Nikhit Agrawal

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EDUCATION

University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)   Anticipated June 2026
Ph.D., Anthropology
>   Dissertation: Seeds of Hope, Fruits of Failure: Scaling Climate-smart agriculture in India
>   Committee: Professor Akhil Gupta, Professor Christopher Kelty, Professor Jessica
>   Cattelino, Professor Hannah Appel, Professor Julie Guthman

University of Delhi   November 2018
M.A., Sociology

Indian Institute of Technology Delhi (IIT Delhi)   October 2015
B.Tech., Computer Science & Engineering

PUBLICATIONS

Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles

2025. "Violent Sustainability: Blitzscale and counteraccounting in an Indian agtech start-Up."
>   *Economic Anthropology*. https://doi.org/10.1002/sea2.12333.

2017. "Mobilization in Vidarbha: A Comparative Study." *Economic and Political Weekly* 52(39):
>   46-53. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26698515.

Revision submitted. June 2025. *Journal of Peasant Studies*. "Fixing rice stubble burning for
>   Delhi's air: Technological solutionism and agrarian governance in Haryana."

Under Review since May 2025. *Critique of Anthropology*. "When more-than-human meshworks
>   push back: Infrapolitics in an Indian tech-entrepreneurial sustainability program."

Public Writing (selected)

2021. "State of Rural and Agrarian India Report 2020: Rethinking Productivity and Populism
>   through Alternative Approaches," (co-authored with Richa Kumar, PS Vijayshankar, and
>   AR Vasavi) Chennai: *Notion Press. (translated and published in multiple Indian languages).*
>   http://www.ruralagrarianstudies.org/state-of-rural-and-agrarian-india-report-2020/

2021. "As agribusinesses proliferate, who is talking about sustainability of Indian
>   *agriculture?," India in Transition, Center for the Advanced Study of India, University of
>   Pennsylvania*, December 20. https://casi.sas.upenn.edu/iit/nikhitkumaragrawal

2021. "Reform for farmers needs to look at more than mere efficiency of agriculture
>   markets," (co-authored with Richa Kumar) *The Indian Express,* January 5.
>   https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/farm-laws-controversy-narendra-modi-
>   farmers-protest-7132953/ *(translated in Hindi and published in Trolley Times, a farmers'
>   protest publication, March 31, 2021.* https://trolleytimes.com/2021/03/31/कृषि-सुधार-क़ानून-
>   कैसे-हो/*)*

2020. "Why experts believe the new agricultural laws are beneficial – but farmers don't,"
>   *Scroll.in*, December 22. https://scroll.in/article/981944/why-experts-believe-the-new-
>   agricultural-laws-are-beneficial-but-farmers-dont

2020. "Neither Govt nor protesting farmers recognize challenge of depleting natural
>   Resources and climate crisis," (co-authored with Richa Kumar, PS Vijayshankar, AR
>   Vasavi) *The Indian Express,* December 7.
>   https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/in-farm-debate-a-green-reality-check-
>   7094384/

2020. "India hopes digital tech will save its floundering farm sector – but it's working without evidence," *Scroll.in,* September 20. https://scroll.in/article/973544/india-hopes-digital-tech-will-save-its-floundering-farm-sector-but-is-working-without-evidence

2020. "Some Key Questions That Need to Be Answered About the Three Agriculture Ordinances," *The Wire,* June 24. https://thewire.in/agriculture/agriculture-ordinances-key-questions

2018. "India Should Recognize That Manual Scavenging is Akin to Slavery," *The Wire,* July 18. https://thewire.in/caste/india-should-recognise-that-manual-scavenging-is-akin-to-slavery

2018. "India's Future Growth Track Hinges on Supreme Court's Aadhaar Ruling," *The Wire*, June 1. https://thewire.in/tech/indias-future-growth-track-hinges-on-supreme-courts-aadhaar-ruling

2018. "Why India's Oppressed Lack a United Voice," *The Wire,* January 3. https://thewire.in/agriculture/indias-subjugated-lack-united-voice

HONORS AND AWARDS

UCLA Division of Graduate Education: Dissertation Year Award for 2025–26	Spring 2025
UCLA Department of Anthropology: Summer Research Grant	Spring 2025
University of California: Singh Fellowship Award, Nominated	Spring 2025, 2024
Society for the Anthropology of Work, American Anthropological Association: Eric R. Wolf best graduate student paper prize	Fall 2024
Wenner-Gren Foundation: Dissertation Fieldwork Grant for 2023–24	Fall 2023
UCLA Department of Anthropology: Dorothy Jewell Graduate Student Travel Award	Summer 2023
UCLA Department of Anthropology: Robert B. Edgerton Endowed Award	Summer 2023
UCLA Navin and Pratima Doshi Chair of Indian Studies: Summer Research Fellowship	Summer 2023
UCLA College: Charles and Sue Graduate Student Fellowship Award, Nominated	Spring 2023; 2022
UCLA Division of Graduate Education: Graduate Summer Research Mentorship Fellowship	Summer 2022, 2021
UCLA International Institute: Fieldwork Fellowship	Fall 2022
UCLA Center for India and South Asia: Sambhi Summer Research Fellowship	Summer 2020
UCLA College: Strategic Enrollment Fellowship	Fall 2019
IIT Delhi Board for Recreational and Creative Activities: Best Fresher Award	2011–12
IIT Delhi Merit–cum–Means Scholarship	Fall 2012

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

"Violent Sustainability and Agtech in India. Impact Hau?" Ethnographic Critiques of Sustainable Finance Conference, Bertinoro, Italy, May 2024

"Paddy stubble management to prevent Delhi's air pollution: rethinking modernization amid climate change in Indian agriculture," Managing Sustainable Transitions Conference, Institute of Rural Management, Gujarat, India, Nov 2023

"The interplay of private capital and techno-fixes: an ethnographic study of agtech firms in India," Annual Conference on South Asia, University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA, Nov 2023

"Counter-accounting in the age of techno-fixes: an ethnographic study of agtech firms and their sustainability narratives," Annual Conference, Society for Social Studies of Science, Honolulu, USA, Nov 2023

INVITED TALKS

"Navigating Sustainability and Digitalization in India's Development." Humanities Initiative Annual International Symposium, Academic Writing Lab, Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology, Delhi, August 2025

"Seeds of Hope, Fruits of Failure: Scaling climate-smart agriculture in India" Job talk, Department of Anthropology, Yale University, February 2025
"India's rural and agrarian economy today," Department of Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, India, June 2021

GUEST LECTURES

"Whose sustainability?" Professor Mascha Gugganig, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, June 2025
"Violent sustainability," Professor Luísa Reis-Castro, University of Southern California, Undergraduate Course Lecture, November 2024
"Analyzing the impact of agtech start-ups in Indian agriculture," Dr. S. Subramanian, Christ University, Bengaluru, India, November 2022
"Agtech in India: technology, start-ups, and development," Professor Richa Kumar, IIT Delhi, India, December 2020

UNIVERSITY TEACHING EXPERIENCE

UCLA Institute for Society & Genetics
Teaching Fellow
- Ways of Knowing in the Human and Life Sciences   Spring 2025
- Human Biology & Society   Winter 2025

Teaching Associate
- Data, Artificial Intelligence, and Algorithms in the Biosciences   Fall 2024

UCLA Department of Anthropology
Teaching Associate
- Anthropology of Social Systems   Winter 2022
- Culture and Society   Fall 2021

Teaching Assistant
- Anthropology of Food   Spring 2021
- Culture and Society   Winter 2021, Fall 2020

RELEVANT WORK EXPERIENCE

ZealGrit Social Welfare Foundation, India   2023–Present
Co-founder
- Focus on addressing health and nutrition challenges among women, adolescents, and young children in rural India.
- Apply anthropological methods to design and refine community programs and inform organizational fundraising strategies.
- Cultivate an inclusive and reflexive organizational culture by training team members in participatory methods and critical self-reflection.

Professor Nicholas Shapiro
UCLA Research Associate   Spring 2025
- Designed and developed a pedagogical exercise for *Homesick*, integrating critical theory and participatory learning methods to engage students in discussions on environmental toxicity and lived experience.

Professor Jessica Cattelino
UCLA Graduate Student Researcher   Spring 2022
- Edited and formatted an academic manuscript to meet target journal guidelines, enhancing clarity and strengthening the scholarly argument.
- Transcribed qualitative interview data and drafted professional correspondence to journal editors to gauge interest in the manuscript, facilitating the submission process.

Ashoka University, India
Associate to the Chief Minister, Government of Haryana   2018–19
- Consulted with over 40 district-level government departments to support technology adoption, program implementation, and data-driven decision-making.
- Designed and facilitated strategic implementation plans to enhance service delivery and strengthen interdepartmental coordination across diverse policy areas.
- Advised senior officials on operational challenges and process improvements, translating policy priorities into actionable district-level initiatives.

Professor Richa Kumar
IIT Delhi Research Associate   2015–16
- Conducted primary and secondary research on the environmental impacts of industrial agriculture, including qualitative interviews, literature reviews, and data analysis.
- Synthesized interdisciplinary research findings to support the development of evidence-based policy recommendations and academic publications.

SERVICE

Society for the Anthropology of Work, American Anthropological Association: Member, Eric R. Wolf Prize committee 2025, with Professor Lilly Irani and Professor Jasmine Folz   Fall 2025
Committee on International Student, Department of Anthropology, UCLA: Student Member Spring 2025
Big Data & Society, Social Anthropology: Journal Peer Reviewer   2025
Society for Cultural Anthropology, American Anthropological Association: Contributing Editor 2024–26
Fifth Annual Graduate Interdisciplinary Conference on South Asia, UCLA Centre for India and South Asia: Organizing Committee Member   Spring 2020
Admissions Committee, UCLA Department of Anthropology: Student Member   2019–20
Network of Rural and Agrarian Studies, India: Core Team Member   2020–Present
Public Lecture Series titles "Democracy, Development, and Justice," IIT Delhi, India: Coordinator 2020

REFERENCES

Professor Akhil Gupta
Distinguished Professor of Anthropology, UCLA
Doctoral committee co-chair
akgupta@ucla.edu

Professor Christopher Kelty
Professor of Anthropology, UCLA and the UCLA Institute for Society and Genetics
Doctoral committee co-chair
ckelty@ucla.edu

Professor Jessica Cattelino
Professor of Anthropology, UCLA
Doctoral committee member
jesscatt@anthro.ucla.edu