INSTRUCTOR
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Department of History
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Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:30 am -12:30 pm on Zoom and by appointment

GRADER
TBA

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course covers the history of the Indian subcontinent from the Indus Valley Civilization until about the 1520s CE. We proceed chronologically and cover some of the major political, social, religious, and cultural developments in premodern India. 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 assess historical arguments.

SYLLABUS OVERVIEW
General Information Pages 1–4
Weekly Readings & Assignments Pages 5–8

PANDEMIC PEDAGOGY – NEED TO KNOW FOR REMOTE LEARNING
There are many details in this syllabus. These are basics, for remote learning in the course:

We have synchronous class meetings on Tues/Thurs. You need a reliable internet connection.

Class meetings on are Zoom; you can find the link on Canvas.

Our Canvas class site has a module for each week, with all readings, assignments, quizzes, and an overview document that lists everything you need to do that week.

The professor wants you to succeed; if you have issues or concerns, please be in touch.
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.
- Learning to understand and evaluate scholarly arguments.
- Formulate 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 TEXT


*Alternative editions of Thapar’s Early India are acceptable if published after 2002.

Purchase: [https://www.amazon.com/dp/0143029894/](https://www.amazon.com/dp/0143029894/) or through the campus bookstore

All other readings and links are available on Canvas.

GRADING AND ASSIGNMENTS

Your grade is based on four components:

- Class Attendance and Participation: 45%
- Individual Writing Assignments: 25%
- Midterm Essay: 10%
- Final Exam: 20%

Class Attendance: Your attendance grade includes

1. attendance and participation in the twice weekly class meetings
2. watching short online videos
3. participation in the group discussions on Canvas
4. individual online quizzes

Online lectures are held on Tuesdays and Thursday between 10 a.m. and 11:20 a.m., and quizzes / recorded videos / group discussions should be completed during the listed week. Lectures are not recorded.
**Class Preparation:** You should carefully read all listed readings. There are three types of readings every week: (1) secondary texts (unmarked on the syllabus), (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 essay is worth 10% of your grade, and the final exam is worth 20% of your grade. Both exams are cumulative, drawing upon lectures and readings. They are both essay-based and open book / open note. You may not, however, collaborate with fellow students.

**Individual Writing Assignments:** There are four writing assignments in the course:
- Sept. 25: Primary Source Analysis 1 (Mahabharata)
- Oct. 16: Primary Source Analysis 2 (Ashokan edicts)
- Nov 1: Primary Source Analysis 3 (Kamasutra)
- Nov 16: Primary Source Analysis 4 (Al-Biruni)
- Dec 7: Primary Source Analysis 5 (Kabir and Tamil poetry)

The primary source analyses are due at 11:59 pm via Canvas and are each worth 5% of your final grade. These exercises develop the skills necessary to read and make sense of primary sources, a key part of studying history and living in the world as a critical thinker.

**Class Policies**

**Absences:** If you have more than two absences from online lectures, discussions, and quizzes, your grade may suffer. If you find yourself missing class or having difficulties, whether for pandemic-related reasons or other reasons, please reach out to the professor to discuss the best way to succeed in this course. Please note the following Rutgers University policies on absences:
- *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 grader, in advance where possible, 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.

**Academic Dishonesty:** The professor and grader expect full academic honesty from all students. If you plagiarize, cheat, help another student cheat, or are otherwise academically dishonest, you will face disciplinary action. Being caught cheating is the last thing anybody needs in the middle of a pandemic, and you will be caught. So, Don’t Cheat. See: http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/
Support and Assistance

Counseling Center: The Rutgers-Newark Counseling Center provides a number of counseling and consultative services to enrolled and eligible undergraduate and graduate students. For students, if you are seeking individual or group therapy, you can expect to find a safe, supportive space to collaboratively identify and begin to change the thoughts, behaviors, and beliefs that prevent you from being your best self. http://counseling.newark.rutgers.edu.

Disabilities: Rutgers welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University’s educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus’s disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form: https://webapps.rutgers.edu/student-ods/forms/registration.

Food: PantryRUN, the campus food pantry, helps students who have difficulty affording enough healthy food to remain focused on their studies and stay healthy. You can find hours and information here: https://myrun.newark.rutgers.edu/pantryrun.

Pandemic: Your go-to for how COVID-19 is being handled at Rutgers University-Newark is MyRun Student Resources; https://myrun.newark.rutgers.edu/covid19.

Writing: The Rutgers University-Newark Writing Center provides tutoring for students who want to strengthen their reading, writing, and research skills. They offer individual sessions and writing workshops to all undergraduate students currently enrolled in classes on the Rutgers University-Newark campus; they are offering remote tutoring. More details here: https://sasn.rutgers.edu/student-support/tutoring-academic-support/writing-center.

Please 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**  
Introduction to South Asia, Evidence, and the Practice of History

- **Sept 1**  
  10–11 a.m. Lecture

- **Sept 3**  
  10–10:30 a.m. Conversation with Taymiya Zaman, Associate Professor of History at the University of San Francisco

  Thapar, *Early India*, excerpts of chapter 1, 1-29  
  **Primary Source:** Incredible India Poster  
  **Present-Day Connection:** Vinay Lal, “History and Politics” introduction

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

**Week 2**  
Indus Valley (Harappan) Civilization and Modern Politics

- **Sept 8**  
  NO CLASS

- **Sept 10**  
  10–11:20 a.m. Lecture, including conversation with Mark Kenoyer, George F. Dales Jr. and Barbara A. Dales Professor of Anthropology, at 10:45

  Thapar, *Early India*, excerpts of chapter 3, 69-71, 79-88  
  “A History of the World in 100 Objects” Podcast: Indus Seal  
  **Primary Source:** “Around the Indus in 90 Slides”  
  **Present-Day Connection:** Witzel and Farmer, “Horseplay in Harappa”

**Week 3**  
Vedic India: The Beginning of Text-Based Indian History and Hinduism

- **Sept 15**  
  10–11 a.m. Lecture

- **Sept 17**  
  10–10:30 a.m. Conversation with Tony Joseph, author of *Early Indians: The Story of Our Ancestors and Where We Came From* (2018)

  Thapar, *Early India*, excerpts of chapter 4, 98-117, 122-136  
  **Primary Source:** *Rig Veda*, trans. Doniger, 29-31, 89-92, 289-90 (hymns 10.90, 1.162, 10.145)  
  **Primary Source:** *Upanishads*, trans. Olivelle, 34-36, 46-52, 69-71 (sections 3.1, 3.9, 4.5)  
  **Present-Day Connection:** Sen, “Argument and History”

**Week 4**  
The Rise of Kingdoms: Society and Politics in the Mahabharata

- **Sept 21**  
  Primary Source Analysis 1 on *Mahabharata* (due on Canvas by 11:59 pm)

- **Sept 22**  
  10–11 a.m. Lecture

- **Sept 24**  
  10–10:30 a.m. Conversation with Wendy Doniger, Mircea Eliade Distinguished Service Professor of the History of Religions at the University of Chicago

  Thapar, *Early India*, first half of chapter 5, 146-164  
  Introduction to *Mahabharata, Longman*, 829-833 (introduction)  
  **Primary Source:** Mahabharata, excerpts in *Longman*, 850–70
**Week 5**  
**New Religions: Buddhism and Jainism**

- **Sept 29**  
  10–11 a.m. Lecture

- **Oct 1**  
  10–10:30 a.m. Review of Therigatha assignment

  Thapar, *Early India*, second half of chapter 5, 164-173
  Sunil Khilnani’s podcasts on Buddha & Mahavira, from “Incarnations: India in 50 Lives”
  **Primary Source:** *Therigatha*, trans. Hallisey, pp. 21, 23, 43-45, 51, 77, 111-15, 197-211
  (read every other page)
  **Present-Day Connection:** Dalrymple, “The Nun’s Tale”

**Week 6**  
**Ramayana: Social Ideals and their Discontents**

- **Oct 6**  
  10–11 a.m. Lecture, including conversation with Ajay Rao, Associate Professor in Historical Study and Religion at the University of Toronto, at 10:30

- **Oct 8**  
  10–10:30 a.m. Lecture

  Introduction to *Ramayana, Longman*, 878-881
  **Primary Source:** Valmiki’s *Ramayana*, trans. Pollock, vol. 2, 71-103 (every other page)
  **Primary Source:** Valmiki’s *Ramayana, Longman*, 912-917
  Ramanujan, “Three Hundred Ramayanas,” 131–160
  **Present-Day Connection:** Doordarshan Ramayan episode 76, Fire Test

**Week 7**  
**Ashoka and the Mauryan Empire**

- **Oct 12**  
  Primary Source Analysis 2, Ashokan edicts (due on Canvas by 11:59 pm)

- **Oct 13**  
  10–11 a.m. Lecture

- **Oct 15**  
  10–10:30 a.m. Conversation with Nayanjot Lahiri, Professor of History at Ashoka University in Delhi, India

  Thapar, *Early India*, excerpts of chapter 6, 174-184, 194-208
  Lahiri, *Ashoka in Ancient India*, 118–32
  **Primary Source:** Ashokan edicts, *Longman*, 874-877
  **Present-Day Connection:** Kapadia, “Why Ashoka, the emperor of India who inspired the symbols of new republic, is still worth reading”
### Week 8

**India 200 BCE – 300 CE: The Silk Road and Dharma**

- **Oct 20**  
  10–11 a.m. Lecture
- **Oct 22**  
  NO CLASS (work on midterm essay)

  *Davis, Global India Circa 100 CE*

*Primary Source:* The Law Code of Manu, trans. Olivelle, 13, 19-20, 43-48

*Present-Day Connection:* Shantha, “As Symbols of Discrimination Fall Worldwide, Meet the Women Who Blackened Manu’s Statue”

*Present-Day Connection:* Ambedkar on Burning the Manu Smriti

*October 23, Midterm Essay due on Canvas by 11:59 p.m.*

### Week 9

**Sex and Other Ideals in “Classical” India**

- **Oct 26,** Primary Source Analysis 3, *Kamasutra* (due on Canvas by 11:59 pm)
  
- **Oct 27**  
  10–11 a.m. Lecture
- **Oct 29**  
  10–10:30 a.m. Conversation with Wendy Doniger

  *Thapar, Early India, second half of chapter 8, 280-302*

*Primary Source:* Narayan, “Manmata” in *Gods, Demons, and Others*, 85-95

*Primary Source:* *Kamasutra*, trans. Doniger, 3-21, 48-51

*Present-Day Connection:* Excerpt from Doniger, *Redeeming the Kamasutra*

### Week 10

**India in the World c. 700 CE**

- **Nov 3**  
  10–11 a.m. Lecture
- **Nov 5**  
  TBD

  *Thapar, Early India, second half of chapter 9, 302-325*

Sunil Khilnani, 15-minute podcast on Shankaracharya, “Incarnations: India in 50 Lives”

*Gordon, When Asia was the World, (“Xuanzang”) 1-20 (reporting on Primary Source)*

*Present-day Connection:* Arnold and Turner, “Why are we Surprised When Buddhists are Violent”

### Week 11

**South Indian Vignettes c. 700-1300 CE: Cholas, Temples, and Travelers**

- **Nov 10**  
  10–11 a.m. Lecture
- **Nov 12**  
  10–10:30 a.m. Conversation with Katherine Kasdorf, Associate Curator of Arts of Asia and the Islamic World at Detroit Institute of Arts

  *Thapar, Early India, 348-370, 381-404*

*Primary Source:* *Travels of Marco Polo*, trans. Latham, 260-276

*Primary Source:* Ramanujan trans., *Hymns for the Drowning*, 3–13

*Present-day Connection:* “The Hindu Temple” Video (5 minutes)
### Week 12

**Game-changers: Mahmud of Ghazni, the Ghurids, & decline of Indian Buddhism**

- **Nov. 16**: Primary Source Analysis 4 on al-Biruni’s *India* (due on Canvas by 11:59 pm)

**Nov 17**
10–11 a.m. Lecture

**Nov 19**
10–10:30 a.m. Conversation with Manan Ahmed Asif, Associate Professor of History at Columbia University

- Asher and Talbot, *India Before Europe*, 18-35
- Eaton, “Temple desecration in pre-modern India”
- **Primary Source**: Al-Biruni’s *India*, 3-8, 17-26
- **Present-day Connection**: Gandhi, “When Toppling Monuments Serves Authoritarian Ends”

### Week 13

**November 24 and 26**  
NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING RECESS

### Week 14

**Tale of Two Empires: Delhi Sultanate and Vijayanagara Empire**

- **Dec 1**: 10–11 a.m. Lecture
- **Dec 3**: 10–10:30 a.m. Conversation with Richard Eaton, Professor History at Arizona State University

- Asher and Talbot, *India Before Europe*, 35-77
- Sunil Khilnani, 15-minute podcast on Krishnadevaraya, from “Incarnations: India in 50 Lives”
- **Primary Source**: Ibn Battuta, *Travels*, 161-172
- **Present-day Connection**: Padmaavat Trailer and Khalid, “’Padmaavat’ puts together every stereotype of Muslims in India”

### Week 15

**Religious Updates: Bhakti, Sufis, and the Sikh tradition**

- *Dec 7*: Primary Source Analysis 5: Kabir and Tamil poetry (due on Canvas by 11:59 p.m.)

**Dec 8**
10–11 a.m. Lecture

**Dec 10**
10–10:30 a.m. Conversation with Simran Jeet Singh, instructor at Union Seminar, activist, and far more; 10:30-11 a.m. review and debrief

- **Primary Source**: Kabir poetry, *Longman*, 18-21
- **Present-day Connection**: Daily Show: Confused Islamophobes Target American Sikhs

### Final Exam: December 17, 8:30–11:30 a.m.

*exam available December 15–17; must be completed by 11:59 a.m. on December 17.*