

Syllabus

History of South Asia 1

21:510:280

Fall 2023, Rutgers University-Newark
Tuesday/Thursday 10:00 am – 11:20 am

INSTRUCTOR

Professor Audrey Truschke
Department of History
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Office Hours and Location TBA

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course, we discover the history of the Indian subcontinent from the Indus Valley Civilization (2600–1900 BCE)—one of the centers of the ancient world—until the 1520s CE. We cover some amazing human milestones, including the birth of numerous world religions, classical stories and art that still inspire today, and some of the world’s most impressive empires. History also has dark corners, and we investigate trends of oppression and exploitation as part of premodern Indian life.

Our guides for this fascinating, sometimes difficult journey are the diverse people of premodern India, who speak to us through inscriptions and texts translated from numerous languages. Think it is all ancient history? Think again, since historical figures and claims about the past feature in South Asian politics daily in 2023. In this class, students will engage with the relevance of history today while cultivating transferrable skills, such as assessing evidence, discerning trends and parsing change over time, and weighing scholarly arguments.

SYLLABUS OVERVIEW

General Information Pages 1–4
Weekly Schedule, Readings & Assignments Pages 5–8

PEDAGOGY 101 – WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

We meet on Tues/Thurs 10–11:20 a.m. Tuesdays tend to be traditional lectures. Thursdays are a mix of lectures, sidebar conversations, and in-class exercises (these count towards your final grade).

Our Canvas class site has a module for each week, with all readings, assignments, and additional information.

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, intellectual, 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.

READINGS

All readings and links are available on Canvas. You should carefully read / listen to everything for the week assigned, prior to Tuesday class. There are three types of readings every week:

- (1) Secondary sources: analyses of the past written by modern scholars
- (2) Primary sources: written or made by historical actors at the time
- (3) Present-Day Connections: Modern-day reflections on history and why it matters

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.

GRADING AND ASSIGNMENTS

Your grade is based on four components:

Class Attendance and Participation	35%
Individual Writing Assignments	25%
Midterm Exam	15%
Final Exam	25%

Class Attendance: You are required to attend all classes. Your attendance grade includes a map quiz and in-class activities. Everyone gets 1 free unexcused absence per term; beyond that, your grade will suffer.

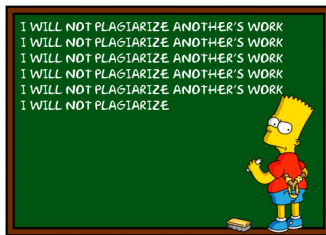
Exams: Exams are in-person, closed book, and cannot be made-up.

CLASS POLICIES

Absences. Everyone gets one unexcused absence. For excused absences, please contact the professor, in advance if possible. If you find yourself missing multiple classes, please reach out to the professor to discuss the best way to succeed in this course. Rutgers University policy 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, 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 Integrity. The professor expects full academic honesty from all students. If you plagiarize, cheat, help another student cheat, consult ChatGPT or equivalent, or are otherwise academically dishonest, you will face disciplinary action. Don't want trouble? Don't Cheat. See: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>



Please include the Rutgers honor pledge on all course assignments submitted for grading: “On my honor, I have neither received nor given any unauthorized assistance on this examination (assignment).”

Censorship and Offense. The professor does not censor information or images, and history is no walk in the park. As a result, students in this course may well encounter historical texts, depictions, actions, and ideas that they find upsetting. This includes, but is not limited to, criticisms of religions, depictions of religious figures and deities, explicit sexuality, swastikas, pro-caste rhetoric, and misogyny. Please remember that it is okay to feel offended. We will discuss in class how to sensitively address such feelings without whitewashing the past.

Electronics. Electronics—including laptops, tablets, and phones—are not allowed in class. I encourage notetaking by hand.

Intellectual Property. Lectures, powerpoints, assignments, unpublished work, and other materials utilized in this course are protected by United States copyright laws as well as Rutgers University policy. You are not permitted to share any of these without written consent from the professor. Similarly, all original work that you produce for this course is covered by copyright protections, and the professor will not share your work without your written consent.

Late Work. All late work incurs a penalty of one letter grade (10% reduction) for every 24 hours late.

SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE

Counseling Center. The Counseling Center has confidential therapists available to support students. Students should reach out to the Counseling Center to schedule an appointment: counseling@newark.rutgers.edu or (973) 353-5805. If students are not quite ready to make an appointment with a therapist but are interested in self-help, check out *Sanvello* for an easy, web-based approach to self-care and support. Visit <https://my.rutgers.edu/>, click on Sanvello: Wellness @ RUN, and log in with your netid to begin your journey toward wellness.

Crisis and Concerns. The Campus Awareness Response and Education (CARE) Team works with students in crisis to develop a plan of support plan and address personal situations that might impact their academic performance. Connect with the CARE Team by using the following link: tinyurl.com/RUNCARE or emailing careteam@rutgers.edu.

Disabilities. The Office of Disability Services (ODS) works with students with medical, physical, and/or mental conditions who encounter disabling barriers in order to determine reasonable and appropriate accommodations for access. Students who have completed the process with ODS and have approved accommodations are provided a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) specific to each course. To initiate accommodations for their course students must both provide the LOA to and have a conversation with the course instructor about the accommodations. More information can be found at ods.rutgers.edu. Contact ODS: (973) 353-5375 or ods@newark.rutgers.edu.

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>.

Temporary Conditions/Injuries. The Division of Student Affairs can assist students who are experiencing a temporary condition or injury (broken or sprained limbs, concussions, or recovery from surgery). Students experiencing a temporary condition or injury should submit a request for assistance at: <https://temporaryconditions.rutgers.edu>.

Writing Center. 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. They can be contacted at (973) 353-5847 and nwc@rutgers.edu. Also see: <https://sasn.rutgers.edu/student-support/tutoring-academic-support/writing-center>.

Week 1

Sept 5 Introduction to South Asia and the Practice of History
Sept 7 Map Quiz + Primary / Secondary Sources Bootcamp I

Lal, “History and Politics” introduction
Primary Source: Maps (see Canvas)
Present-Day Connection: Thapar, “They Peddle Myths”

Week 2

Sept 12 Indus Valley Civilization
Sept 14 Ancient India beyond the Indus Civilization + Sources Bootcamp II

“Brief Introduction to the Ancient Indus Civilization” (sections 1-3)
“Indus Seal” podcast
Primary Source: “Around the Indus in 90 Slides”
Present-Day Connection: Joseph, *Early Indians* on Bhimbetka

Week 3

Sept 19 Vedic Migrants and Practices
Sept 21 Sidebar - How do historians talk about religion?

“Vedic Migrants and Practices”
Primary Source: *Rig Veda*, trans. Doniger, excerpts
Primary Source: *Upanishads*, trans. Olivelle, excerpts
Present-Day Connection: Interview: Thapar on dissent

*September 22, Rig Veda and Upanishads Primary Source Analysis Due

Week 4

Sept 26 Building and Renouncing Cities, 550–325 BCE
Sept 28 *Therigatha primary source analysis (in-class)

Thapar, *Early India*, 164–173
Khilnani, podcasts on Buddha & Mahavira
Primary Source: *Therigatha*, trans. Hallisey, selections
Present-Day Connection: Arnold and Turner, “When Buddhists Are Violent”

Week 5

- Oct 3 Mauryan Empire and Ashoka
Oct 5 *Ashokan Edicts primary source analysis (in-class)

15 Minute History, “Era Between the Empires”
Kachru, “Ashoka’s Moral Empire”
Primary Source: Ashokan edicts, *Longman*, 874–877
Present-Day Connection: Kapadia, “Why Ashoka is still worth reading”

Week 6

- Oct 10 Mahabharata
Oct 12 Sidebar – How do historians work with literature and myths?

Introduction to *Mahabharata*, *Longman*, 829–833
Truschke, “Living Mahabharata”
Primary Source: *Bhagavadgita*, excerpts in *Longman*, 859–70
Present-Day Connection: Dhand, Mahabharata podcast, episode 1

Week 7

- Oct 17 South Asians Traveling 200 BCE – 300 CE
Oct 19 Ramayana

Davis, *Global India Circa 100 CE*
Primary Source: Ramayana, excerpts in *Longman*
Present-Day Connection: Study for the midterm!

Week 8

- Oct 24 Review
Oct 26 MIDTERM (in-class)

No Readings

Week 9

- Oct 31 Sex, Oppression, and Trade in Classical India
Nov 2 Sidebar – How might we narrate a people’s history of this time?

Thapar, *Early India*, 287–305
Primary Source: Excerpts of *Kamasutra* and “Charter of Vishnusena”
Present-Day Connection: Ambedkar & others on burning Manu Smriti

*November 3, Kamasutra + Vishnusena Primary Source Analysis Due

Week 10

Nov 7 NO CLASS – ELECTION DAY
Nov 9 India in the World c. 700 CE

Gordon, “Xuanzang”
Khilnani, Shankaracharya podcast
Primary Source: Xuanzang excerpt
Present-Day Connection: Jain, “Diwali 2021”

Week 11

Nov 14 South India c. 700-1300 CE: Cholas, Temples, and Traders
Nov 16 Sidebar – Encountering ancient South Asia in museums

“Culture and Religion in Chola South India”
Asher and Talbot, *India Before Europe*, 21–27
Primary Source: Virashaiva Vachana poetry by women
Present-Day Connection: “Museum Will Stop Obscuring Images”

Week 12

Nov 21 Indo-Persian Culture and Rule 1190–1350
Nov 23 NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)

Eaton, *India in the Persianate Age*, 62–72
Eaton, “Temple desecration”
Primary Source: Ibn Battuta, *Travels*, 161–172
Present-Day Connection: Gandhi, “Toppling Monuments”

*November 22: Ibn Battuta Primary Source Analysis Due

Week 13

Nov 28 Long 15th century: Bahmani and Vijayanagara Kingdoms
Nov 30 *Wikipedia rewrite exercise (in-class) I

Eaton, *India in the Persianate Age*, 80–88
Khilnani’s Krishnadevaraya podcast
Primary Source: Krishnadevaraya excerpts
Present-Day Connection: Kapadia, “Rhinos to Lisbon, Turkeys to Agra”

Week 14

Dec 5 New Players and Paths, c. 1500 CE
Dec 7 *Wikipedia rewrite exercise (in-class) II

[no secondary reading; begin studying for the final exam]

Primary Source: Kabir poetry, Longman, 18-21

Present-Day Connection: Englesberg, "Bellingham 'Anti-Hindu' Riot"

*Dec 7, Wikipedia rewrite due in class

Week 15

Dec 12 Review

Final Exam – December 19, 8:30-11:30 a.m.