Jaffna, Sri Lanka** *ANTHROPOLOGICAL THEORY*
  Thiranagama, S.
  2018; 18 (2-3): 357–81
- **Introduction: Whose civility?** *ANTHROPOLOGICAL THEORY*
  Thiranagama, S., Kelly, T., Forment, C.
  2018; 18 (2-3): 153–74
- **Making Tigers from Tamils: Long-Distance Nationalism and Sri Lankan Tamils in Toronto** *AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGIST*
  Thiranagama, S.
  2014; 116 (2): 265-278
- **Sri Lanka's Lingering State of War** *CURRENT HISTORY*
  Thiranagama, S.
  2014; 113 (762): 163-164
- **The Self at a Time of War in Northern Sri Lanka** *JOURNAL OF HISTORICAL SOCIOLOGY*
  Thiranagama, S.
  2013; 26 (1): 19-40
- **Reconciliation, Popular Aspirations, and the State** *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development*
  Thiranagama, S., Biner, O.
  2013; 4 (1):
- **Claiming the State: Reconciliation Processes in Sri Lanka** *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development*
  Thiranagama, S.
  2013; 4 (1)
- **'A Railway to the Moon': The post-histories of a Sri Lankan railway line** *MODERN ASIAN STUDIES*
  Thiranagama, S.
  2012; 46: 221-248
- **Muslims, Ethnicity and Minority Identity in Sri Lanka** *Religion and Politics in South Asia*
  Thiranagama, S.
  edited by Jaffrelot, C., Arif, A.
  Purushartha, Sciences Sociales en Asie du Sud. Paris: EHESS.2012
- **Ethnic entanglements: The BBC Tamil and Sinhala services amidst the civil war in Sri Lanka** *JOURNALISM*
  Thiranagama, S.
  2011; 12 (2): 153-169
- **In My Mother's House: Civil War in Sri Lanka**
  Obeysekere, G., Thiranagama, S.
  Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.2011
- **Spectres of Treason** *Traitors: Suspicion, Intimacy and the Ethics of State Building*
  Kelly, T., Thiranagama, S.
  edited by Thiranagama, S., Kelly, T.
  Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.2010
- **Praise of Traitors: Intimacy, Betrayal and the Sri Lankan Tamil Community** *Traitors: Suspicion, Intimacy and the Ethics of State-Buildin*
  edited by Thiranagama, S., Kelly, T.
  Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.2010
- **Traitors: Suspicion, Intimacy and the Ethics of State-Building**
  edited by Kelly, T., Thiranagama, S.

Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.2010

- **South Asian Diasporas and the BBC World Services: Contacts, Conflicts, and Contestations** *South Asian Diaspora*
  edited by Gillespie, M., Thiranagama, S., Pinkerton, A., Baumann, G.
  2010
- **Partitioning the BBC: From Colonial to Postcolonial Broadcaster** *South Asian Diaspora*
  Thiranagama, S.
  2010; 2 (1): 39-55
- **A New Morning? Reoccupying home in the aftermath of violence in Sri Lanka** *Struggles for Home: Violence, Hope, and the Movement of People*
  Thiranagama, S.
  edited by Jansen, S., Löfving, S.
  Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books.2009
- **Review of Ritualizing on the Boundaries: Continuity and Innovation in the Tamil Diaspora by F.W. Clothey** *Religion*
  Thiranagama, S.
  2008; 30: 195-218
- **The Shadow Diaspora: Sri Lankan Tamils in Colombo** *Infochange Agenda*
  Thiranagama, S.
  2008
- **The right of return to Jaffna** *Himal South Asian*
  Thiranagama, S.
  2008; 21 (1)
- **The Eviction of Tamils and Muslims from Jaffna** *Daily Mirror*
  Thiranagama, S.
  2008
- **Moving on? Memory, generation and home for displaced Northern Muslims in Sri Lanka** *Ghosts of Memory: Essays on Remembrance and Relatedness*
  Thiranagama, S.
  edited by Carsten, J.
  Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.2007
- **A New Morning? Reoccupying home in the aftermath of violence in Sri Lanka** *Focaal: European Journal of Anthropology*
  Thiranagama, S.
  2007; 49 (1): 45-61
- **A Dream of Return: Northern Muslims in Sri Lanka** *ISIM Review*
  Thiranagama, S.
  2007; 20