HISTORY450: Making of Modern South Asia

3 Credits

Instructor: Dr. Mou Banerjee, meeting in-person,

TuTh 1:00PM - 2:15PM

Classroom: HUMANITIES 2211

Email: mbanerjee4@wisc.edu

Office hours: Through Zoom and by email appointments. Students need to schedule an appointment through email, even for meeting within the designated office hours. Students are required to meet with me at least once by the end of the third week of the semester, so please set up your appointments.

Credit Hours: The credit standard for this 3-credit course is met by an expectation of a total of 135 hours of student engagement with the course’s learning activities (at least 45 hours per credit or 9 hours per week), which include regularly scheduled meeting times (75 minutes per class session, 2 sessions per week – a total of 150 minutes per week),
guided individual research, dedicated online time, reading, writing, field trips, individual consultations with the instructor, and other student work as described in the syllabus.

**Syllabus:** This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the Instructor.

**Course Requirements:**

This course is a historical introduction to the postcolonial history, political identity and political consciousness in the South Asian nation-states of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and Myanmar. We shall study the evolution of modern South Asia and the intricate relationship between the neighboring sovereign states that emerged out of the partition of colonial India in 1947 and their interactions with their immediate postcolonial neighbors, through close readings of primary sources and relevant historiographical and theoretical literature. Some of the ways to do this fruitfully are to compare the evolution of different political regimes in the regions of South Asia, and to pay attention to inter-Asian narratives of sectarian violence, terrorism and internecine war.

By exploring the interactions between India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and Myanmar, from an India-centric point-of-view, we shall examine how such encounters and debates, in relation to the realities of postcolonial international political, ecological and economic relations, shaped a modern discourse on a nation and its perceived “Others”, the creation of categories of those who belong and those who do not in national narratives. This course will help students to understand the shifting regional dynamics by mapping the changing shape of geopolitics in this region that has the largest population, in numbers and density, in the world – close to 1.75 billion.

**Course Learning Objectives:**

The main objective of the course is to help you think and write critically about the South Asian subcontinent. We will do this through close-reading and analysis of primary sources and secondary material, as well as through writing assignments. In the written assignments, we shall work on identifying and engaging with historical arguments through examination and contextualization of primary sources and through critiques of academic monographs or articles.

By the end of this course, students will have achieved the following course learning outcomes:

1. Demonstrate a strong basis of knowledge of the history of inter-regional relations between South Asian countries.
2. Demonstrate the ability to do historical research and analysis, including the use of primary sources.
**Course Requirements and Grading:**

The main objective of the course is to help you think and write critically about the discourses of postcolonial nation formation and constructions of imagined communities, from the perspective of civil wars, failures of diplomatic ties, and last, in sectarian violence against minority populations.

We will do this through close-reading and analysis of primary sources and secondary material, as well as through writing assignments. In the written assignments, we shall work on identifying and engaging with historical arguments through examination and contextualization of primary sources and through critiques of academic monographs or articles.

**Recommended Textbooks:** The recommended background readings for the course are listed below. You might loan them from Memorial Library or buy them online. The Readings for class will be posted on Canvas in the “Files” section ahead of class. Readings may change at instructor discretion but will be announced and posted on the Canvas site a week in advance.

The primary background reading for the course is the textbook by Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal. *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political economy* (4th Ed.). New York: Routledge, 2017. You can also consult the third edition of Thomas and Barbara Metcalf’s *A Concise History of Modern India*. As background preparation, listen to Sunil Khilnani’s excellent podcast on BBC, India in 50 Lives: [https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b05rptbv/episodes/downloads](https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b05rptbv/episodes/downloads)


**Students will be evaluated on the basis of:**
1. Participation, Attendance, and Class Prep (Discussion Board posts) - 10%+10%+15% = 35%:

Attendance and participation are mandatory. It is essential in a course of this nature to approach the course material and your classmates with respect and an academic mindset and attitude: much of the material we will cover, particularly that regarding religion, caste, and ethnicity in South Asia, is often the subject of debate.

**Discussion Board Posts Rubric:**

You are **required** to post to the Discussion Board every week, concentrating on critically analyzing the readings. Each post should be about 300 words long at the minimum. Please do not write summaries. I want thoughtful critiques and opinions, and you should always quote or cite from the readings to substantiate your arguments. You are strongly encouraged to reply to and engage with the opinions of your peers, both in class and in the Discussion threads.

a. Ideas expressed in discussion posts include original thought, substantial depth, and are relevant to topic. Viewpoint shows strong logical thinking, reasoning, and analysis with evidence and examples. Construction of new meaning and insights are evident.

b. Direct connections are made to readings and/or other course materials (lectures, media, resources, etc.) and are clearly stated.

2. In the last 5 minutes of every lecture, we will perform a debriefing exercise – I will ask a member of the class what they found to be the most compelling or instructive issue in their assigned readings, and we will have a short discussion of what you take away from the day's class. Be prepared to answer if I call on you and engage in the discussion. Be constructive, kind, collegial.

2. Film Review - 5% (Draft to Writing Fellows) + 15% (Final submission) – Choose a historical film that depicts a particular historical period in India between 1947 and the present day, and analyze the narrative of the film in context of the historical period it describes. Reflect on the many ways in which historical facts are used to depict a particular understanding or POV and think about the many ideological ways in which history can be interpreted. 4-5 pages, 1500-2000 words, cited and annotated clearly.

**DRAFT due to Writing Fellow: 10th February, 11.59 PM**

**Final submissions: 17th February, 11.59 PM**
Film Review Rubric:

Director, title, year and lead actors/characters listed. Great opening sentence that attracts the interests of the reader and demonstrates the tone of the review. Provides a succinct plot synopsis without divulging too much about the film, giving away "spoilers." I do not want a scene by scene summary or synopsis. More attention should be paid to the historical context, the narrative arc and overarching themes. Provides relevant examples/illustrations from the film, compares and contrasts them to the historical facts, to back-up the reviewer’s opinion about the film’s effectiveness. Makes a provable case for the film’s merit and analyzes what worked and did not work in the film. Properly edited, vibrant vocabulary, with no spelling mistakes. Your paper should be in 12-point font, double spaced, with 1-inch margins. The pages should be numbered. You should use either Chicago or MLA style for your footnotes and endnotes.

3. Op-Ed - 5% (Draft to Writing Fellows) + 10% (Final submission) – Write an Op-Ed on any issue that highlights the inter-regional socio-political complexity of South Asia, drawing on both present events and on the history of the last seventy years. This is original creative non-fiction, and you’re free to write what you want. 5 pages. Model your Op-ed on any of the major media-outlets mentioned above. You also can take the help of the wonderful website: https://www.theopedproject.org/oped-basics

Op-Ed Rubric: It must include the following components:

A lede or opener which draws the reader into your argument. A clear, easy to understand description of the POV you are advocating for. 3 distinct points which support your argument that this POV change would create a positive impact on society, each of which is undergirded with concrete evidence. Acknowledgement of 1 or more obvious counterarguments, with effective argumentation disarming each. A conclusion which includes a clear recommendation for what should be done differently.

Your op-ed has a strict word limit of 800 words.

DRAFT due to Writing Fellow: March 10th, by 11:59 PM

Final submissions: March 17th, 11.59 PM

4. Final combined review, which is a reflection on a historical monograph paired with historical fiction set in the same historical period or about the same event - 10% (Draft to Writing Fellows) + 20% (Final submission): Due on May 10th, by 11.59 PM. Not less than 6 pages in length and not to exceed 10 pages in length. Citations are mandatory, and you should use the MLA or Chicago Manual of Style for citatory practices. I have a zero-tolerance policy on plagiarism, so if you’re unclear on any aspect of writing the paper, please schedule a meeting with me before submission, and we can have a discussion on your draft.
Choose a historical book/film that depicts a particular historical period within the context of the course and analyze the narrative in the context of the historical period it describes. Reflect on the many ways in which historical facts are used to depict a particular understanding or POV and think about the many ideological ways in which history can be interpreted. Cited and annotated clearly.

**Combined Review Rubric:**

Title and author of books listed. Introduction is attractive and provides genre and details.

Short summary consists of a clear discussion of themes, ideas and characters from the books, with examples which are clearly annotated and footnoted. Thorough critique of the themes, subject and narrative of the book. The student will clearly and elegantly articulate their own understanding of the novel/non-fiction monograph under review, and also analyze whether the monograph succeeds or fails in its intent. A clear concise paragraph explaining the overlaps and differences between the fiction and the non-fiction books, and the reasons such differences emerge. Structure of the paper smoothly transitions from paragraph to paragraph, the arguments and evidence are clearly signposted, the sequence of topics is clearly organized and logical. There is a clear introduction, body and conclusion. The tone should be consistently professional and appropriate for an academic research paper. Compelling evidence from professionally legitimate sources is given to support claims. Attribution is clear and fairly represented. References are primarily peer-reviewed professional journals or other approved historical and archival sources. The reader is confident that the information and ideas can be trusted.

Properly edited, vibrant vocabulary, with no spelling mistakes. Your paper should be in 12-point font, double spaced, with 1-inch margins. The pages should be numbered. You should use either Chicago or MLA style for your footnotes and endnotes.

I expect polished, exciting essays. Barring extremely urgent and unforeseen medical or personal circumstances, in which case, please contact me as soon as you can, extension of the deadline for the final essay will not be allowed. You lose 1/3 of the grade for each day of delay in submission of coursework if the instructor is not informed in advance and has given an extension, so more than three days of delay means an automatic 0%.

**DRAFT due to Writing Fellow: April 28th, by 11:59 PM**

**Final submissions: May 10th, 11.59 PM**

**HELP WITH WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:**

1. Writing Fellows Program:
We are extremely fortunate to have three undergraduate Writing Fellows assigned to our class who will assist you in developing your writing skills this semester, and you will be assigned to work with one of them by the instructor:

Maya Reinfeldt: mreinfeldt@wisc.edu
Emma Helstrom: ehelstrom@wisc.edu
Siri Nibhanupudi: nibhanupudi@wisc.edu

The Writing Fellows program is based on two beliefs that are supported by current research in writing instruction: 1) that writers of all skill levels can improve their writing by sharing work in progress and revising based on constructive criticism, and 2) that collaboration among student peers is a particularly effective mode of learning. The Writing Fellows are skilled undergraduate writers selected through a competitive application process. They are trained to read student papers carefully and respond constructively to them.

You will be providing the drafts of your literature review and your research proposal draft to your Writing Fellow so they can provide feedback to you. After they’ve commented on your work, you are required to meet with them (online or in person) to discuss your writing assignment. Their feedback will be aimed at helping you present your ideas more effectively and express them more clearly. Writing fellows are not subject experts on rainforests and reefs, and do not grade your papers. Their role is to read your drafts, provide extensive feedback, and meet with you face-to-face to discuss ways to improve your writing.

Please take full advantage of this amazing opportunity to become a better writer in your freshman year, and thus produce better papers throughout your college career!

2. The History Lab: If you wish to improve your chances of writing an excellent paper, you are also strongly encouraged to consider visiting The History Lab: https://history.wisc.edu/undergraduate-program/the-history-lab/

Primary source documents freely accessible can be found here:

Costs of War Project at Brown University: https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/

National Archives of India, Digitized Collection (NAI): https://www.abhilekh-patal.in/jspui/digitized-collections

South Asia Open Archives, JStor: https://www.jstor.org/site/saoa/

Dr. Adam Tooze’s Substack on Afghanistan: https://adamtooze.substack.com/archive?sort=search&search=afghanistan
Foreign Relations of the United States volumes (FRUS):
https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments

CIA Records Search Tool (CREST):
https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/

Research Guide to South Asia: https://researchguides.library.wisc.edu/HistSA

South Asia related digital archives accessible through UW-Madison including periodicals, newspapers and other sources:
https://search.library.wisc.edu/search/database?q=South+Asia

Grade Cutoffs:

92-100% A

87-91.9% AB

82-86.9% B

77-81.9% BC

72-76.9% C

67-71.9% D

0-66.9% F

Absences:

Over the course of the semester, you are allowed up to **two absences**, for any reason, without penalty, provided you inform the instructor in advance through email. Every additional absence will result in a three-point deduction from your overall final grade. Rare
exceptions to this policy will be made at the professor’s discretion in cases of health or family emergency or due to religious observances. Absences due to routine schedule conflicts (job interviews, exams in others classes, etc.) will not result in additional excused absences beyond the three already allotted.

If you are late to class, it is your responsibility to make sure at the end of that day’s class that you are counted as present for the day. Excessive lateness will also count as absences at the instructor’s discretion. If I am late for class, please wait for fifteen minutes, unless you are informed otherwise.

Learning during a Pandemic

These are unusual times, to say the least. You most likely know people who have lost their jobs, people who have tested positive for COVID-19, have been hospitalized, or perhaps have even died. You all have increased (or possibly decreased) work responsibilities and increased family care responsibilities. I’m fully committed to making sure that you learn everything you were hoping to learn from this class! I will make whatever accommodations I can to help you finish your assignments, do well on your projects, and learn and understand the class material. Under ordinary conditions, I am flexible and lenient with grading and course expectations when students face difficult challenges. Under pandemic conditions, that leniency is intensified. If you tell me you are having trouble, I will not judge you or think less of you. You never owe me personal information about your health (mental or physical). You are always welcome to talk to me about things that you are going through, though. If I can’t help you, I can find someone who can. If you need extra help, or if you need more time with something, or if you feel like you’re behind or not understanding the course material, do not suffer in silence! Talk to me. I will work with you. I promise. I hope that you will learn lots of things from this course and that you will enjoy your time in my classroom. But primarily, I want you to stay healthy, balanced, and grounded during this crisis.

Let us make a pact to be kind to ourselves and to each other.

Readings:

Week 1: Introduction


**Week 2: 1947 and Aftermath of the “Tryst with Destiny”**


**Week 3: Kashmir, The Roots of Conflict**


**Week 4: Kashmir, Paradise Lost?**


**Week 5: The Language Movement and Nationalism in East Pakistan**


**Week 6: 1971: Genocide and the birth of Bangladesh**


**Week 7: India and Sri Lanka: Part 1**

5. Recommended Reading: The UN Report on the Sri Lankan Civil War. Stable URL: https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/737299?ln=en (Links to an external site.)

**Week 8: India and Sri Lanka: Part 2**

2. Palme d’Or award winning “Dheepan”, directed by Jacques Audiard, 2016: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g7VZoE4vB2s
4. “The Defeated: Sri Lanka’s Tamils pick up the pieces after the war”. *Caravan Magazine*, 1 February 2012. Stable URL: http://www.caravanmagazine.in/reportage/defeated (Links to an external site.)

**Week 9: Afghanistan**

7. Recommended reading: Adam Tooze on Afghanistan:

https://adamtooze.substack.com/p/adam-tooze-on-africa

https://adamtooze.substack.com/p/chartbook-35-its-not-the-fall-that


https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SsK8gurEsxE

Week 10: The Global Problem of Afghanistan


Week 11: Myanmar: From Freedom to Genocide


Week 12: China, USA and the shadows of empire in the Indian Ocean

1. Srinath Raghavan. War and Peace in Modern India. Chapters 7 and 8.
5. Smith, Paul J. "The Tilting Triangle: Geopolitics of the China–India–Pakistan

Week 13: Hauntings of the Past

1. India’s Citizenship Amendment Act, 11 December 2019: Documents: https://egazette.nic.in/WriteReadData/2019/214646.pdf
4. Assam Accord, 15 August 1985: IN_850815_Assam Accord.pdf (un.org)
5. On the Nelli Massacre in Assam:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=599LmFwHJwU&t=68s

Week 14: Meaning and Memory in the Present Day

5. “Where have you hidden my new moon crescent?” – dir. Iffat Fatima: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZK_J96O6gQ&t=591s
6. Recommended viewing: Article 377 and decriminalization of homosexuality in India - #IndiaPride: One India, Equal in Love: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AbY-_8XmaoY

End of Spring Semester, 2022. Submission of Final Paper, May 10th, 11.59 PM.

Usage of Audio Recorded Lectures Statement

Lecture materials and recordings for Hist. 450 are protected intellectual property at UW-Madison. Students in this course may use the materials and recordings for their personal use related to participation in this class. Students may also take notes solely for their personal use. If a lecture is not already recorded, you are not authorized to record my lectures without my permission unless you are considered by the university to be a
qualified student with a disability requiring accommodation. [Regent Policy Document 4-1] Students may not copy or have lecture materials and recordings outside of class, including posting on internet sites or selling to commercial entities. Students are also prohibited from providing or selling their personal notes to anyone else or being paid for taking notes by any person or commercial firm without the instructor’s express written permission. Unauthorized use of these copyrighted lecture materials and recordings constitutes copyright infringement and may be addressed under the university’s policies, UWS Chapters 14 and 17, governing student academic and non-academic misconduct.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY STATEMENT

By virtue of enrollment, each student agrees to uphold the high academic standards of the University of Wisconsin-Madison; academic misconduct is behavior that negatively impacts the integrity of the institution. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and helping others commit these previously listed acts are examples of misconduct which may result in disciplinary action. Examples of disciplinary action include, but is not limited to, failure on the assignment/course, written reprimand, disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES STATEMENT

The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform faculty [me] of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. I will work either directly with the student [you] or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student’s educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA. McBurney Disability Resource Center: https://mcburney.wisc.edu/

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION STATEMENT: https://diversity.wisc.edu/

Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals.
The University of Wisconsin-Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background – people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world.