

Syllabus *History of South Asia 1*
Course number 21:510:280

Fall 2016, Rutgers University-Newark
Tuesday/Thursday 10:00 am – 11:20 am, ENG-209

INSTRUCTOR

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:30 am -12:30 pm and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course covers the history of the Indian subcontinent from the Indus Valley Civilization until 1500 CE. We proceed chronologically and cover some of the major political, social, religious, and cultural developments within the premodern Indian subcontinent. Students will be exposed to primary sources, written by a diverse array of people and translated from numerous languages, as well as the politics of history in the present day. Students will also learn about the practice of history more broadly, including how to read primary and secondary texts and how to conduct basic research.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students can expect the following through successful completion of this course:

- Acquire basic knowledge of South Asian history through the mid-second millennium CE, including major political, social, religious, and cultural developments.
- Learn strategies for approaching and making sense of primary historical sources.
- Develop critical reading skills by learning to understand and evaluate scholarly arguments.
- Formulate legitimate historical questions and identify the means of investigating those queries.
- Learn how to assess different types of historical evidence and posit a grounded thesis.
- Appreciate the role of history and historical memory in present day debates.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Romila Thapar, *Early India: From the Origins to AD 1300*, 2004.
Catherine Asher and Cynthia Talbot, *India Before Europe*, 2006.

All other readings and links are available on Blackboard.
Both required books and numerous others are on reserve at Dana Library.

GRADING AND ASSIGNMENTS

Your grade is based on four components:

Class Attendance and Preparation	35%
Writing Assignments	35%
Midterm	15%
Final Exam	15%

Class Attendance: You are required to attend all classes. The museum visit is required. Your attendance grade includes the map quiz and may include periodic pop quizzes (these quizzes cannot be made-up if you miss class for an unexcused reason). Everyone gets one unexcused absence per term, and beyond that your grade will suffer.

- *Excused Absences:* Recognized grounds for absence include illness requiring medical attention, curricular or extracurricular activities approved by the faculty, and recognized religious holidays. You must contact the professor or absences will be counted as unexcused.
- *Extended Absences:* Any student who misses eight or more sessions through any combination of excused and unexcused absences will not earn credit in this class. Such students should withdraw to avoid getting an F.

Class Preparation: You should come to class having carefully read all listed readings for that day. There are three types of readings: (1) secondary texts, (2) primary sources, and (3) present-day connections. These three types of materials require different critical reading skills, and all are important for making sense of South Asian history and its relevance today.

Midterm and Final: The midterm and final are each worth 15% of your grade. Both exams are cumulative, which means that everything in the course up until that point is fair game. Exams will draw upon both lectures and readings.

Writing Assignments: There are five writing assignments in the course: Three primary source analyses, a book review, and a Wikipedia-style entry. The primary source analyses and book review are each worth 5% of your grade, and the Wikipedia assignment is worth 15%. The primary source analyses develop the skills necessary to read and make sense of primary sources. The book review develops critical reading skills regarding secondary materials. The Wikipedia-style entry allows you to try your hand at producing your own account of a particular person or event in Indian history, thus putting to use your critical reading skills and knowledge base developed through this course.

CLASS POLICIES

Absences: If you miss class or arrive late, you are absent. Everyone gets one free unexcused absence (save this for an occasion when you may truly need it; this cannot be used on the day of our museum visit). For truly extenuating circumstances, get in touch with the instructor at least 48 hours before the missed class. Do not contact the instructor about the content of missed lectures. It is your responsibility to find out from classmates about subjects discussed in your absence.

Electronics in Class: Laptops are permitted for note-taking only in class until they become a problem; phones should be silenced. If at any point electronics prove distracting, all electronics will be banned.

Late Work: All late work incurs a penalty of one letter grade for every 24 hours late.

Academic Dishonesty: Plagiarism, cheating, and other academic dishonesty of *any sort* will not be tolerated. Please familiarize yourself with the Rutgers Code of Student Conduct and resources about academic dishonesty: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>. All students are required to include the Rutgers honor pledge on all major course assignments submitted for grading: “On my honor, I have neither received nor given any unauthorized assistance on this examination (assignment).”

Week 1

September 6 Introduction to India, South Asia, and “South Asia”

September 8 Sources, Evidence, and the Practice of History
Thapar, *Early India*, excerpts of chapter 1, 1-29
Vinay Lal, “History and Politics” introduction (link on blackboard)

Recommended Reading: Thapar, *Early India*, introduction and chapter 2

Week 2

September 13 Indus Valley (Harappan) Civilization
Thapar, *Early India*, excerpts of chapter 3, 69-71, 79-88
Primary Source Text: Archaeological Evidence. Spend 20 minutes perusing images on “Around the Indus in 90 Slides” (link on blackboard)
*Map Quiz (in class)

September 15 The Politics of Harappa: Language and Forgeries
“Write Signs for Indus Script?”
Present-Day Connection: Witzel and Farmer, “Horseplay in Harappa”

Week 3

September 20 Vedic India 1: The Beginning of Text-Based Indian History
Thapar, *Early India*, excerpts of chapter 4, 98-117, 122-126
Primary Source Text: Rig Veda, selections trans. by Doniger, 25-39

September 22 Vedic India 2: Intellectual Developments and Asceticism
Thapar, *Early India*, 126-136
Primary Source Text: Upanishads, selections trans. by Olivelle, 34-36, 46-52, 69-71 (sections 3.1, 3.9, and 4.5)
Present-Day Connection: Sen, “Argument and History”

Week 4

*September 27 Assignment (due in class): Primary source analysis of *Mahabharata*
<note> each student only responsible for **either** Sept 27 or 29 assignment, not both.

September 27 Social and Political Visions within the Mahabharata
Introduction to *Mahabharata*, Longman, 829-833 (introduction)
Primary Source Text: Mahabharata, Longman, 850-870 (excerpts book 5 and book 6)

*September 29 Assignment (due in class): Primary source analysis of *Ramayana*
<note> each student only responsible for **either** Sept 27 or 29 assignment, not both.

September 29 Ramayana 1: Social Structures
Introduction to *Ramayana*, Longman, 878-881
Davis, *Global India Circa 100 CE*, pp. 45-57
Primary Source Text: Valmiki's *Ramayana*, trans. Pollock, vol. 2, pp. 71-103 (read every other page in order to skip the Sanskrit)

Week 5

October 4 Ramayana 2: Moral Questions
Primary Source Text: Kamban's *Ramayana*, trans. Narayan, pp. 91-105
Primary Source Text: Valmiki's *Ramayana*, Longman, 912-917
Present-Day Connection: Amar Chitra Katha comic book *Vali*

October 6 Alexander the Great, Trade, and Classical Sanskrit
Thapar, *Early India*, first half of chapter 5 ("States and Cities"), 146-164
Sunil Khilnani's 15-minute podcast on Panini, from "Incarnations: India in 50 Lives"

Week 6

October 11 Buddhist Ethics
Thapar, *Early India*, second half of chapter 5 ("States and Cities"), 164-173
Sunil Khilnani's 15-minute podcast on Buddha, from "Incarnations: India in 50 Lives"
Primary Source Text: *Therigatha*, trans. Hallisey, pp. 21, 23, 43-45, 51, 77, 111-15, 197-211
(read every other page in order to skip the Pali)

October 13 Jain Ethics
Sunil Khilnani's 15-minute podcast on Mahavira, from "Incarnations: India in 50 Lives"
Present-Day Connection: Dalrymple, "The Nuns Tale"

Week 7

*October 18 Assignment (due in class): Primary Source analysis of Ashokan inscriptions

October 18 Mauryan Empire and Ashoka
Thapar, *Early India*, excerpts of chapter 6, 174-184, 194-208
Primary Source Text: Ashokan inscriptions, *Longman*, 874-877

October 20—NO CLASS. Take time to review for the midterm

Week 8

October 25 Midterm (in class)

October 27 India 200 BCE – 300 CE
Thapar, *Early India*, first half of chapter 8 (“Mercantile Community”), 245-263
Primary Source Text: *The Law Code of Manu*, trans. Olivelle, 13, 180-189.

Week 9

November 1 Museum Visit
Thapar, *Early India*, second half of chapter 8 (“Mercantile Community”), 263-279
*Today we visit the Newark Museum as a class.

*November 3 Assignment (due in class): Primary source analysis of *Kamasutra*
<note> each student only responsible for **either** Nov 3 or 10 assignment, not both.

November 3 Gupta Rule: Classical Culture and Golden Age Tropes
Thapar, *Early India*, first half of chapter 9 (“Threshold Times”), 280-302
Primary Source Text: *Kamasutra*, trans. Doniger, 3-21, 48-51 (skip the notes)

Week 10

November 8 India in the World c. 700 CE
Thapar, *Early India*, second half of chapter 9 (“Threshold Times”), 302-325
Gordon, *When Asia was the World*, (“Xuanzang”) 1-20 (reporting on Primary Source Text)

*November 10 Assignment (due in class): Primary source analysis of *Travels of Marco Polo*
<note> each student only responsible for **either** Nov 3 or 10 assignment, not both.

November 10 South India Vignettes (900-1300 CE): Cholas, Temples, and Travelers
Thapar, *Early India*, excerpts of chapter 11, 363-370, 381-396
Primary Source Text: *Travels of Marco Polo*, trans. Latham, 260-276

Week 11

November 15 Library meeting
*Class comes in two sections at 10 am and 10:45 am, respectively.

November 17 Religious Developments: Shankaracharya, bhakti, and Buddhist Decline
Thapar, *Early India*, 348-357, 397-404
Present-Day Connection: Amar Chitra Katha comic book *Shankara*

Week 12

November 22 Making sense of India from the Outside
Primary Source Text: Al-Biruni, *India*, 3-8, 17-26, 125-134
Primary Source Text: *Shahnameh*, trans. Davis, 483-488, 503-505

*November 23 Assignment (due 5 pm): Book review of Thapar's *Ancient India*

November 24 NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING RECESS

Week 13

November 29 Mahmud of Ghazni and Ghurids
Asher and Talbot, *India Before Europe*, 18-24, 25-35
Eaton, "Temple desecration in pre-modern India"

December 1 Building the Delhi Sultanate
Asher and Talbot, *India Before Europe*, 35-52
Primary Source Text: Ibn Battuta, *Travels*, 161-172

Week 14

December 6 Vijayanagara: "Sultans among Hindu kings"
Asher and Talbot, *India Before Europe*, 53-77
Sunil Khilnani's 15-minute podcast on Krishnadevaraya, from "Incarnations: India in 50 Lives"

December 8 NO CLASS –work on your Wikipedia Entry

*December 9 Assignment (due 5 pm): Wikipedia Entry

Week 15

December 13 Rajputs, Sufis, and Kabir
Asher and Talbot, *India Before Europe*, 99-114
Primary Source Text: Kabir poetry, *Longman*, 18-21
Present-Day Connection: Listen to Qawwali music (at least part 1)

Final Exam: December 22, 8:30 – 11:30 am