SOUTH ASIA STUDIES (SAST)

SAST 001 Introduction to Modern India
This introductory course will provide an outline of major events and themes in Indian history, from the Mughal Empire in the 16th century to the re-emergence of India as a global player in the 21st century. The course will discuss the following themes: society and economy in Mughal India; global trade between India and the West in the 17th century; the role of the English East India Company’s control over Indian subcontinent in the 18th century; its emergence and transformation of India into a colonial economy; social and religious reform movements in the 19th century; the emergence of elite and popular anti-colonial nationalisms; independence and the partition of the subcontinent; the emergence of the world’s largest democracy; the making of an Indian middle class; and the nuclearization of South Asia.
For BA Students: History and Tradition Sector
Taught by: Ali
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 002 The City in South Asia
This interdisciplinary social science course examines key topics, themes, and analytic methods in the study of South Asia by focusing on significant South Asian cities. With one-fifth of the world’s population, South Asia and its urban centers are playing an increasingly important role in recent global economic transformations, resulting in fundamental changes within both the subcontinent and the larger world. Drawing primarily on ethnographic studies of South Asia in the context of rapid historical change, the course also incorporates research drawn from urban studies, architecture, political science, and history, as well as fiction and film. Topics include globalization and new economic dynamics in South Asia; the formation of a new urban middle class; consumption and consumer culture; urban political formations, democratic institutions, and practices; criminality & the underworld; population growth, changes in the built environment, and demographic shifts; everyday life in South Asia and ethnic, cultural, and linguistic identities, differences, and violence in South Asia’s urban environments. This is an introductory level course appropriate for students with no background in South Asia or for those seeking to better understand South Asia’s urban environments in the context of recent globalization and rapid historical changes. No prerequisites. Fulfills College sector requirement in Society and foundational approach in Cross-Cultural Analysis.
For BA Students: Society Sector
Taught by: Mitchell
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 003 History, Culture, and Religion in Early India
This course surveys the culture, religion and history of India from 2500 BCE to 1200 CE. The course examines the major cultural, religious and social factors that shaped the course of early Indian history. The following themes will be covered: the rise and fall of Harappan civilization, the “Aryan Invasion” and Vedic India, the rise of cities, states and the religions of Buddhism and Jainism, the historical context of the growth of classical Hinduism, including the Mahabharata, Ramayana and the development of the theistic temple cults of Saivism and Vaisnavism, processes of medieval agrarian expansion and cultic incorporation as well as the spread of early Indian cultural ideas in Southeast Asia. In addition to assigned secondary readings students will read select primary sources on the history of religion and culture of early India, including Vedic and Buddhist texts, Puranas and medieval temple inscriptions. Major objectives of the course will be to draw attention to India’s early cultural and religious past and to assess contemporary concerns and ideologies in influencing our understanding and representation of that past.
For BA Students: History and Tradition Sector
Taught by: Ali
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 004 India’s Literature: Love, War, Wisdom and Humor
This course introduces students to the extraordinary quality of literary production during the past four millennia of South Asian civilization. We will read texts in translation from all parts of South Asia up to the sixteenth century. We will read selections from hymns, lyric poems, epics, wisdom literature, plays, political works, and religious texts.
For BA Students: Arts and Letters Sector
Taught by: Patel
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 005 Performing Arts in South Asia
This course is a survey of selected traditions of theater, music, and dance in India and surrounding regions. Topics include ritual practices, theater, classical dance, classical music, devotional music, regional genres, and contemporary popular musics. Readings and lectures are supplemented by audio and visual materials and live performances. The aim of the course is to expose students to a variety of performance practices from this part of the world and to situate the performing arts in their social and cultural contexts. The course has no prerequisites.
For BA Students: Arts and Letters Sector
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit
SAST 006 Hindu Mythology
Premodern India produced some of the world’s greatest myths and stories: tales of gods, goddesses, heroes, princesses, kings and lovers that continue to capture the imaginations of millions of readers and hearers. In this course, we will look closely at some of these stories especially as found in Purana-s, great compendia composed in Sanskrit, including the chief stories of the central gods of Hinduism: Visnu, Siva, and the Goddess. We will also consider the relationship between these texts and the earlier myths of the Vedas and the Indian Epics, the diversity of the narrative and mythic materials within and across different texts, and the re-imagining of these stories in the modern world.
For BA Students: Arts and Letters Sector
Taught by: Patel
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 007 Introduction to Modern South Asian Literatures
This course will provide a wide-ranging introduction to the literatures of South Asia from roughly 1500 to the present, as well as an exploration of their histories and impact on South Asian society today. How are literary movements and individual works - along with the attitudes towards religion, society, and culture associated with them - still influential in literature, film, and popular culture? How have writers across time and language engaged with questions of caste, gender, and identity? We will read from the rich archive of South Asian writing in translation - from languages that include Braj, Urdu, Bangla, and Tamil - to consider how these literatures depict their own society while continuing to resonate across time and space. Topics of discussion will include the Bhakti poetries of personal devotion, the literature of Dalits - formerly referred to as the Untouchables - and the ways in which literature addresses contemporary political and social problems. Students will leave this course with a sense of the contours of the literatures of South Asia as well as ways of exploring the role of these literatures in the larger world. No prior knowledge of South Asia is required; this course fulfills the cross-cultural analysis requirement.
Taught by: Goulding
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 008 India: Culture and Society
What makes India INDIA? Religion and Philosophy? Architectural splendor? Kingdoms? Caste? The position of women? This course will introduce students to India by studying a range of social and cultural institutions that have historically assumed to be definitive India. Through primary texts, novels and historical sociological analysis, we will ask how these institutions have been reproduced and transformed, and assess their significance for contemporary Indian society.
For BA Students: Humanities and Social Science S
Taught by: Sreenivasan
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Lecture
0 Course Units

SAST 009 Introduction to Hinduism
This course introduces students to the history, texts, philosophies and rituals of South Asia's oldest living religious traditions, represented today by the term "Hinduism." At the same time, it problematizes the idea of a monolithic "Hindu Tradition," in favor of an approach that recognizes several distinct, dynamic, yet symbiotic Hindu religious cultures. The course also places emphasis on the vitality of today's Hinduism(s), and the various historical, ritual, cultural, and social contexts that they represent and constitute. The course is organized around six modules: (1) Issues in the Academic Study of Hinduism; (2) Sanskrit (textual) tradition; (3) Philosophy; (4) Theology; (5) Ritual; and (6) Modernity and Contemporary Politics.
Taught by: Soneji
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 012 Spices, Gunpowder, and Pagodas: A History of Southeast Asia
This undergraduate course introduces students to the history of Southeast Asia from the earliest centuries of the Common Era to c.1950. It introduces students to Southeast Asia as religion, constituent historical societies of the region, and to the major academic literature and debates pertaining to the historical development of Southeast Asian societies and the region. Key themes explored include the origins and character of early civilizations, ideas and ideology about power and prowess, material culture, the transformation of ethnic, class, and gender relations, the impact of the arrival of world religions and early European expansion, and the nature of indigenous responses to the diffusion of new beliefs and ideas and intercultural contact.
Taught by: Sevea
Course not offered every year
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 050 Introduction to Indian Philosophy
This course will take the student through the major topics of Indian philosophy by first introducing the fundamental concepts and terms that are necessary for a deeper understanding of themes that pervade the philosophical literature of India – arguments for and against the existence of God, for example, the ontological status of external objects, the means of valid knowledge, standards of proof, the discourse on the aims of life. The readings will emphasize classical Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain philosophical articulations (from 700 B.C.E to 16th century CE) but we will also supplement our study of these materials with contemporary or relatively recent philosophical writings in modern India.
Taught by: Patel
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 054 Gods, Rebels, and Devotion in South Asia
Taught by: Mohammad
Course not offered every year
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit
SAST 057 Planning to be Off-shore?
Freshman Seminar. In this course we will trace the economic development of India from 1947 to the present. Independent India started out as a centrally planned economy in 1949 but in 1991 decided to reduce its public sector and allow, indeed encourage, foreign investors to come in. The Planning Commission of India still exists but has lost much of its power. Many in the U.S. complain of American jobs draining off to India, call centers in India taking care of American customer complaints, American patient histories being documented in India, etc. At the same time, the U.S. government encourages highly trained Indians to be in the U.S. Students are expected to write four one-page response papers and one final paper. Twenty percent of the final grade will be based on class participation, 20 percent on the four response papers and 60 percent on the final paper.
Taught by: Gangulee
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

Sugar and Spices. Tea and Coffee. Opium and Cocaine. Hop aboard the Indian Ocean dhows, Chinese junks, Dutch schooners, and British and American clipper ships that made possible the rise of global capitalism, new colonial relationships, and the intensified forms of cultural change. How have the desires to possess and consume particular commodities shaped cultures and the course of modern history? This class introduces students to the cultural history of the modern world through an interdisciplinary analysis of connections between East and West, South and North. Following the circulation of commodities and the development of modern capitalism, the course examines the impact of global exchange on interactions and relationships between regions, nations, cultures, and peoples and the influences on cultural practices and meanings. The role of slavery and labor migrations, colonial and imperial relations, and struggles for economic and political independence are also considered. From the role of spices in the formation of European joint stock companies circa 1600 to the contemporary cocaine trade, the course's use of both original primary sources and secondary readings written by historians and anthropologists will enable particular attention to the ways that global trade has impacted social, cultural, and political formations and practices throughout the world.
For BA Students: Humanities and Social Science S
Taught by: Mitchell
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 104 BeginningTabla I
An introduction to the tabla, the premier drum of north Indian and Pakistani classical music traditions.
Taught by: Bhatti
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 105 BeginningTabla II
A continuation of Tabla I, also open to beginning students.
Taught by: Bhatti
Course usually offered in spring term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 106 Beginning Sitar I
This course is an introduction to the repertoire and performance practices of the North Indian sitar. Fundamentals of sitar technique, composition, and improvisation are presented and practiced in class. Class lectures and discussions, audio and video material, and reading and listening assignments on selected topics supplement practice, to provide an overview of the social and historical context and the formal structures of North Indian music in general. There are no prerequisites for the course, but some experience with instrumental or vocal music is suggested. Each student is expected to put in two hours of individual practice per week, and complete reading, audio, and written assignments. The class gives a group performance at the end of the semester.
Taught by: Miner
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 107 Beginning Sitar II
This is the second semester of a performance course in the North Indian sitar. Students who have not taken the first semester but play any musical instrument are permitted to join. Principles of composition and improvisation will be explored in practice and supplemented by readings and listening. The class gives a group performance at the end of the semester.
Taught by: Miner
Course usually offered in spring term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 108 Intermediate Sitar I
This is a performance course open to students who have completed both semesters of Beginning Sitar, or to others by permission from the instructor. Students will work with right and left-hand techniques, study three ragas in depth, learn the contours of several other ragas, and work with concepts of tala, composition, and improvisation. Assigned readings and listenings will complement the performed material. A group performance will be given at the end of the semester.
Taught by: Miner
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 109 Intermediate Sitar II
This is a continuation of an intermediate performance course in the North Indian sitar. It is open to students by permission of the instructor. Students who play other instruments and have had at least a beginning level of training in Hindustani music may also join, with the permission of the instructor.
Taught by: Miner
Course usually offered in spring term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit
SAST 112 Religion and Cinema in India
This seminar examines key themes in the study of religion and Indian cinema. The aim of the seminar is to foreground discussions of performativity, visual culture, representation, and politics in the study of modern South Asian religions. Themes include mythological cinema, gender and sexuality, censorship and the state, and communalism and secularism. The films we will be deploying as case studies will be limited to those produced in Hindi, Telugu and Tamil (the three largest cinema cultures of India). No knowledge of any South Asian language is needed for this course however.
Taught by: Soneji
Course not offered every year
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 116 Music Cultures of North India and Pakistan
A great variety of song and instrumental genres have thrived in the Hindu and Muslim milieus of North India and Pakistan. In this course we examine a selection of urban and rural musics, such as instrumental music in Baluchistan, qawwals in Delhi, the garba of Gujarat, ballad singing of Rajasthan and the urban music of Calcutta. We will explore the sounds, poetry, historical, and social contexts of chosen genres and trace aspects of continuity and adaptation in the changing environment of contemporary South Asia. Readings are supplemented by audio-visual material and live performances.
Taught by: Miner
Course not offered every year
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 120 Literature of the South Asian City: Space, Culture, Politics
The South Asian city as a way of organizing space and social relations, as a symbol, as a memories the subject of this course. Through primarily, though by no means exclusively, readings of literature in translation, we will gain a sense for the history of the city and the ways in which it is a setting for protest and nostalgia, social transformation and solitary flâneurie. We will see reflections of the city in poetry recited in its cafes, plays staged in its theaters, and films produced in its backlots. Readings will attempt to address urban spaces across South Asia, and will include works by writers such as Mirza Ghalib, Rabindranath Tagore, Saadat Hasan Manto, and Vijay Tendulkar. We will examine these works in the context of secondary readings, including histories and ethnological works that take up life in the modern city. Students will finish this course prepared to pursue projects dealing with the urban from multiple disciplinary perspectives. This course is suitable for anyone interested in the culture, society, or literature of South Asia, and assumes no background in South Asian languages.
Taught by: Goulding
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 124 Narrative Across Cultures
The purpose of this course is to present a variety of narrative genres and to discuss and illustrate the modes whereby they can be analyzed. We will be looking at shorter types of narrative: short stories, novellas, and fables, and also some extracts from longer works such as autobiographies. While some works will come from the Anglo-American tradition, a larger number will be selected from European and non-Western cultural traditions and from earlier time-periods. The course will thus offer ample opportunity for the exploration of the translation of cultural values in a comparative perspective.
For BA Students: Arts and Letters Sector
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 139 Introduction to Islam
This course is an introduction to Islam as a religion as it exists in societies of the past as well as the present. It explores the many ways in which Muslims have interpreted and put into practice the prophetic message of Muhammad through historical and social analyses of varying theological, philosophical, legal, political, mystical and literary writings, as well as through visual art and music. The aim of the course is to develop a framework for explaining the sources and symbols through which specific experiences and understandings have been signified as Islamic, both by Muslims and by other peoples with whom they have come into contact, with particular emphasis given to issues of gender, religious violence and changes in beliefs and behaviors which have special relevance for contemporary society.
Taught by: Elias
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 142 Introduction to Buddhism
This course seeks to introduce students to the diversity of doctrines held and practices performed by Buddhists in Asia. By focusing on how specific beliefs and practices are tied to particular locations and particular times, we will be able to explore in detail the religious institutions, artistic, architectural, and musical traditions, textual production and legal and doctrinal developments of Buddhism over time and within its socio-historical context. Religion is never divorced from its place and its time. Furthermore, by geographically and historically grounding the study of these religions we will be able to examine how their individual ethic, cosmological and soteriological systems effect local history, economics, politics, and material culture. We will concentrate first on the person of the Buddha, his many biographies and how he has been followed and worshipped in a variety of ways from Lhasa, Tibet to Phrae, Thailand. From there we touch on the foundational teachings of the Buddha with an eye to how they have evolved and transformed over time. Finally, we focus on the practice of Buddhist ritual, magic and ethics in monasteries and among aliy communities in Asia and even in the West. This section will confront the way Buddhists have thought of issues such as ‘Just-War’, Women’s Rights and Abortion. While no one quarter course could provide a detailed presentation of the beliefs and practices of Buddhism, my hope is that we will be able to look closely at certain aspects of these religions by focusing on how they are practiced in places like Nara, Japan or Vietnam, Laos.
Taught by: McDaniel
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit
SAST 144 Modern Islam and Poetry
This course focuses on a basic question: How and why a modern poem turns into a narrative device to debate contemporary Islamic discourses? We begin exploring this question by taking note of how a 12th-century Persian poet Rumi became - as described by Time magazine - "the best-selling poet in the US today," and then introduces students to poems and various social, cultural and religious moments that were key in the making of modern Islam. Although the course primarily emphasizes the study of poetry produced and circulated among various Muslim communities world-wide, it also covers a diverse set of secondary readings from the field of religious studies, anthropology and literature to outline more clearly the contours of contemporary Islam. Readings begin with internationally famous Rumi and then include poets emerging from Arabic, Persian, Urdu, and several vernacular literary cultures in both Muslim and non-Muslim countries.
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 146 Islam in the Modern World
This course explores the ways in which some of the biggest issues in human life are dealt with across religious traditions. Beginning with important questions of sexual identity, politics, religion and the individual in contemporary life, we will examine questions of eroticism, sex and love as they are reflected in religious literature, art and history. The concept of divine love and religious devotion will be explored in relation to acts of violence, including human sacrifice and self-sacrifice in the form of martyrdom seen in pre-modern concepts of saintly martyrdom and religious chivalry as well as the religious legitimacy of modern self-sacrifice of soldiers in war and terrorist suicides. The course focuses in particular on examples drawn from Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Mesoamerican Religion, although discussions of contemporary issues will be conducted with a broader sweep. Important questions considered in this course include: how does the body function as the locus in which religion is enacted? What is the conflict between our agency over our bodies and socio-religious claims over the individual? Is violence an integral part of religion? What are religious understandings of the relationship between love and sex? How can a human being love gods erotically?
Taught by: Elias, J
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 147 Love, Sex & Power
This course usually offered in spring term
Course not offered every year
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 169 Merchants, Saints, Slaves and Sojourners: the Worlds of the Indian Ocean
Do oceans serve to divide and demarcate distinct cultures and regions? Or do they facilitate exchange, connection and cosmopolitanism? This course will explore the manner in which the Indian Ocean has played both roles throughout history, and how the nature of those divisions and connections has changed over time from the ancient to the modern world. We will reconstruct the intertwined mercantile, religious and kinship networks that spanned the Indian Ocean world, across the Middle East, East Africa, South Asia, Southeast Asia and China, illuminating the histories of Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam, while also considering the role of successive imperial political formations, from Rome to Britain. Throughout the semester we will seek to understand the Indian Ocean through the people who lived and worked in its milieu - from consuls and military commanders, to traders, brokers, sailors, prisoners and slaves. Course materials will draw on a variety of disciplines (anthropology, archaeology, material culture, religious studies) to construct the cultural, economic, and environmental history of the Indian Ocean.
Taught by: Petrie
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 170 Asian American Psychology
Using a cultural perspective, this course is intended to provide knowledge of Asian American personality, identity, and its relationship to mental well being; analyze psycho-social research pertinent to Asian Americans; and develop critical thinking skills on Asian American issues through experiential learning/discussions.
Taught by: Kumar, M
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 189 Islam and the West
How did Muslims and modern South Asia interact with the West? What Islamic idioms, orientations and movements emerged in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries? Was South Asia a prominent global center of Islam? What kinds of Islamic educational institutions developed in modern South Asia? How did Muslims appropriate technologies? What materials were printed by Muslims? Were Muslims part of the British army? What was jihad in modernity? How did Muslim 'modernists' and 'traditionalists' respond to the challenges of colonialism and modernity? What was the nature of Sufism in modern South Asia? What was the nature of political Islam in South Asia? How did some Muslims demand a Muslim State? What was the Partition? How has Muslim history been remembered in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan? This is an introductory course, and aims to introduce students to a facet of the long history of Islam, Muslims, and the West.
Taught by: Sevea
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 199 Independent Study
Directed Study for Undergraduates
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Independent Study
0.5 Course Units
SAST 200 Introduction to Art in South Asia
This course is a survey of sculpture, painting and architecture in the Indian sub-continent from 2300 B.C., touching on the present. It attempts to explore the role of tradition in the broader history of art in India, but not to see India as 'traditional' or unchanging. The Indian sub-continent is the source for multi-cultural civilizations that have lasted and evolved for several thousand years. Its art is as rich and complex as that of Europe, and as diverse. This course attempts to introduce the full range of artistic production in India in relation to the multiple strands that have made the cultural fabric of the sub-continent so rich and long lasting.
For BA Students: Arts and Letters Sector
Course not offered every year
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 208 Doing Research: Qualitative Methods and Research Design
This interdisciplinary course introduces students to qualitative research methods and frameworks in the social sciences and humanities. Students will learn how to frame an effective research question, situate it in relation to existing research, select the most appropriate methods for addressing the question, and develop an effective research plan. Each week students will be introduced to a new set of frameworks for analysis, see specific examples of their application drawn from anthropological, historical, and related scholarship and have opportunities to practice applying and evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of specific methodological tools. The goals of the semester will be for each student to develop their own research proposal for a specific project. Students will be introduced to a range of textual, archival and media collections and databases available at Penn, with particular attention to South Asia and other specific regions of interest to course participants. Students will also have the opportunity to identify sources of funding for summer and/or thesis research projects, and submit applications for these opportunities as part of the course. The course is ideal for students considering summer research, an undergraduate thesis, or an application to the Fulbright or other research program. It may be taken by itself as a freestanding course, or may be sequenced with SAST 209, Writing Research, the following fall semester.
Taught by: Mitchell
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 217 CU In India - Topics Course
C.U. in India is a hybrid, domestic/overseas course series which provides students with the opportunity to have an applied learning and cultural experience in India or South East Asia where students participate in 1) 28 classroom hours in the Fall term 2) a 12-day trip to India or South East Asia with the instructor during the winter break visiting key sites and conducting original research (sites vary) 3) 28 classroom hours at Penn in the Spring term and 4) a research paper, due at the end of the Spring term. Course enrollment is limited to students admitted to the program. For more information and the program application go to http://sites.sas.upenn.edu/cuinindia This is a 2-CU yearlong course
Two terms. student must enter first term.
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 241 Religion and Poetry of South Asia
This course is designed to introduce students to the wide array of devotional and mystical literatures of pre-modern South Asia. We will focus on the texts, practices, and discourses of the religious and literary communities which create these forms of literature, placing them within social and historical contexts. Topics covered include the formation of Sufi silsilahs in India, Krishna bhakti and the Vais?ava sects, Kabir, Guru Nanak and the Sikhs, Tulsidas's Ramcaritmanas, and other texts in translation.
Course not offered every year
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 247 Gender and Sexuality in Hinduism
Issues related to gender and sexuality occupy a complex, often contradictory place in Hinduism. Sexual desire, sexual activity, and the body are simultaneously celebrated, manipulated, controlled, and restricted. This fundamental ambiguity is at the core of this course, which concerns itself with religious perspectives on the body, gender and sexual activity in Hinduism. Topics include: dharma, morality, and sexual practice; menstruation; pregnancy and childbirth; Bhakti and Tantra; same-sex relations; masculinities; hijras and the notion of the "third sex"; eroticism in the literary, visual, and performing arts; colonialism; and somatic nationalism.
Taught by: Soneji
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
SAST 249 Re-enchanting Modernity: A Guide to Sufism in South Asia
This undergraduate level course introduces students to Sufism in modern South Asia, with a particular focus on how Muslim 'mystics' and their 'mystical' methods interacted with modernity, colonialism, technological developments and globalization. This course is divided into three parts. In the first part of this course, students are provided with an overview of the theological and historical background of the dominant expression of Islam that came to be identified as 'Sufism' or 'Islamic mysticism', the historical development of Sufi institutions and spaces in South Asia, and the historical emergence of South Asia as a prominent global center of Sufism. The second and main part of this course introduces students to a range of anthropological and historical works that are revelatory about how Sufi in modern South Asia were and remain intimately connected to modern political and technological developments. Providing students with an overview of Sufi re-enchantments of modernity from the 19th to 21st century, this section of the course focuses upon Sufi movements and masters who perpetuated or defended customary Islam through sophisticated appropriations of technologies and print networks, and negotiations with non-Muslim rulers and societies. Moreover, students will be introduced to anthropological and historical scholarship on religious worlds in modern South Asia that were and remain steeped in 'customary Islam' and Sufi performances and interpretations of Islam. These sources reveal how 'mystical' methods of performing Islam through ecstasy and spiritual restoration, and interpretations of dreams and visions, have regularly interacted with contemporaneous technologies. The third part of this course introduces students to the globalisation of South Asian Sufism in North America, Europe and Southeast Asia. Herein, students will be encouraged to engage with anthropological and literary works pertaining to itinerant South Asian Sufi masters and their devotional cults, and introduced to active South Asian Sufi centers in Philadelphia.
Taught by: Sevea
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 250 History of Hinduism
This course will explore the history of the religion(s) designated by the term 'Hinduism' from their earliest articulations down to the rise of modern reforms in the nineteenth century. The study of Hinduism is perhaps unique among the scholarly traditions on world religions in that it has to date had no serious connected account of its historical development, as scholars have preferred to take structural, sociological, phenomenological, and doctrinal approaches to the religion. The course, after a brief review of scholarly approaches to Hinduism and their interpretive legacies, will seek to develop a historical sense of the religion through attention to shifts in liturgy, ritual, theology, doctrine, sacral kingship, and soteriology. The course will include the reading of primary sources relevant to understanding these changes as well as highlight both modern and premodern traditions of their interpretation. It will also consider and assess some of the key interpretive ideas in the study of Hinduism, including, Sanskritization, Great and Little Traditions, cult formation, regional and popular religious movements, and canon formation. There will also be sustained consideration of the question of religion and socio-political power as well as relations between Hinduism and other religions like Buddhism and Islam.
Taught by: Soneji
Course not offered every year
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 251 Muslim Sainthood Practices
This course aims at introducing various classical, popular and modern Muslim saints in South Asia. We will read the life stories of these saints and focus on their contribution to various religions in South Asia. We will read the life stories of these saints and focus on their contribution to various religions in South Asia. We will learn about the major concepts initiated and circulated by these saints and their distinctive ways of dealing with spiritual aspects. While focusing on their sainthood practices, we also study the nature of the dialogue which addresses the questions such as pluralism, localism, and a new paradigm of spirituality that continually interacts with diverse modes of everyday life in South Asia. In order to understand their impact on visual and media cultures, we also watch two documentaries and compare these visual sources with sainthood literature and practices.
Taught by: Mohammad, M.A.
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 252 Music, Religion, Ritual in South and Southeast Asia.
What role does music play in articulating religious identities and spaces? What is the importance of ritual musics as they persist and change in the modern world? How does music reflect and articulate religious ways of thinking and acting? In this course, we explore these and other questions about the interrelations between music, religion, and ritual in South and Southeast Asia. Focusing on India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, and Indonesia, the course emphasizes musics from Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim and Christian traditions; nevertheless, it draws widely to touch upon sacred musics in Pakistan, Nepal, Burma, Thailand, Vietnam, and among some indigenous peoples in the region. Throughout, we explore ontologies of sound; sonic occurrences in religious structures, public processions, and pilgrimage sites; the construction of religion and ritual as ideas forged through colonial encounter and modern scholarship on religion; the politics of sacred sounds in today’s public spaces and contemporary media, such as television and online; and the surprising fluidity between popular and sacred musical genres.
Taught by: Sykes
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit
SAST 262 The Making of Medieval India
This course will provide an in-depth understanding of South Asia in what is often called its 'medieval' period—from the rise of the great temple kingdoms until the end of the Delhi Sultanate in the sixteenth century (c. 500 CE - c. 1500 CE). This millennium is arguably one of the most transformative in South Asia's history, a period when many of its most distinctive social and cultural features evolved. The course will provide both an overview of the period as well as an introduction to major interpretations and types of sources (textual, visual, and archaeological). The focus throughout the course will be on the heterogeneous development of states, societies and cultures with special attention to long-term processes of transformation. One set of themes explored will be largely social and economic, focusing on the development of agrarian and peasant societies, aristocracies and intellectuals, as well as the role of mercantile, pastoralist, nomadic and forest-living groups. Another set of themes will explore cultural transformation, including the development, transformation and interaction of religious practices, the emergence of cosmopolitan and regional literary cultures, and the rise of distinctive urban, courtly, and rural world views. Special themes of discussion may include violence and manners, material cultures, religious conflict, devotional religion and gender relations.

Taught by: Ali
Course not offered every year
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 269 Migration and the Middle East
This reading and discussion-intensive seminar examines the phenomenon of migration into, out of, within, and across the Middle East and North Africa. We will focus on the period from the late nineteenth century to the present, and will emphasize the cultural (rather than economic) consequences of migration. Along the way we will trace connections between the Middle East and other regions— notably the Americas, sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, the Caucasus, and Western Europe. Readings are interdisciplinary and include works of history, anthropology, sociology, medical research, literature, political science, geography, and human rights advocacy. As students develop final projects on topics of their choice, we will spend time throughout the semester discussing tactics for research and writing.

Taught by: Sharkey
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

Notes: This is a topics course and will vary from year to year.

SAST 290 South Asians in the United States
This course investigates the everyday practices and customs of South Asians in America. Every immigrant group has its own history, customs, beliefs and values, making each unique while simultaneously a part of the "melting pot" or salad bowl of American society. Yet how do people define themselves and their ethnicities living in a diasporic context? By taking into account the burgeoning South Asian American population as our model, this course will explore the basic themes surrounding the lives that immigrants are living in America, and more specifically the identity which the second generation, born and/or raised in American, is developing. South Asians in the U.S. will be divided thematically covering the topics of ethnicity, marriage, gender, religion, and pop culture. Reading and assignments will discuss a variety of issues and viewpoints that are a part of the fabric of South Asia, but will focus on the interpretation of such expressive culture in the United States.

Taught by: Khan
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 293 Caste & Class in South Asia
This course will explore the reality of caste and class in South Asian society, and the theories, classical and modern, that attempt to explain it. We shall survey a wide sweep of sources, from the earliest evidence for a division into caste-classes in the Rig-Veda to reports in modern media of caste-related social problems; from orthodox Hindu normative texts justifying and upholding a rigid hierarchical division of society to voices, in Sanskrit and in vernaculars, criticizing the caste system. Our goal is to gain a nuanced and many-sided insight into a deeply pervasive phenomenon that has shaped South Asian society, culture, and religion in general (Muslim, Sikh, and Christain castes) from ancient time up to the twentieth century.

Taught by: Sreenivasan
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 297 Nature Culture Environmentalism: Urban Water
In Spring 2018, this course is specially designed to appeal to students with interests in urban studies and environmental studies across different disciplines. We will explore the nature, cultures and environmentalisms of cities by exploring the matter of urban water. Cities have long been made through historic projects to tame the unruly relations between land and water. As the catastrophic human disasters in Houston, Florida and Puerto Rico have recently shown, these relations are today everywhere being unsettled and exacerbated by climate change. In cities as diverse as Philadelphia and Mumbai, climate change promises to exacerbate social inequalities and further squeeze non-human natures. How is the urban environment produced, magnified, divided and shrunk with water? In these times, how might we make space for social justice and non-human natures in and along rising urban waters?

Taught by: Anand, N
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 300 Directed Study
This course is required for all senior honors majors, and open to senior majors. Honors majors must, in addition, prepare a research paper. One-term course offered either term
Activity: Independent Study
1 Course Unit
SAST 312 20th Century South Asian Art
Topic varies. Spring 2015: Using resources of the Philadelphia Museum of Art’s exceptional collection, this workshop will explore India’s remarkable traditions of sculpture produced for singular narrative and iconic ends.
Taught by: Meister
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 324 Sanskrit Literature in Translation
This course will focus solely on the specific genres, themes, and aesthetics of Sanskrit literature (the hymn, the epic, the lyric, prose, drama, story literature, the sutra, etc.) and a study of the history and specific topics of Sanskrit poetics and dramaturgy. All readings will be in translation.
Taught by: Patel
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 334 A Survey of Sanskrit, Pakrit, and Classical Tamil Literature in Translation
This course will cover most of the genres of literature in South Asia’s classical languages through close readings of selections of primary texts in English translation. Special focus will be given to epics, drama, lyric poetry, satirical works, and religious literature.
Taught by: Patel
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 340 Religious Bodies and Sex in South Asia
This graduate-level course introduces students to the writings of key religious scholars in modern South Asia who associated the regeneration of Hinduism, Islam, and Sikhism with the cultivation of bodies and sexual practices. Particular attention will be paid towards religious texts produced in modern India, Pakistan and Bangladesh pertaining to sexual bodies, exercises and health; celibacy; body-building; the transmission of sexual knowledge; and the political roles of the ‘Hindu’, ‘Muslim’ and ‘Sikh’ body. In this course, students will be encouraged to engage a range of sources including religio-sexual manuals, autobiographies, novels, speeches, pamphlets, official records, recipes and films. Moreover, students will be introduced to the academic literature on South Asian religious scholars and ‘sex gurus’ in South and Southeast Asia; religious sexuality in South Asia, Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Europe; and, the transcultural literary networks that led to the production of religio-sexual texts in modern South Asia.
Taught by: Sevea, T
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 400 Beginning Hindi-Urdu Online (Startalk)
This introductory, proficiency-based course covers the core content of first-year Hindi-Urdu. It is designed for students with little or no prior exposure to Hindi or Urdu. The course covers all four language skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing), but there is a special focus on developing speaking and listening skills. Students will also develop literacy skills in one script of their choice (Hindi or Urdu script). All written materials will be provided in both scripts. All classes are interactive and students acquire the language by using it in realistic contexts. Culture is introduced through various authentic materials including Bollywood songs. This program has a special application process. Please visit our website (https:/www.southasiacentner.upenn.edu/startalk) for more information on the program and how to apply.
Taught by: Pien, J.
Course usually offered summer term only
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit
Notes: This is a summer online course known also as Startalk.

SAST 405 Beginning Pashtu I
The first semester is focused on mastering the writing system, basic structures, and simple conversation using texts, writing samples, and numerous structure and dialogue drills. We remain within the present and future tenses only, developing vocabulary with lessons and discussions centered around greetings, family, weather, foods, and directions. Students use authentic online and textbook materials.
For BA Students: Language Course
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit
Notes: Offered through Penn Language Center

SAST 406 Beginning Pashtu Part II
The second semester covers more advanced structures with reinforcing drills, and begin reading longer texts of an assorted variety, mostly short stories and some news articles. The past tense is introduced, as well as longer more complex texts. Topics within simple simulated contexts (taxi, hotel, restaurant, food shopping, time, family). Short writing exercises and dictations are expected at this time, as well as simultaneous translations to and from Pashto.
For BA Students: Language Course
Course usually offered in spring term
Prerequisites: Beginning Pashtu Part I or equivalent ascertained through placement test or permission of instructor.
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
Notes: Offered through Penn Language Center.
SAST 407 Beginning Kannada Part I
This is a systematic introduction to the Kannada language and culture for beginners. The course aims at developing listening and comprehension and a real life interactive speaking ability in a variety of everyday topics. The Kannada script is introduced from the beginning and the language is presented in its socio-cultural context for achieving a meaningful and operational control of the language. Students acquire basic rules for structural and socio-cultural appropriateness. Students learn vocabulary related to a variety of topics during the semester. Class activities include watching videos, role-playing, language games and group work. Evaluation is based on class participation, performance in quizzes and tests and completed assignments.
For BA Students: Language Course
Taught by: Swaminathan
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit
Notes: Offered through Penn Language Center

SAST 408 Beginning Kannada Part II
This is a systematic introduction to the Kannada language and culture for beginners. The course aims at developing listening and comprehension and a real life interactive speaking ability in a variety of everyday topics. The Kannada script is introduced from the beginning and the language is presented in its socio-cultural context for achieving a meaningful and operational control of the language. Students acquire basic rules for structural and socio-cultural appropriateness. Students learn vocabulary related to a variety of topics during the semester. Class activities include watching videos, role-playing, language games and group work. Evaluation is based on class participation, performance in quizzes and tests and completed assignments.
For BA Students: Language Course
Taught by: Swaminathan
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit
Notes: Offered through Penn Language Center

SAST 410 Beginning Marathi Part I
The first year course in Marathi begins with learning the Devnagari script which is common for other important languages like Hindi and Nepali. With proper emphasis on grammar, vocabulary, and phonetics, the syllabus will see the student becoming able to speak conversational Marathi, read Marathi data from the Internet, and compose simple short essays on selected topics.
For BA Students: Language Course
Taught by: Ranade
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit
Notes: Offered through Penn Language Center

SAST 411 Beginning Marathi Part II
Simple sentences in the present tense, narration (spoken as well written) of day to day activities, expressing likes & dislikes, culturally appropriate greetings and addressing, ability to describe events happening in present and present incomplete tense, consolidation of reading and writing skill acquired in the previous semester as well as proper pronunciations of common usage words and phrases. Speaking practices based upon the My Marathi Text book created by University of Mumbai.
For BA Students: Language Course
Taught by: Ranade
Course usually offered in spring term
Prerequisite: Beginning Marathi Part I or equivalent ascertained through placement test or permission of instructor
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit
Notes: Offered through Penn Language Center

SAST 412 Intermediate Marathi Part I
Intermediate Marathi builds up upon the Beginning Level of Marathi. Gaining ability to speak about past and future is the most important skill in the intermediate course. Students learn the grammar, vocabulary, sentence structures to narrate and write in simple language about their experiences, short anecdotes, their observations and opinions and future plans.
For BA Students: Language Course
Taught by: Ranade
Course usually offered in fall term
Prerequisite: Beginning Marathi Part II or equivalent ascertained through placement test or permission of instructor
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 413 Intermediate Marathi Part II
In the syllabus for the fourth semester Marathi course gaining language inputs regarding Marathi culture and day to day daily life in Maharashtra becomes one important topic. Day to day communication skills necessary to survive in Maharashtra on the street like interaction with a grocery store clerk or a vegetable sales woman in the market, a rikshaw driver, a policeman, a commoner, asking and providing directions on the street and various day to day real life situations are improvised and practiced. Vocabulary, sentence structures and associated grammar is acquired during practice and real life situations based exercises.
For BA Students: Last Language Course
Taught by: Renade
Course usually offered in spring term
Prerequisites: Intermediate Marathi Part II or equivalent ascertained through placement test or permission of instructor
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
SAST 421 Intermediate Urdu
In Intermediate Urdu, the curriculum focuses on the development of reading, listening and speaking skills. Although there are short assignments for writing in Urdu, the emphasis on developing writing as a skill is not part of the course objectives. Authentic texts in the three skills include conversations, short stories, current events, articles, films and plays. There is a continuous emphasis on vocabulary development and students are expected to add about five hundred new words to their active vocabulary per semester. The rules of grammar for structural accuracy and socio-cultural propriety are parts of the regular curriculum. Class activities include students’ short presentations, role-plays, singing and conversations. There are weekly assignments and quizzes, a mid-term and a final examination. The final evaluation will rest on class participation, performance in quizzes and tests, and completed assignments. This is a two-semester course.
Taught by: Menai
Two terms. Student must enter first term.
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit
Notes: Offered through Penn Language Center.

SAST 425 Intermediate Pashtu Part I
A more in-depth study of the Pashto language. Reading, writing, speaking, and listening comprehension are all stressed in this more advanced course which also builds on the grammar of beginning level.
For BA Students: Language Course
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit
Notes: Offered through Penn Language Center.

SAST 426 Intermediate Pashtu Part II
The second semester of intermediate study and a more in-depth study of the Pashto language. Reading, writing, speaking, and listening comprehension are all stressed in this more advanced course which also continues to build on gramer skills.
Two terms. Student must enter first term.
Prerequisites: Intermediate Pashtu Part I or equivalent ascertained through placement test or permission of instructor.
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
Notes: Offered through Penn Language Center.

SAST 427 Intermediate Kannada Part I
This course continues the study of the Kannada language and culture from where the beginners II course ended. The course continues developing listening and comprehension and a real life interactive speaking ability in a variety of everyday topics. The Kannada script is learned in its socio-cultural context for achieving a meaningful and operational control of the language. Students acquire rules for structural and socio-cultural appropriateness. Students learn vocabulary related to a variety of topics during the semester. Class activities include watching videos, role-playing, language games and group work. Evaluation is based on class participation, performance in quizzes and tests and completed assignments.
For BA Students: Language Course
Taught by: Sundaram
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit
Notes: Offered through Penn Language Center

SAST 428 Intermediate Kannada Part II
Students continue their study of Intermediate Kannada I, both in language and culture. The course aims at honing listening and comprehension and a real life interactive speaking ability in a variety of everyday topics. The Kannada script is learned in its socio-cultural context for achieving a meaningful and operational control of the language. Students acquire basic rules for structural and socio-cultural appropriateness. Students learn vocabulary related to a variety of topics during the semester. Class activities include watching videos, role-playing, language games and group work. Evaluation is based on class participation, performance in quizzes and tests and completed assignments.
For BA Students: Last Language Course
Taught by: Sundaram
Course usually offered in spring term
Prerequisites: Intermediate Kannada Part II or equivalent ascertained through placement test or permission of instructor.
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
Notes: Offered through Penn Language Center.

SAST 447 Advanced Kannada: Selected Topics
Directed topics vary by semester in advanced level Kannada.
Taught by: Rajagopalan
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 449 Advanced Marathi
Theater and Films, Literature and poetry, Folk Songs, Dance and Music; this one semester course will explore the rich Marathi culture as well as will work on increasing the spoken, listening, reading and written proficiency of the students. News stories from the Marathi print media as well as glimpses from Marathi Television, News as well as Serials and popular comedy shows become the authentic materials in this course. Students learn the linguistic as well as cultural aspect of the variety of material through discussions, presentations in which students acquire and use the language to describe, narrate, express their opinions, evaluate, critique and appreciate these aspects of Marathi urban and rural culture.
Taught by: Ranade
Course not offered every year
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 500 Introduction to Art in South Asia
This course is a survey of sculpture, painting and architecture in the Indian sub-continent from 2300 B.C., touching on the present. It attempts to explore the role of tradition in the broader history of art in India, but not to see India as ‘traditional’ or unchanging. The Indian sub-continent is the source for multi-cultural civilizations that have lasted and evolved for several thousand years. Its art is as rich and complex as that of Europe, as diverse. This course attempts to introduce the full range of artistic production in India in relation to the multiple strands that have made the cultural fabric of the sub-continent so rich and long lasting.
Course not offered every year
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit
SAST 503 Historical Transitions In Early India
This course will focus on major historical transitions in the South Asian subcontinent until approximately AD 1200. It will focus on particularly on political, social and liturgical philosophical change. It will also introduce students to the major narratives and interpretations of the ancient and early medieval periods as they bear on these questions and will also familiarize students with the sources upon which this history has been based. It will review debates, critical perspectives and recent trends in this historiography with a view toward developing a sensitivity to the theoretical problems that attend the study of pre-modern India. Its persistent themes will be historical continuity and disjuncture in the history of religious practices and ideas, the emergence of political forms and the nature of the ‘state’ in precolonial India, transformations of society and economy, and the relationship between discursive production and relations of power. It will be of interest to students of history, literature, religion and archaeology.

Taught by: Ali
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 505 Topics in Indian Art
Aspects of sculpture, painting, iconography, or architecture in the Indian sub-continent. Topic varies. Fall 2016: Important as texts have been to South Asia’s history, perceptions of the physical world dominate experience within South Asian cultures. Seeing and being seen, vocalizing and hearing, contribute to the construction of meaning. This pro-seminar will approach South Asia’s perceptual world as expressed and tested by art, and methods to frame art as a source of knowledge.

Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 508 Doing Research: Qualitative Methods and Research Design
This interdisciplinary course introduces students to qualitative research methods and frameworks in the social sciences and humanities. Students will learn how to frame an effective research question, situate it in relation to existing research, select the most appropriate methods for addressing the question, and develop an effective research plan. Each week students will be introduced to a new set of frameworks for analysis, see specific examples of their application drawn from anthropological, historical, and related scholarship and have opportunities to practice applying and evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of specific methodological tools. The goals of the semester will be for each student to develop their own research proposal for a specific project. Students will be introduced to a range of textual, archival and and media collections and databases available at Penn, with particular attention to South Asia and other specific regions of interest to course participants. Students will also have the opportunity to identify sources of funding for summer and/or thesis research projects, and submit applications for these opportunities as part of the course. The course is ideal for students considering summer research, an undergraduate thesis, or an application to the Fulbright or other research program.

Taught by: Mitchell
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 517 CU In India - Topics Course
C.U. in India is a hybrid, domestic/overseas course series which provides students with the opportunity to have an applied learning and cultural experience in India or South East Asia where students participate in 1) 28 classroom hours in the Fall term 2) a 12-day trip to India or South East Asia with the instructor during the winter break visiting key sites and conducting original research (sites vary) 3) 28 classroom hours at Penn in the Spring term and 4) a research paper, due at the end of the Spring term. Course enrollment is limited to students admitted to the program. For more information and the program application go to http://sites.sas.upenn.edu/cuinindia This is a 2-CU yearlong course

Two terms. student must enter first term.
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 534 A Survey of Sanskrit, Pakrit, and Classical Tamil Literature in Translation
Taught by: Patel
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 541 Religion and the Visual Image: Seeing is Believing
Seeing is Believing engages in a historical, theoretical, and cross-cultural analysis of the place of visuality in religion and of religion in visual culture. We will examine images, buildings, places, objects, performances and events. The geographical, cultural and historical scope of the material is broad, including subjects from Europe, the Islamic World, non-Muslim South Asia, the US and Latin America from the medieval period until the present. Theoretical works will be read in conjunction with representative examples to invite intellectual engagement in a socially and historically grounded way. Important issues to be covered include the relationship of visual to material culture; visual theories versus theories of vision; locating religion in human sensory experience; perception at individual and collective levels; authentics, fakes and simulacra; iconoclasm and image veneration; aesthetics, use and utility; and things.

Taught by: Elias
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
SAST 550 History of Hinduism
This course will explore the history of the religion(s) designated by the term 'Hinduism' from their earliest articulations down to the rise of modern reforms in the nineteenth century. The study of Hinduism is perhaps unique among the scholarly traditions on world religions in that it has to date had no serious connected account of its historical development, as scholars have preferred to take structural, sociological, phenomenological, and doctrinal approaches to the religion. The course, after a brief review of scholarly approaches to Hinduism and their interpretive legacies, will seek to develop a historical sense of the religion through attention to shifts in liturgy, ritual, theology, doctrine, sacral kingship, and soteriology. The course will include the reading of primary sources relevant to understanding these changes a well as highlight both modern and premodern traditions of their interpretation. It will also consider and assess some of the key interpretive ideas in the study of Hinduism, including, Sanskritization, Great and Little Traditions, cult formation, regional and popular religious movements, and canon formation. There will also be sustained consideration of the question of religion and socio-political power as well as relations between Hinduism and other religions like Buddhism and Islam.
Taught by: Ali
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 551 Muslim Sainthood Practices
This course aims at introducing various classical, popular and modern Muslim saints in South Asia. We will read the life stories of these saints and focus on their contribution to various religions in South Asia. We will read the life stories of these saints and focus on their contribution to various religions in South Asia. We will learn about the major concepts initiated and circulated by these saints and their distinctive ways of dealing with spiritual aspects. While focusing on this sainthood practices, we also study the nature of the dialogue which addresses the questions such as pluralism, localism, and a new paradigm of spirituality that continually interacts with diverse modes of everyday life in South Asia. In order to understand their impact on visual and media cultures, we also watch two documentaries and compare these visual sources with sainthood literature and practices.
Taught by: Mohammad, M.A.
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 560 Modern History of Pakistan
This course is designed as an introduction to the contemporary history of Afghanistan and Pakistan, with an emphasis on the intertwined history of both countries; their other regional neighbors; and global politics. The course focuses on global trends such as empire, nationalism, the Cold War, superpower competition, and transnational Islamism. At the same time, participants will explore how local people viewed their lives amidst these trends, and how local dynamics on this northwestern fringe of the Subcontinent changed the face of global politics. The readings supplement political and economic history with primary sources drawn from popular poetry, oral narrative, and memoir. Finally, we'll be following current events in the region, and placing them in their sociohistorical context. Therefore, there are two main goals for this course: (1) to introduce the specific history of Afghanistan and Pakistan up to present, and (2) to introduce typologies of social institutions and events, assisting class participants to develop their own frameworks for interpreting current events in the region after the end of the course.
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 562 The Making of Medieval India
This course will provide an in-depth understanding of South Asia in what is often called its 'medieval' period—from the rise of the great temple kingdoms until the end of the Delhi Sultanate in the sixteenth century (c. 500 CE - c. 1500 CE). This millennium is arguably one of the most transformative in South Asia’s history, a period when many of its most distinctive social and cultural features evolved. The course will provide both an overview of the period as well as an introduction to major interpretations and types of sources (textual, visual, and archaeological). The focus throughout the course will be on the heterogeneous development of states, societies and cultures with special attention to long-term processes of transformation. One set of themes explored will be largely social and economic, focusing on the development of agrarian and peasant societies, aristocracies and intellectuals, as well as the role of mercantile, pastoralist, nomadic and forest-living groups. Another set of themes will explore cultural transformation, including the development, transformation and interaction of religious practices, the emergence of cosmopolitan and regional literary cultures, and the rise of distinctive urban, courtly, and rural worldviews. Special themes of discussion may include violence and manners, material cultures, religious conflict, devotional religion and gender relations.
Taught by: Ali
Course not offered every year
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit
SAST 589 Islam and the West
This course introduces students to Islam in modern South Asia, with a particular focus on the development of ‘new’ Muslim religious idioms, orientations, pedagogies and movements in 19th and 20th century South Asia. This course is divided into three parts. In the first part of this course, students are provided with an overview of: Muslim institutions and spaces in pre-colonial South Asia, the historical emergence of South Asia as a prominent global center of Islam, and the development of Urdu as an Islamic idiom. The second and main part of this course introduces students to academic literature concerning sophisticated encounters between the Muslim elite in north India and modern political and technological developments. The intimate interactions of the ‘Mullah’ and the ‘Englishman’ from the 19th to 20th century will thus be revealed to students. This part focuses upon, on the one hand, the role of Islam and pious Muslims in the colonial army, and on the other hand, Muslim initiatives to educate an Islamic ‘modernism’, ‘traditionalism’, ‘fundamentalism’ and ‘Sufism’, and appropriate print technologies for the creation of public spheres. Students will be introduced to historical scholarship revelatory of how these Muslim pedagogies and print initiatives were based upon sophisticated transcultural networks and exchange. In the third part of this course, students will be encouraged to engage with contemporary literature on South Asian Muslim political philosophy and nationalism, and the transcultural intellectual exchanges that produced key Muslim political ideologies.
Taught by: Sevea
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 593 Caste & Class in South Asia
This course will explore the historiography and theory of caste and class in South Asia. While we will survey the evidence from the pre-modern period briefly, the primary focus of the course will be on the period between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries. We will examine the degree to which colonial rule triggered particular kinds of class-oriented and caste-oriented ‘reform’, and the extent to which South Asian actors themselves shaped the nature of such change. The course will also provide an introduction to the work of the Subaltern school historians who have engaged with such questions, and situate them within the wider field of South Asian historiography.
Taught by: Sreenivasan
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 603 Intro To Indian Philos
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 604 Neoliberalism and the City
Over fifty percent of the worlds population now lives in cities. Neoliberalism—the ideology and accompanying policies and practices that champion the shifting of political decision making from the public sector to the private sector—has been widely recognized as having shown dramatic growth worldwide since the 1970s. It has also been widely regarded as a product of globalization. This course traces the history of neo-liberalism in global context with particular attention to neoliberalism’s relationship to cities, and exam the role that urban growth has played in spurring neoliberal policies and practices. It asks how policy makers, voters, and private interest worldwide have responded to the growth of urban poverty and slums, challenges withing urban public education, unequal resource distribution, environmental pressures experienced within urban sanitation and waste disposal systems, and increased demands for municipal services like water, electricity, and transport infrastructers, and examined the rise of public-private partnerships, gated communities, initiatives to privatized education and municipal services, and efforts to relocate slum-dwellers and beautify cities as explicit strategies for attracting “global capital”. The course also asks how the recent rise of neoliberal policies and practices differs from earlier market-driven and private sector led forms of political governance. The British and Dutch East India Companies are two famous examples of joint stock companies that assumed administrative and political roles over their colonies. How did the rise of these colonial relationships differ from current neoliberal shifts. Readings will draw heavily from ethnographic and urban studies, scholarship on South Asia, as well as Latin America, South Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and North America, exploring what each of these specific contexts has to teach us more generally about the relationship between urbanization, global capitalism, public and private sectors, and political processes and decision making.
Taught by: Mitchell
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 617 Readings in Modern Indian History
This course will introduce students to the major themes and debates of modern Indian historiography. Though the course will not provide a survey outline of events, it will be organized around themes that have a broad chronological sequence. It will touch on key topical themes like the transition to colonialism, the development of the colonial economy, the evolution and significance of colonial knowledge systems, the impact and shape of religious and social reform, the rise of nationalism and communalism, and peasant, labour and subaltern history. The goal of the course will be to provide students with an understanding of the significance of debates around key themes in modern Indian history and a familiarity with the different ‘schools’ or ‘traditions’ of historical interpretation, including Nationalist, Marxist, the so-called ‘Chicago’, and ‘Cambridge’ schools, as well as the Subaltern collective and post-Subaltern historiography.
Taught by: Ali
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
SAST 620 Godliness, Miracles, and 'Madness' in Indian Ocean Port Cities
This graduate-level course introduces students to religious worlds within port cities of the modern Indian Ocean that were centered upon peripatetic Muslim, Saiva, Christian and Sikh miracle-workers, missionaries and 'gods'. This course will particularly consider how extant, published sources reveal how religion in 19th and 20th century cosmopolitan port cities and islands: was centered upon holy men and women or spiritual beings, and intricately connected to modern economic, political and technological developments in the Indian Ocean. This course is divided into three parts. In the first part of this course, students will be introduced, on the one hand, to the scholarship on the port cities or islands of, and religions or religious networks in, the modern Indian Ocean. On the other hand, to anthropological, historical and literary works on Muslim saints, Christian missionaries and Saiva gods in the Indian Ocean. In the second and main section of this course, students will be introduced to contemporary academic literature pertaining to the inter-linkages between itinerant miracle-workers, missionaries, 'gods' and devotional cults, and economic, political and technological developments in the Indian Ocean. As well as works that explore European institutions, barracks, plantations, cells and asylums, and and steam travel being steeped in customary religion, carnivals, ecstasy, madness and miracle stories. Here, students will be encouraged to consider ways in which a study of religion and religious economies of modern Indian Ocean port cities can be recovered through extracts from a range of anthropological, literary and historical sources. In the third part of this course, students will be encouraged to engage with the question of whether the religion of devotional cults preoccupied with the powers of Muslim, Saiva, Christian, and Sikh miracle-workers, missionaries and 'gods' in cosmopolitan port cities, was a distinct product of circulations within the Indian Ocean. Taught by: Sevea
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 623 Literary History and Aesthetics in South Asia
This seminar surveys the multiple components of literary culture in South Asia. Students will engage critically with selected studies of literary history and aesthetics from the past two millennia. In order to introduce students to specific literary cultures (classical, regional, contemporary) and to the scholarly practices that situate literature in broader contexts of culture and society, the course will focus both on the literary theories - especially from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries - that position South Asia's literary cultures within broader disciplinary frameworks that use literary documents to inform social, historical, and cultural research projects. The aim is to open up contexts whereby students can develop their own research projects using literary sources. Taught by: Patel
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 624 Sanskrit Literature in Translation
This course will focus solely on the specific genres, themes, and aesthetics of Sanskrit literature (the hymn, the epic, the lyric, prose, drama, story literature, the sutra, etc.) and a study of the history and specific topics of Sanskrit poetics and dramaturgy. All readings will be in translation. Taught by: Patel
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 625 PHILOLOGY AND HISTORY: READING SOUTH ASIAN TEXTS
Taught by: Patel, D
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 627 South Asia Literature as Comparative Literature
This course takes up the question of reading South Asian Literature both as a collection of diverse literary cultures, as well as the basis for a methodology of reading that takes language, region, and history into account. It takes as a starting point recent work that foregrounds the importance of South Asian language literatures, and their complex interactions, to an understanding of South Asian literary history, as well as critiques of the concept of world literature that question its underlying assumptions and frequent reliance on cosmopolitan languages such as English. In what ways can we describe the many complex interactions between literary cultures in South Asia, rooted in specific historical contexts, reading practices, and cultural expectations, while maintaining attention to language and literary form? How, in turn, can we begin to think of these literatures in iteration with larger conversations in the world? With these considerations in mind, we will examine works of criticism dealing with both modern and pre-modern literatures, primarily but not exclusively focused on South Asia. Topics will include the concept of the cosmopolis in literary and cultural history, the role of translation, the transformations of literature under colonialism, and twentieth century literary movements such as realism and Dalit literature. Readings may include works by Erich Auerbach, Frederic Jameson, Aljaz Ahmad, Gayatri Spivak, Aamir Mufti, Sheldon Pollack, David Shulman, Yigal Bronner, Shamshur Rahman Faruqui, Francesca Orsini, Subramanian Shankar, Sharan Kumar Kimbale, and Torlae Jatin Gajarawala. We will also examine selected works, in English and in translation, as case studies for discussion. This course is intended both for students who intend to specialize in the study of South Asia, as well as for those who focus on questions of comparative literature more broadly. Taught by: Goulding
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 632 Hinduism and Colonial Modernity
This seminar deals with the question of modernity in South Asia, with a specific focus on the construction, dissemination, and politicization of Hinduism in nineteenth and twentieth century India. It focuses on three central heuristic lenses--namely those of European imperialism, Orientalism, and nationalism--to study modernity and its discourses. What was at stake in the encounter between colonial modernity and India's religions in nineteenth and early twentieth centuries? How did colonial and native discourses on "reform" and "revival" shape Indian religions as we understand them today? How is modern "Hinduism" inextricably hinged to early forms of cultural transnationalism, Orientalism, and incipient forms of nationalism? This seminar approaches questions such as these and others, with an eye to understanding how nineteenth and early twentieth century discourses continue to shape contemporary understandings of Hinduism in deep and highly politicized ways. Taught by: Soneji
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
SAST 633 The Persian Intellectual Tradition
What makes Persian culture distinctive within broader Islamic intellectual history, and what constitutes the historical and geographical boundary of the Persianate intellectual and cultural zone? These questions lie at the center of inquiry in this seminar in which participants will read and discuss a broad range of works from the 11th to the 20th centuries. Readings will include works on philosophy and language, Sufi epic poems, religious and cultural geographies, accounts of natural and manufactured wonders, urban and political histories, as well as other kinds of texts. All readings will be in English for the regular meeting of the seminar; students with a reading knowledge of Persian and an interest in participating in an additional meeting to read the assignments in their original language should register for the higher of the two numbers listed for this course.

Taught by: Elias
1 Course Unit

SAST 640 Religious Bodies and Sex in South Asia
This graduate-level course introduces students to the writings of key religious scholars in modern South Asia who associated the regeneration of Hinduism, Islam, and Sikhism with the cultivation of bodies and sexual practices. Particular attention will be paid towards religious texts produced in modern India, Pakistan and Bangladesh pertaining to sexual bodies, exercises and health; celibacy; body-building; the transmission of religious knowledge; and the political roles of the ‘Hindu’, ‘Muslim’ and ‘Sikh’ body. In this course, students will be encouraged to engage a range of sources including religio-sexual manuals, autobiographies, novels, speeches, pamphlets, official records, recipes and films. Moreover, students will be introduced to the academic literature on South Asian religious scholars and ‘sex gurus’ in South and Southeast Asia; religious sexuality in South Asia, Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Europe; and, the transcultural literary networks that led to the production of religio-sexual texts in modern South Asia.

Taught by: Sevea
1 Course Unit

SAST 701 Methodology Seminar: Topics
Topics vary

Taught by: Mitchell, L
1 Course Unit

SAST 711 Seminar in Indian Art
Research seminar. Topics change. Spring 2016: We will examine the practice and symbolism of South Asian Architecture with case studies of how to build and how to make buildings meaningful.

1 Course Unit

SAST 713 Literature in Translation: South Asia and the World
This course primarily introduces how to critically read literature in light of major global developments in contemporary literary theory and aesthetics from the past century (including structuralism, semiotics, reception theory, deconstruction, Marxist approaches to literature, feminist readings of texts, translation theory, etc.). It also draws attention to scholastic practices of textual criticism, paleography, and the preparation of critical editions. In doing so, the course emphasizes specific texts and essays related to South Asian literature, literary theory, and aesthetics from the past two millennia as case studies in order to: a) supplement students’ knowledge of South Asian cultural production, b) frame social and historical questions related to art and aesthetics in contexts that have been otherwise under-explored, and c) to inspire debate about the extent to which analytical models and approaches developed within a given cultural setting are translatable to literary materials produced elsewhere. Students will develop their own projects, workshop what they have already begun, or explore new directions for studying literature and literary culture. Comparative approaches with other literary traditions are welcome and no background in South Asian languages or history is required.

Taught by: Patel
1 Course Unit

SAST 762 Women in South Asia
This course on women in South Asian history has several objectives. To comprehend the genres of narratives in which South Asian women between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries have spoken and have been spoken about. To gain an understanding of evolving institutions and practices shaping women’s lives, such as the family, law and religious traditions. To understand the impact of historical processes – the formation and and breakdown of empire, colonialism, nationalism and decolonization – upon South Asian women between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries. We will read primary sources in addition to familiarizing ourselves with the historiography of women in South Asia.

1 Course Unit

SAST 769 Feminist Theory
Specific topic varies. Dissent is a key word in our world today–from the Arab Spring to the American Fall, we have seen expressions of political disobedience and protest around the world. It is more urgent than ever to consider what dissent might mean, what shapes it has taken historically, what connection might exist between it and literature, and what futures are possible. We will read key critical and theoretical work alongside some powerful, tender and controversial writings and films (largely but not exclusively produced in the postcolonial world), to inquire into the politics and poetics of governance and dissent. Students are invited to make connections with other historical and geographical contexts, and explore the different forms of dissent individual, collective, urban, rural, national, pan-nationalist, religious, marxist, or feminist, to name but a few. We will pay special attention to different performances of dissent at a popular, mass or individual level. We will think about the social and cultural channels attention to different performances of dissent at a popular, mass or See the English Department’s website at www.english.upenn.edu for a complete description of the current offerings.

1 Course Unit
SAST 999 Independent Study
Directed Study for Graduate students only
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Independent Study
1 Course Unit