History 142: South Asia, Past and Present (3 Credits)

Instructor: Dr. Mou Banerjee

Email: mbanerjee4@wisc.edu

Class Hours: Monday and Wednesday, 2:30 PM - 3:45 PM, Humanities 1131.

Office hours: Through Zoom and only by prior email appointments. Students are recommended that they meet with me at least once by the end of the 5th week of the semester.

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 – which is 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 Description:

The South Asian Subcontinent, site of one of oldest civilizations of the world, and home to one-fourth of the world’s population, is a study in paradoxes. Culturally complex, religiously syncretic yet divisive, politically tumultuous, the subcontinent is a melting-pot of languages, ethnicities, heterogeneous political and social regimes, and widely disparate economic and ecological habitats. From being shaped by one of the greatest empires of the early-modern period - the Mughals; to being the most important imperial possession of Britain in the nineteenth century – the jewel in the crown; and ultimately providing a mosaic of postcolonial nations experimenting with democracy and authoritarianism in varied measures of success and tragedy, South Asia is both a world unto itself and a central node to wider global connections.

In this class then, our objectives are to analytically understand South Asia as a politically, economically, historically, and geo-strategically vital part of our early-modern and modern world. Beginning with a short but in-depth examination of early-modern South Asia from antiquity, with emphasis on the Mughal period from 1500-1757, we shall engage more fully with the shaping of the subcontinent into a complex colonial and then post-colonial territory through the influences and engagements with British imperial rule from 1757-2019.

We will think about the birth of two sovereign nation states, India and Pakistan, accompanied by bloody carnage, resulting in mass-movements of about 8 million people across shadowy and uncertain borders, in 1947, a tragedy that was repeated again in 1971 with the birth of Bangladesh, marred by genocidal violence. Such partitions were and are not one-time catastrophes, but ongoing events, shaping the lives of the billions of people who inhabit the geopolitical imaginaries of South Asia. We will also pay close attention to the ways in which the peoples of South Asia adapted, adopted and refashioned the notions of modern enlightenment
and national belonging. We will see how India is not at all the mythic space of changeless tradition that it was characterized as, by Orientalist scholars past and present. Instead, we will discover a vibrant, engaged, vital and rapidly changing South Asian subcontinent.

Course Objectives:

1. The main objective of the course is to help you think and write critically about the South Asian subcontinent, the makings and multiple markers of colonial and postcolonial modernity, and the creation of political identities and the ideological discourses of political practice.
2. 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.

Course Learning Outcomes:

1. By the end of this course students will be able to identify and describe the contours and stakes of conversations among historians about South Asia.
2. Students will learn critical thinking and will be able to apply historical methods to evaluate critically the record of the past and how historians of South Asia and British imperialism have interpreted it.
3. Students will acquire historical research skills, including (as appropriate) the effective use of libraries, archives, and digital databases.
4. Students will learn to organize and express their thoughts clearly and coherently both in writing and orally and thereby offer their own analytical critique of major historical events and their legacies in South Asia.
5. Students will learn how to demonstrate their mastery of the knowledge and skills involved in historical practice by conceptualizing and executing a significant piece of research.

Course Guide: [https://researchguides.library.wisc.edu/introductorysouthasia](https://researchguides.library.wisc.edu/introductorysouthasia)

Required Textbook:


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.
Also watch the series *Bharat Ek Khoj/ A Discovery of India:*
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4f6vdW91hLA&list=PL1EG23oYcaFu6SNAiofd0uco0sD0J eVji

**Availability of required texts**: All readings for the class (including the textbook) will be posted on the course website at the beginning of the semester. You may choose to purchase the required reading textbook online if you want. Readings may change at instructor discretion.

**Students will be evaluated on the basis of:**

**Participation, Attendance, and Class Prep (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, citizenship, and ethnicity in South Asia, is controversial and the subject of heated debate. So are issues of statehood, sovereignty, geographical borders enforced nationally and migration.

**Class Prep**: Each week, you will be required to post weekly responses to the week’s assigned readings (every Thursday, by 11.59 PM) to the Discussion Board on Canvas. You are required to analyze the readings, instead of writing a summary. You're strongly encouraged to respond to the posts of your colleagues and discuss each other's viewpoints.

Be attentive, constructive, empathetic, kind, and collegial.

**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.

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

**Written Assignments:**

This class has a midterm (20%) and two reviews (20% + 25% = 45%)
Midterm (20%) - We will have a take-home mid-term exam on Monday, October 24th. I will post the question paper on the Announcements page on Canvas on Monday at 8.00 A.M.

You will answer 2 essay questions out of six choices (each 7 points – 500-600 words at least), and there will be a choice of 6 date/event identifications out of ten choices (each of 1 point – 4-5 sentences.)

I will provide you some samples for the questions to practice which will be uploaded in advance to the Canvas site. You will email me a word.doc (not a Google doc link or a pdf) of your typed answers by 11.59 PM on Tuesday the 25th of October.

Rubric for Grading Mid-terms:

Essay Questions:

1. 5-7 points: Correctly examined the issues and answered questions completely and clearly. Incorporated pertinent and detailed information from both class discussion and assigned readings (whenever applicable), providing needed evidence. The dates and historical actors mentioned were accurate and spelled correctly, and the answer showed deep familiarity with textbook, readings cited and the student’s own research. Language was clear, simple and elegant.
2. 3-4.5 points: Correctly examined the issues and answered questions but not in a clear and complete manner and/or provided little support from textbook and other assigned readings. The dates and historical actors were correct only in approximation, and the language use was confused, inelegant and filled with spelling errors.
3. 1-2.5 points: Did not answer the specific central question in any way. Did not incorporate information from pertinent class discussion and/or assigned readings. Provided no information that could be understood or related to the specific topic. May lack any recognizable organization. May contain enough distracting grammar/spelling/etc. problems to make it substantially incomprehensible.

Key-terms and identification:

1. 1 point: Provided all of the required important facts and clearly demonstrated understanding of the historical relevance of the Key Terms.
2. 0-0.5 points: Only provided one correct basic fact and did not make any reference to historical relevance and/or did not demonstrate clear understanding of historical relevance.

The Reviews: One each on a painting or a historical film (not mythological) set in South Asia (20%) and a combined review (academic monograph paired with historical fiction, either book or film – 25%). 12-point font, double spaced, 1 inch margin. Citations are mandatory, and you should use the 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.

1. **First Review (5% on First Draft + 15% on Final Draft)** – Choose a historical painting or film (not a mythological/superhero film, say, for e.g., *Bahubali*) that depicts a particular historical period in India, and analyze the narrative of in context of the historical period it describes. Reflect on the many ways in which historical facts can be a product of the period it is produced in, and may be used to depict a particular understanding or POV. Think about the many ideological ways in which history can be interpreted. Consider the genre, historical provenance, the painter, the subject matter, and the historical scholarship (if any) on the painting. Clear, elegant language, depth of analysis and citations will be considered for the highest grade. 4-5 pages, cited and annotated clearly. Draft for Writing Fellows due on September 26th. Final draft uploaded to the submission box on Canvas on October 10th by 11.59 PM.

**Review Rubric:**

- Director/Painter, title, year and characters/lead actor depicted. Great opening sentence that attracts the interests of the reader and demonstrates the tone of the review. Provides a succinct synopsis (in the case of the film without divulging too much about the film, giving away "spoilers") Attention should be paid to the historical context, the narrative arc and overarching themes. Provides relevant examples/illustrations from the film/painting, compares and contrasts them to the historical facts, to back-up the reviewer's opinion about the painting/film’s effectiveness. Makes a provable case for the painting/film’s merit and analyzes what worked and did not work. 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.

2. **Final Review (10% on First Draft + 15% on Final Draft)** – Choose a work of historical fiction set in the South Asian subcontinent or containing elements that illuminate the history of the subcontinent, and pair it with a historical monograph that deals with a central concern of your fiction choice, to make a nuanced argument about the many ways in which the historical past provides a rich tapestry and a polyphony of voices to illuminate contemporary concerns, both in the academic sphere and for entertainment or informational purposes. Concentrate on the oft-repeated adage – “The past is a foreign country, they do things differently there.” Is it really the case? 8-10 pages. Clear, elegant language, depth of primary source research, analysis and citations will be considered for the highest grade. Draft for Writing Fellows due on December 1st. Final draft uploaded to the submission box on Canvas on December 14th by 11.59 PM.

**Final 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 film/novel/non-fiction monograph under review, and also analyze whether it succeeds or fails in its intent. A clear concise paragraph explaining the overlaps and differences between the fiction and the non-fiction interpretations, 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%.

**Writing Fellows:**

Your Writing Fellows are:

Aliza Ramirez: passowramire@wisc.edu

Juliet Chang: jchang94@wisc.edu

Rachel Lynch: relynch@wisc.edu

Regan Norton: rmorton2@wisc.edu

You will be assigned to a WF by the instructor.

Students will work with the WF on two of their written projects. The first of these, as noted above, is the painting/film review; the second is the final paper itself. For each of these, we will have two deadlines: one for a draft and one for a final. Both are required. The drafts will be reviewed with the help of the peer undergraduate Writing Fellows at the UW Writing Center (http://www.wisc.edu/writing/), who will meet with you and discuss draft improvements. Late
drafts will be read at discretion of the writing fellows. Meeting with the Writing Fellows is part of the assignment. If you do not meet them or do not provide a full draft of your paper to them, you will automatically lose the part of the grade that is assigned to the first draft.

Working with the Fellows is a rare opportunity to improve your writing, and this is precisely why I have specifically chosen to develop the course around student work with them. One thing that is true, no matter how “advanced” a writer you are or what sort of writing you’re doing: we can all benefit from revision, and we can all benefit from a collaborative process of learning and revising. The Fellows, as we will discuss in class, are not TAs; they are undergraduate students who have been selected through a very competitive process who are highly skilled in working with peers to improve their writing. Working with Fellows, as outlined in the syllabus, is mandatory for all participants. Fellows cannot give extensions for assignments.

**The History Lab:** If you need further help to improve your chances of writing an excellent paper, you are strongly encouraged to consider visiting [The History Lab](#).

**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 (vacations, 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.

**Late Coursework Submission Policy:** Extensions will be granted only in exceptional circumstances. Late assignments without prior notification to the instructor will lose 1/3 of a letter grade for each day's delay.

**Learning during a Pandemic**

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.

**Calendar of Topics and Assignments:**

**Week 1:**

Wednesday the 7th of September: Introduction

**Week 2: Unravelling India's Heritage: Ashoka to Somanatha**


Monday the 12th of September: Nayanjot Lahiri, *Ashoka in Ancient India*, Epilogue
Wednesday the 14th of September: Romila Thapar, *Somanatha: The Many Voices of a History*, pp. 1-17.

**Week 3: The Mughal Empire: State, Economy and Society**

Textbook: Bose & Jalal, *Modern South Asia*, ch.4

Monday the 19th of September: Amartya Sen, *The Argumentative Indian*, pp. 273-293


**Week of 4: India Between Empires: Decline or Decentralization?**

Textbook: Bose & Jalal, Modern South Asia, ch.5

Monday the 26th of September: C.A. Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire*, ch.1

Wednesday the 28th of September: Short excerpt of Sanjay Leela Bhansali’s *Bajirao Mastani* (2016) and discussion of the power vacuum left behind after the death of the last Mughal Emperor, Aurangzeb.

*Draft for Writing Fellows due on September 26th: Uploaded to Canvas, by 11.59 PM.*

**Week 5: The Transition to Colonialism: the late 18th Century**

Textbook: Bose & Jalal, *Modern South Asia*, ch.6 and ch.7

Monday the 3rd of October: Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire*, chs. 2 and 3
Wednesday the 5th of October: Excerpts and short class discussion of Bharat Ek Khoj: The Company Bahadur and William Dalrymple, The East India Company: The original corporate raiders.

**Week 6: Company Raj and Indian Society, 1757 to 1857**

Textbook: Bose & Jalal, Modern South Asia, ch.8


*Final Draft due on October 10th: Uploaded to Canvas, by 11.59 PM.*

**Week 7: Rebellion, Collaboration and the Transition to Crown Raj**

Textbook: Bose & Jalal, Modern South Asia, ch.9


Wednesday the 19th of October: Excerpts from Satyajit Ray’s The Chess Players (1977): Shatranj Ke Khilari

**Week 8: High Noon of Colonialism, 1858 to 1914: State and Political Economy**

Textbook: Bose & Jalal, Modern South Asia, ch.10

Wednesday the 26th of October: Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts: The Making of Indian Poverty*, Chapter 10.

*Monday, October 24th-Tuesday October 25th: Mid-term Exam. Upload to Canvas submission box.*

**Week 9: A Nation in Making? Swadeshi Nationalism - 1858 to 1914**


Monday October 31st: Sugata Bose ‘Nation as Mother’ in Bose & Jalal (eds.), *Nationalism, Democracy and Development*, pp. 50-75.


**Week 10: Colonialism Under Siege: State and Political Economy During and After World War I**


Monday the 7th of November: Bose & Jalal (eds.), *Nationalism, Democracy and Development*, ch.3

Wednesday the 9th of November: David Olusoga, *The World's War: The Martial Races*.


Week 11: Gandhian Nationalism and Radical Social Politics: Enigma and Reality in the 1920s


Week 12: 1930s, The Depression Decade: Society, Economy and Politics


Monday the 21st of November: Amartya Sen, “Poverty and Famines”

Wednesday the 23rd of November: *Famine in Bengal* (Pathe) and excerpts from Satyajit Ray’s *The Distant Thunder* (1973). Class discussion on paintings and etchings by Chittaprosad and Zainul Abedin of the Bengal Famine.

*Thanksgiving Break Nov 24-Nov 27, 2022*

Week 13: World War II and its Aftermath: Economic Crisis and Political Confrontation

Textbook: Bose & Jalal, *Modern South Asia*, ch.15

Recommended Reading: Raghu Karnad: *Farthest Field – An Indian Story of the Second World War*

*Draft for Writing Fellows due on December 1st. To be uploaded to the submission box on Canvas by 11.59 PM.*

**Week 14: Partition and Independence**


Monday the 5th of December: Selections from Anis Kidwai, *In Freedom’s Shade*, Sadat Hasan Manto, “Toba Tek Singh”, excerpts from Chandraprakash Dwivedi’s *Pinjar* (2003), Faiz Ahmed Faiz’s poem “This is not that dawn”.

Wednesday the 7th of December: Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence*, excerpts. Class discussion.

**Week 15: 1947 - Meaning and Memory in the Present Day**

Monday the 12th of December: Kashmir (article 370), Assam (NRC), and the ghosts of colonial pasts.

Films to be watched by students as prepwork:

2. “Haider” – Vishal Bharadwaj

Articles to Read – Uploaded to Canvas.

*Final draft to be uploaded to the submission box on Canvas on December 14th by 11.59 PM.*
Usage of Audio Recorded Lectures Statement

Lecture materials and recordings for Hist. 142 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.

Care Networks at UW-Madison

- University Health Services
- Undergraduate Academic Advising and Career Services
- Office of the Registrar
- Office of Student Financial Aid
- Dean of Students Office

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/Links to an external site.

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.