



Syllabus *History of South Asia 1*

Course number 21:510:280

Fall 2017, Rutgers University-Newark
Tuesday/Thursday 10:00 am – 11:20 am, HIL-101

INSTRUCTOR

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:30 am -12:30 pm (through mid-November) and by appointment

GRADER

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Office Hours: 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 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 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.

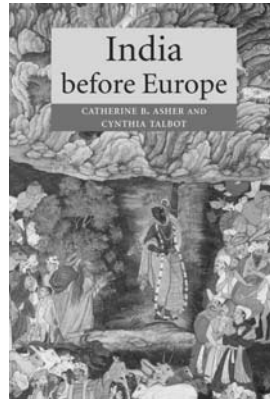
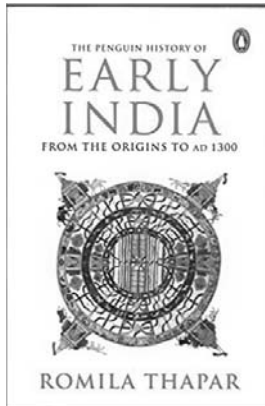
Learning to understand and evaluate scholarly arguments.

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 TEXTS



Romila Thapar, *The Penguin History of Early India: From the Origins to AD 1300*, 2015.

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

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	30%
Midterm Exam	15%
Final Exam	20%

Class Attendance: You are required to attend all classes. Your attendance grade includes the map quiz and 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 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.

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 is worth 15% of your grade, and the final is worth 20% of your grade. Both exams are cumulative and draw upon lectures and readings. Dates:

Oct. 24: Midterm
Dec. 21: Final

Writing Assignments: There are four writing assignments in the course. Due dates:

Sept. 25: Primary Source Analysis 1 (Mahabharata)

Oct. 16: Primary Source Analysis 2 (Ashokan edicts)

Nov 1: Primary Source Analysis 3 (Kamasutra)

Dec. 8: Wikipedia Entry Assignment

All assignments are due at 11:59 pm via Blackboard. The primary source analyses are each worth 5% of your grade, and the Wikipedia assignment is worth 15% of your grade. The primary source analyses develop the skills necessary to read and make sense of primary sources. 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 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 days of the museum visit or the library visit). Do not contact the professor or grader about the content of missed lectures. It is your responsibility to find out from classmates about subjects discussed in your absence.

Electronics in Class: No electronics are permitted; this ban includes laptops. Please silence and refrain from using cell phones.

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

Academic Dishonesty: If you plagiarize, cheat, or are otherwise academically dishonest, the professor will come down on you like a ton of bricks, to the full extent permitted by Rutgers University policy. Avoid this scenario by not cheating. <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>



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

September 5 Introduction to India, South Asia, and “South Asia”

September 7 Sources, Evidence, and the Practice of History

Thapar, *Early India*, excerpts of chapter 1, 1-29

Vinay Lal, “History and Politics” introduction

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

Week 2

September 12 Indus Valley (Harappan) Civilization

Thapar, *Early India*, excerpts of chapter 3, 69-71, 79-88

Primary Source: Archaeological Evidence. Spend 20 minutes perusing images on “Around the Indus in 90 Slides”

*Map Quiz (in class)

September 14 The Politics of Harappa: Language and Forgeries

“Write Signs for Indus Script?”

Present-Day Connection: Witzel and Farmer, “Horseplay in Harappa”

Week 3

September 19 Vedic India 1: The Beginning of Text-Based Indian History

Thapar, *Early India*, excerpts of chapter 4, 98-117, 122-126

Primary Source: *Rig Veda*, trans. Doniger, 29-31, 89-92, 289-90 (hymns 10.90, 1.162, 10.145)

September 21 Vedic India 2: Intellectual Developments and Asceticism

Thapar, *Early India*, 126-136

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

*Sept. 25, Primary Source Analysis 1 on *Mahabharata* (due on Blackboard by 11:59 pm)

September 26 Social and Political Visions within the Mahabharata

Introduction to *Mahabharata*, Longman, 829-833 (introduction)

Primary Source: *Mahabharata*, Longman, 850-870 (excerpts of book 5 and book 6)

September 28 Ramayana 1: Social Structures

Introduction to *Ramayana*, Longman, 878-881

Davis, *Global India Circa 100 CE*, 45-57

Primary Source: Valmiki’s *Ramayana*, trans. Pollock, vol. 2, 71-103 (read every other page in order to skip the Sanskrit)

Week 5

October 3 Ramayana 2: Moral Questions

Primary Source: Kamban’s *Ramayana*, trans. Narayan, 90-105

Primary Source: Valmiki’s *Ramayana*, Longman, 912-917

October 5 India 600-200 BCE: Political Changes, Alexander the Great, and Classical Sanskrit

Thapar, *Early India*, first half of chapter 5, 146-164

Present-Day Connection: Sunil Khilnani's 15-minute podcast on Panini, from "Incarnations: India in 50 Lives"

Week 6

October 10 The Gautama Buddha and the Middle Way
Thapar, *Early India*, second half of chapter 5, 164-173
Sunil Khilnani's 15-minute podcast on Buddha, 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 in order to skip the Pali)

October 12 Mahavira and Jain Practices
Sunil Khilnani's 15-minute podcast on Mahavira, from "Incarnations: India in 50 Lives"
Present-Day Connection: Dalrymple, "The Nun's Tale"

Week 7

*Oct. 16, Primary Source Analysis 2, Ashokan edicts (due on Blackboard by 11:59 pm)

October 17 Mauryan Empire and Ashoka
Thapar, *Early India*, excerpts of chapter 6, 174-184, 194-208
Primary Source: Ashokan edicts, *Longman*, 874-877

October 19—NO CLASS. Take time to review for the midterm

Week 8

October 24 Midterm (in class)

October 26 India 200 BCE – 300 CE: The Silk Road, Languages, and Dharma
Thapar, *Early India*, first half of chapter 8, 245-263
Primary Source: *The Law Code of Manu*, trans. Olivelle, 13, 19-20, 43-48

Week 9

October 31 Religious Developments: Buddhism, "Hinduism," etc.
Thapar, *Early India*, second half of chapter 8, 263-279
Primary Source: Narayan, "Manmata" in *Gods, Demons, and Others*, 85-95

*Nov 1, Primary Source Analysis 3, *Kamasutra* (due on Blackboard by 11:59 pm)

November 2 Gupta Era: The Rise of Classical Sanskrit Culture
Thapar, *Early India*, first half of chapter 9, 280-302
Primary Source: *Kamasutra*, trans. Doniger, 3-21, 48-51 (skip the notes)

Week 10

November 7 India in the World c. 700 CE

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

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

November 9 Museum visit

Thapar, *Early India*, second half of chapter 8, 263-279

*Meet at the Newark Museum

Week 11

November 14 Temples, Architecture, and Religious Practice in Medieval India

*Guest lecture by Tamara Sears, Associate Professor of Art History, RU-New Brunswick

Thapar, *Early India*, 348-362

November 16 Library meeting

*Class comes in two sections at 10 am and 10:45 am, respectively. [Meet at Dana Library](#)

Week 12

November 21 and 23 NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING RECESS

Week 13

November 28 South India Vignettes 900-1300 CE: Cholas, Temples, and Travelers

Thapar, *Early India*, excerpts of chapter 11, 363-370, 381-404

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

November 30 Mahmud of Ghazni, the Ghurids, and the endgame for Indian Buddhism

Asher and Talbot, *India Before Europe*, 18-35

Eaton, “Temple desecration in pre-modern India”

Week 14

December 5 Building the Delhi Sultanate

Asher and Talbot, *India Before Europe*, 35-52

Primary Source: Ibn Battuta, *Travels*, 161-172

December 7 Formation, history, and present of the Sikh tradition

*Guest lecture by Simran Jeet Singh, Assistant Professor of Religion at Trinity University

Asher and Talbot, *India Before Europe*, 99-114

Primary Source: Kabir poetry, *Longman*, 18-21

*Dec. 8, Wikipedia Entry Assignment (due on Blackboard by 11:59 pm)

Week 15

December 12 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”

Final Exam: December 21, 8:30 am – 11:30 am