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 rise 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
Also Offered As: HIST 089
Activity: Lecture
1.0 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
Also Offered As: ANTH 107, URBS 122
Activity: Lecture
1.0 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
Also Offered As: HIST 086, RELS 164
Activity: Lecture
1.0 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
Also Offered As: COML 012
Activity: Lecture
1.0 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
Taught by: Soneji
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit
South Asia Studies (SAST)

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: Sreenivasan
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: COML 006, RELS 066
Activity: Lecture
1.0 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.
For BA Students: Arts and Letters Sector
Taught by: Goulding
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: COML 013
Activity: Seminar
1.0 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
Also Offered As: HIST 085, RELS 068
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

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
Also Offered As: RELS 163
Activity: Lecture
1.0 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
1.0 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.
For BA Students: History and Tradition Sector
Taught by: Patel
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: PHIL 050, RELS 155, SAST 603
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit
SAST 054 Religion and Resistance in South Asia
In this course, we focus on various medieval and contemporary devotional forms of Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam in South Asia. Several definitions try to tie the idea of devotion to classicism and traditionalism with a set of conservative ideas. However, this course introduces the students to a diverse and pluralistic understanding of Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam that also has a history of resistance and protest beginning with poets such as Kabir and others from the Bhakti movement, and Sufi devotional contexts in South Asia. We read about the histories of these rebellious poets and their interventions into the traditional practices of devotion. We also discuss about how these medieval trends find their way into contemporary times enriching the discourses of Dalit, Muslim and Feminist movements.
For BA Students: Humanities and Social Science S
Taught by: Mohammad
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: SAST 554
Activity: Seminar
1.0 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
1.0 Course Unit

SAST 058 Freshman Seminar
This interdisciplinary course introduces students to qualitative research methods and frameworks in the social sciences and humanities. The goals of the semester will be for each student to develop their own research proposal for a specific project that they could imagine pursuing over the summer or later in their undergraduate career, and to develop a web-based exhibit of one Penn-based research collection of interest. 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. The class will visit the Penn Museum object collections and archives, the Art library, the Kislak Center for Rare Books and Manuscripts, Film Archives, and other special collections on campus, and meet with a representative from the Center for Undergraduate Research Funding (CURF). 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. Students will also have the opportunity to identify sources of funding for summer research projects and prepare applications for these opportunities as part of the course. The course is ideal as an introduction to both the excellent libraries and research collections housed at Penn, and to a wide range of intellectual frameworks for engaging with these collections - a great way to kick off your undergraduate experience at Penn! Prerequisite: Topic varies by semester, see subtitle and Professor.
Taught by: Mitchell
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: ANTH 058
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit
Notes: Topic varies by semester, see subtitle and Professor
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
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: ANTH 063
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

SAST 087 Colonial South Asia, 1700 - 1950
The East India Company established its first trading outpost in India in 1612 and by 1765, was granted the right to collect revenue in eastern India on behalf of the Mughal Emperor. By 1858, Queen Victoria was Empress of India and by 1947, two independent nation states had emerged upon decolonization, India and Pakistan. The course will familiarize students with the outlines of the history of colonial South Asia, while exploring the following themes: How do we know what we know as historians, about the colonial era? What new institutions emerged in India under the British and, more importantly, what older institutions did they replace or modify? What kinds of modernity did South Asians begin to embrace, and what was the role of colonial rule in shaping and constraining these changes? How did different groups of South Asians perceive and respond to colonial rule, and how did this shape the emergence of new political movements in the early twentieth century?
Taught by: Sreenivasan
Also Offered As: HIST 087
Activity: Lecture
1.0 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
1.0 Course Unit

SAST 105 BeginningTabla II
A continuation ofTabla I, also open to beginning students.
Taught by: Bhatti
Course usually offered in spring term
Activity: Lecture
1.0 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: Bhatti
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Lecture
1.0 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: Bhatti
Course usually offered in spring term
Activity: Lecture
1.0 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: Bhatti
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Lecture
1.0 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
Also Offered As: MUSC 162
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit
SAST 110 Media and South Asia
This course examines the historical development of media institutions across the Indian subcontinent, and how media texts have helped to shape post-colonial national/cultural/religious/social identities, nationalism, and geopolitical relations. The course looks at how the post-colonial State in South Asia (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka) has interacted with media industries, and the implications of this interaction.
Taught by: Balaji
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: COMM 214
Activity: Lecture
1.0 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
Also Offered As: CIMS 113, RELS 118
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

SAST 113 Asian American Communities
Who is Asian American and how and where do we recognize Asian America? This interdisciplinary course explores the multiple factors that define Asian American identity and community. In order to provide a sketch of the multifaceted experience of this growing minority group, we will discuss a wide variety of texts from scholarly, artistic, and popular (film, cinematic) sources that mark key moments in the cultural history of Asia America. The course will address major themes of community life including migration history, Asian American as model minority, race, class, and transnational scope of Asian America. In combination with the readings, this class will foster and promote independent research based on site visits to various Asian American communities in Philadelphia and will host community leaders as guest lecturers.
Taught by: Khan
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: ASAM 104, URBS 207
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

SAST 115 American Race: A Philadelphia Story (SNF Paideia Program Course)
This course proposes an examination of race with a two-pronged approach: one that broadly links the study of race in the United States with a multi-disciplinary approach and also simultaneously situates specific conversations within the immediate location of Philadelphia, home to the University. The broad historical examination advances key concepts of race and racialization, explores key theoretical methodologies, and highlights major scholarly works. For example, students will engage with the study of race through Africana Studies, Asian American Studies, and through Latin American & Latinx Studies. Readings and methodologies will introduce students to critical issues in education, in literature, in sociology, and with methods in oral history, archival work, and ethnography. Most importantly, this extensive approach highlights the impact of race across multiple communities including Black Americans, immigrant populations, and communities that are marginalized to emphasize connections, relationships, and shared solidarity. Students are intellectually pushed to see the linkages and the impacts of racism across and among all Americans historically and presently. As each theme is introduced a direct example from Philadelphia will be discussed. The combination of the national discourse on race, with an intimate perspective from the City of Philadelphia, engages students both intellectually and civically. The course will be led by Fariha Khan but guest instructors with varied disciplinary backgrounds and guest speakers from local community organizations. Each instructor not only brings specific disciplinary expertise, but also varied community engagement experience.
Taught by: Khan
Course usually offered in spring term
Also Offered As: ASAM 115, LALS 115, SOCI 115, URBS 115
Activity: Lecture
1.0 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, qawwali 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: Soneji
Course not offered every year
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit
SAST 117 1947-49: British Empire and the Partitions of South Asia and Palestine
The partitions of South Asia and Palestine marked the end of the British Empire in those regions. British colonial rule in India ended in 1947 with the emergence of not one, but two nation states, India and Pakistan. Decolonization was marked by mass migration and ethnic cleansing along their borders. An estimated million people died in the violence in less than a year, and 12.5 million people migrated from their homes. The British Empire also gave up its claims to Palestine in 1947, exhausted by the two nationalisms of Zionists and Palestinians. This partition set up the declaration of the state of Israel, and the War for Palestine. By 1949, almost a million Palestinians found themselves displaced over many borders, some also within the borders of Israel. This comparative course is organized around three themes - the prehistories of these cataclysmic events, the role of Empire in catalyzing them, and the afterlives of these events that continue to haunt us into the present, seventy-five years later. It explores the political history - and the collapse of politics - that led to violence on a scale that was without precedent in the history of the Indian subcontinent. It examines the political, social and cultural events that led to decades of war and exile, and shaped the lives of generations of Palestinians, Israelis and the wider Middle East. Primary sources will help to explore the perspectives of ordinary people whose lives were turned upside down in both places.
Taught by: Sreenivasan
Also Offered As: HIST 142, NELC 142
Activity: Lecture
1.0 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 fiography. We will see reflections of the city in poetry recited in its homes, detective novels sold in its train stations, stories scribbled 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
Also Offered As: COML 114, URBS 120
Activity: Lecture
1.0 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
Taught by: Loomba
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: COML 125, ENGL 103, NELC 180, THAR 105
Activity: Lecture
1.0 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
Also Offered As: NELC 136, RELS 143
Activity: Lecture
1.0 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 aly 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
Also Offered As: EALC 015, RELS 173
Activity: Lecture
1.0 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 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
1.0 Course Unit

SAST 146 Islam in Modern World
This course key issues facing Muslims in the modern world with an emphasis on gaining an understanding of how Muslims view themselves and the world in which they live. Beginning with a discussion of the impact of colonialism, we will examine Islamic ideas and trends from the late colonial period until the present. Readings include religious, political and literary writings by important Muslim figures and focus on pressing issues in the Islamic world an beyond: the place of religion in modern national politics; the changing status of women; constructions of masculinity; pressing issues in bioethics; Islam, race and immigration in America; the role of violence; and the manifestations of religion in popular culture.
For BA Students: Humanities and Social Science S
Taught by: Elias
Course usually offered in spring term
Also Offered As: NELC 184, RELS 146
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

SAST 147 Love and Hate
This course focuses on important constants of human life as they are grappled with across religious traditions. Drawing on data across a range of religious traditions (such as Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and Mesoamerican Religion), we will explore topics such as sexual identity, politics, religion and the individual in contemporary life; and eroticism, sex and love as they are reflected in religious literature, art and history. Divine love and religious devotion will be examined in relation to acts of violence, including human sacrifice and self-sacrifice in the past as well as the present. Other 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 socioreligious claims over individual autonomy? Is violence an integral part of religion? What are religious understandings of the relationship between our agency over our bodies and socioreligious claims over individual autonomy? Is violence an integral part of religion? What are religious understandings of the relationship between love and sex? What does it mean for human beings to love God?
Taught by: Jamal Elias
Course usually offered in spring term
Also Offered As: RELS 069
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

SAST 166 The Asian Caribbean
This course complicates prevailing understandings of the Caribbean and extends the boundaries of Asian America by exploring the histories, experiences, and contributions of Asians in the Caribbean. In particular, we will focus on the migrations of Chinese and Indian individuals to Cuba, Trinidad, Jamaica, and Guyana as well as how their descendants are immigrating to the United States. We will examine the legal and social debates surrounding their labor in the 19th century, how they participated in the decolonization of the region, and how their migration to the United States complicates our understandings of ethnicity and race. Ultimately, through our comparative race approach, we will appreciate that the Caribbean is more than the Black Caribbean, it is also the Asian Caribbean.
Taught by: Pillai
Course usually offered in spring term
Also Offered As: ASAM 165, GSWS 165, LALS 165
Activity: Lecture
1.0 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
Also Offered As: ANTH 169, NELC 189
Activity: Seminar
1.0 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
Also Offered As: ASAM 170
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

SAST 171 Devotion's New Market: Religion, Economics, and the City
This graduate and undergraduate level course introduces students to the new forms of devotion as circulated in various urban centers in South Asia with a focus on growing market economy and urbanization. This course will particularly discuss case studies of how different modes of Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and other minor religions operate in an urbanized middle-class and educated communities. We will read theoretical and ethnographical works of contemporary research in religious studies and anthropology that deal with the questions of modernity, reformism and economic developmentalism. Throughout the semester, we focus on 1) how does religious forms such as sainthood practices, private and public rituals, narrative modes and everyday life evolve in the background of growing politics of development; 2) we discuss the tensions between classical notions of devotion and their new transformations in the city life, and finally 3) theoretically, we analyze concepts such as reformism, fundamentalism, recent discourses on identity politics and gender implications as connected to urban religious life.
Taught by: Mohammad
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: SAST 571
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

SAST 180 Asian American Food
You are what you eat. Asian American Food explores the history, politics, and ethnic identity of food through a cultural lens. Growing food, eating, and sharing meals serve as intimate expressions of self and community. By examining the production and consumption of food, the course investigates the ways that Asian Americans navigate traditions, gender norms, religious dietary laws, food habits, and employment as they create lives in the United States. The course overviews the history of Asian American foodways, but has a particular focus on Philadelphia’s Asian American communities.
Taught by: Khan, F
Course usually offered in spring term
Also Offered As: ASAM 180, URBS 180
Activity: Seminar
1.0 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
Also Offered As: RELS 189, SAST 589
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

SAST 190 Silk Road: From the Mediterranean to the Pacific
A journey along the overland and sea routes that connected China, India, Iran, and Rome from 200-1000 CE and served as conduits for cultural exchange. Precursor and successor routes will also be taken into consideration. The lives of merchants, envoys, pilgrims, and travelers interacting in cosmopolitan communities will be examined. Exploration of long-known and newly discovered archaeological ruins, along with primary sources in translation, will be studied.
Taught by: Mair
Also Offered As: EALC 190, EALC 590, SAST 590
Activity: Lecture
1.0 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
Also Offered As: ARTH 104, SAST 500, VLST 234
Activity: Lecture
1.0 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
Also Offered As: ANTH 201, SAST 508
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

SAST 210 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
Also Offered As: ARTH 104, SAST 500, VLST 234
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

SAST 211 Sex, Sexuality and Sexual Science in South Asia: Perspectives from the Past and Present
This course will introduce students to the problems of sex, sexuality and sexual science in South Asia over the centuries. Its central problem will be how sex, society and knowledge about sex have been transformed in South Asia under the conditions of colonial and postcolonial modernity. It will consider how a multitude of indigenous practices and knowledges, from the famous Kamasutra and its allied knowledges to the transgender communities, from the Lazzat-un-Nisa to concubinage and the sexual norms of elite households, were framed and reframed during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries through the agency of a variety of institutions, groups and individuals. The course will also show how South Asia played a crucial role in the global evolution of sexual knowledge. Topics will include the varieties and functions of traditional sexual knowledges, colonial sexology, changing sexual identities and practices, the relation of psychiatry and medicine to sex, queer and transgender sexualities, and the complex and shifting role of the state and civil society to all of these topics.
Taught by: Ali
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: HSOC 211, SAST 611
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

SAST 212 Democracy and Development in India
This course introduces students to the complex issues surrounding questions of political and economic development in India, the world's largest democracy, and home to a large chunk of the globe's low-income population. Not surprisingly, the successes and failures of India are tremendously important to the study of democracy and development. The experiences of countries in this region have given rise to influential theories of development. The policy prescriptions these theories have produced have in turn been applied back onto India, with spectacular results- both positive and negative. Over the course of the semester, we will use the concrete experiences from the past seven decades in India to ask and answer fundamental questions about development, including: Does democratic politics help or hurt prospects for economic development? Why are some poor countries like India able to maintain democracies, while equally poor countries in the region, such as Pakistan, are not? How did British colonialism shape the nature of post-colonial development? Should the state or the market play a dominant role in the economies of newly independent nations? How can we best measure poverty, and what have been the challenges to reducing it in the developing world? What are the challenges and opportunities produced by rapid international migration to rich countries? The course is divided into four thematic units, which build upon one another. Within each theme, we draw from a wide array of source materials, reading scholarship in political science, economics, sociology, and anthropology, journalistic non-fiction, and even film. While empirically focusing on India, we will also read about the experiences of other countries in South Asia, and also from East Asia, Latin America, and sub-Saharan African in specific weeks. This will help students place the experiences of South Asian countries in broader comparative perspective.
Taught by: Thachil
Also Offered As: PSCI 212
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit
SAST 215 Asian American Gender and Sexualities
This course explores the intersection of gender, sexuality, and race in Asian America. Through interdisciplinary and cultural texts, students will consider how Asian American gender and sexualities are constructed in relation to racism while learning theories on and methods to study gender, sex, and race. We will discuss masculinities, femininities, race-conscious feminisms, LGBTQ+ identities, interracial and intraracial relationships, and kinship structures.
Taught by: Rupa Pillai
Course usually offered in spring term
Also Offered As: ASAM 215, GSWS 215
Activity: Seminar
1.0 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 DEADLINE TO REGISTER IS MARCH 31st
Two terms. student must enter first term.
Also Offered As: ARTH 317, COML 216, GSWS 217, SAST 517
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

SAST 218 Media and Culture in Contemporary Iran
This course offers a comprehensive introduction to the culture and media of modern Iran, with a critical perspective on issues such as identity formation, ethnicity, race, and nation-building. It focuses on how these issues relate to various aspects of modern Iranian culture -- such as religion, gender, sexuality, war, and migration -- through the lens of media, cinema, and literature.
Taught by: Esmaeili
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

SAST 220 Creating New Worlds: The Modern Indian Novel
Lonely bureaucrats and love-struck students, Bollywood stars and wayward revolutionaries: this course introduces students to the worlds of the Indian novel. From the moment of its emergence in the 19th century, the novel in India grappled with issues of class and caste, colonialism and its aftermath, gender, and the family. Although the novel has a historical origin in early modern Europe, it developed as a unique form in colonial and post-colonial India, influenced by local literary and folk genres. How did the novel in India--and in its successor states after 1947--transform and shift in order to depict its world? How are novels shaped by the many languages in which they are written, including English? And how do we, as readers, engage with the Indian novel in its diversity? This course surveys works major and minor from the past 200 years of novel-writing in India--with surveys both into predecessors of the Indian novel and parallel forms such as the short story. Readings will include works in translation from languages such as Hindi, Bangla, Urdu, Telugu, and Malayalam, as well as works written originally in English. Students will leave this course with an understanding of the Indian novel, along with the social conditions underlying it, especially those relating to caste and gender.
Taught by: Goulding
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: COML 221
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

SAST 221 Asian American Women: Nation, Self and Identity
This course examines the literary constructions of Asian American Womens' identity in relation to the U.S. nation state. How have the figures of the tiger mother, the Asian nerd, the rice queen, the trafficked woman, the geisha, the war bride, emerged to represent Asian American women, and how have Asian American feminists responded to these problematic racial stereotypes? How does the scholarship on such racialized representations illuminate historical and contemporary configurations of gender, sexuality, race, class, nation, citizenship, migration, empire, war, neoliberalism and globalization as they relate to the lives of Asian American women? In exploring these questions, this course examines Asian American histories, bodies, identities, diasporic communities, representations, and politics through multi- and interdisciplinary approaches, including social science research, literature, popular representations, film, poetry and art.
Taught by: Roy
Course usually offered in spring term
Also Offered As: ASAM 220, GSWS 220
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit
SAST 225 Imagining New Futures: Science Fiction and the Fantastic in South Asian Literature
This course examines the many ways in which writers have imagined the future, the past, and the unreal in South Asia. Rather than view science fiction as an isolated, modern genre, we will situate it alongside a range of genres and approaches to the fantastic. Although literature called science fiction is today a dynamic genre across South Asian languages, with a literary history in the twentieth and nineteenth centuries, writers draw from a range of other South Asian literary and cultural traditions, including Hindu mythology, Persian Qissa story cycles, and Sanskrit literature. In this course, therefore, we will explore the many genealogies of contemporary South Asian literature. Science fiction, and fantastic literature more generally, often functions as a means to depict social and technological change, the perception of the larger world, and contemporary politics. How did writers use amazing stories of brilliant inventions, dreams of a woman-led utopia, or dark conspiracies of disease to explore a range of questions. We will also consider how popular literary genres, such as the detective story, intersect with these other genres. Students will leave this course with a knowledge of the dynamic history of South Asian science fiction as part of a long history of imaginative literature, as well as as a deeper understanding of genre and the social history of literature.
Taught by: Goulding
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

SAST 245 Eastern Christianities
The history of Christianity is often told from the perspective of its spread westward from Israel to Rome. Yet, in the first millennium, there were more Christians living in the East, in places as far away as Persia, Yemen, India, China, and Mongolia, than in the West. Spread across the Asian continent, these Christians were actively involved in local and imperial politics, composed theological literature, and were deeply embedded in the cultural fabric of their host societies. This course traces the spread of Christianity eastward, paying particular attention to its regional developments, its negotiations with local political powers, and its contact with other religions, including Buddhism, Manichaeism, and Islam. Readings will cover a broad range of sources, including selections from classical Syriac literature, Mesopotamian magic bowls, the so-called "Jesus Sutras," and the Quran.
Taught by: Durmaz
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: NELC 385, RELS 235
Activity: Lecture
1.0 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 globalization 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: Soneji
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: RELS 249
Activity: Seminar
1.0 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, sacerdotal 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: Durmaz
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: RELS 251
Activity: Lecture
1.0 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 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
Also Offered As: SAST 551
Activity: Seminar
1.0 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 music 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
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: ANTH 242, MUSC 252
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

SAST 260 Women and the Making of Modern South Asia
This course on women in South Asian history has four objectives - 1. To acquaint ourselves with the historiography on South Asian women. 2. To gain an understanding of evolving institutions and practices shaping women’s lives, such as the family, law and religious traditions. 3. To understand the impact of historical processes - the formation and breakdown of empire, colonialism, nationalism and decolonization - upon South Asian women between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries. 4. To become familiar with some of the significant texts written about and by women in this period. We will read a wide variety of primary sources including a Mughal princess’ account, devotional verse authored by women, conduct books, tracts, autobiographies and novels.
Taught by: Sreenivasan
Course usually offered in spring term
Also Offered As: GSWS 260, HIST 260
Activity: Seminar
1.0 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
Also Offered As: SAST 562
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

SAST 266 Modern Southeast Asia
This freshman-friendly course provides a broad introductory overview of modern Southeast Asia, surveying the region's extraordinary diversity and ongoing social, economic, and political transformations. Centering on the nation-states that have emerged following the second World War, we will assess elements of Southeast Asian geography, history, language and literature, cosmologies, kinship systems, music, art and architecture, agriculture, industrialization and urbanization, politics, and economic change. We will remain particularly attentive to the ways Southeast Asians negotiate and contend with ongoing challenges with modernization, development, and globalization.
Taught by: Carruthers
Also Offered As: ANTH 255
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

SAST 268 Art and Empire in India, 1750-1900
This course surveys transformations in visual culture between the Mughal and British empires in India from the mid-eighteenth through the nineteenth centuries. We shall consider changes in artistic production, patronage, publics, and viewing protocols in the contexts of the court and bazaar. We shall examine the emergence of new technologies and its impact on visual forms, media, and genres, focusing on the interplay of photography, print, and painting. We shall explore the role of institutions - the art school, the museum, and the archeological survey - and the professions and practices they engendered. We shall analyze how architecture and urban planning created new built environments and social relationships in colonial India. We shall view objects first-hand in the Penn Museum, Penn Libraries, and Philadelphia Museum of Art. This is a reading- and writing-intensive course. Students with a background in related disciplines such as literature, history, religion, anthropology, and South Asian Studies are welcome.
Taught by: Khullar
Also Offered As: ARTH 268, ARTH 668, SAST 668
Activity: Lecture
1.0 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
Also Offered As: ASAM 239, NELC 239, NELC 539
Activity: Seminar
1.0 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
Also Offered As: ASAM 160
Activity: Seminar
1.0 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 Christian castes) from ancient time up to the twentieth century.
Taught by: Sreenivasan
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: SAST 593
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

SAST 297 Nature Culture Environmentalism
Water wars, deforestation, climate change. Amidst many uncertain crises, in this course we will explore the emergent relationship between people and the environment in different parts of the world. How do people access the resources they need to live? How, when and for whom does 'nature' come to matter? Why does it matter? And what analytical tools we might use to think, mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change? Drawing together classical anthropological texts and some of the emergent debates in the field of climate studies and environmental justice, in this class we focus on the social-ecological processes through which different groups of humans imagine, produce and inhabit anthropogenic environments.
Taught by: Anand
Course usually offered in fall term
Also Offered As: ANTH 297, URBS 297
Activity: Seminar
1.0 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
1.0 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
Course usually offered in fall term
Also Offered As: ARTH 312
Activity: Seminar
1.0 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
Also Offered As: COML 324, COML 624, SAST 624
Activity: Seminar
1.0 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
Also Offered As: COML 334, SAST 534
Activity: Seminar
1.0 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.southasiacenter.upenn.edu/startalk) for more information on the program and how to apply. Prerequisite: This is a summer online course known also as Startalk.
Taught by: Pien, J.
Course usually offered summer term only
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

SAST 452 Urdu Literature in Translation
This course will look at Urdu-Hindi expressions of resistance to militant fundamentalism trends, as well as literature resisting the influence of liberal progressive thought. Through comparisons of these divergent trends, we will explore the real inersections, comfortable comprises and contradictions that are internalized by people on the ground in developing societies. The historical and linguistic roots of resistance poetry will be studied, contrasting South Asian Urdu-Hindi poetry and prose (original and translated) with resistance movements from other parts of the world. This course provides students with the opportunity to deepen their knowledge of Urdu culture, literature, and society while expanding and refining their Urdu language skills. We will explore various social, political, and cultural issues through authentic sources such as journalism and media, prose literature and poetry, and film and music. The course is designed to be flexible to address students’ needs and interests. It targets students with two years of Urdu study or the equivalent proficiency. Prerequisite: Intermediate reading, writing and speaking skills in Urdu are recommended but contact the instructor if you are unsure of your eligibility and want to discuss further.
Taught by: Menai
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

SAST 462 Urdu Topics Course
Urdu literature in translation. Topics vary by semester.
Taught by: Menai
Course not offered every year
Activity: Lecture
1.0 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
Also Offered As: ARTH 104, SAST 200, VLST 234
Activity: Lecture
1.0 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
1.0 Course Unit
SAST 505 Topics in South Asian Art
Topic varies from semester to semester. For the Fall 2021 semester, the topic will be: Arts of the Book in South Asia. This course critically surveys the history of books in South Asia from 1100 to the present, focusing on the relationship between the visual arts and book form. Beginning with palm-leaf manuscripts in the pothi format and their repositories, we consider material and cultural shifts in the idea, use, and practice of the book with the widespread use of paper and production of codices in Sultanate, Mughal, Deccani, and Rajput courts painting from the fifteenth century onward. Then we analyze transformations of the book in colonial South Asia with the rise of photography and print technologies, and a changing public for art, printed books, and illustrated manuscripts. We conclude by examining the revival and resurgence of books, including artists’ books and artistic projects about book culture, in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Throughout we attend to physical and social contexts for the book, including workshops, libraries, storehouses, schools, and museums. We explore multiple modalities that bear upon book use, that is, orality, aurality, textuality, performativity, and visuality, and various practices that books generate, that is, making, collecting, gifting, junking, cutting, pasting, binding, inscribing, translating, publishing, curating, venerating, and recycling. We shall view objects first-hand in the Penn Libraries and Philadelphia Museum of Art. This is a reading- and writing-intensive course. Students with a background in related disciplines such as literature, history, religion, architecture, anthropology, geography, cinema studies, and feminist studies are welcome.
Taught by: Khullar
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: ARTH 511
Activity: Seminar
1.0 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
Also Offered As: ANTH 201, SAST 208
Activity: Seminar
1.0 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.
Also Offered As: ARTH 317, COML 216, GSWS 217, SAST 217
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

SAST 534 A Survey of Sanskrit, Pakrit, and Classical Tamil Literature in Translation
Taught by: Patel
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: COML 334, SAST 334
Activity: Seminar
1.0 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
Also Offered As: NELC 589, RELS 541
Activity: Seminar
1.0 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 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: Ali
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: RELS 551
Activity: Seminar
1.0 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
Also Offered As: SAST 251
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

SAST 552 MLA Proseminar: Philosophy East and West: An Introduction to Indian and Chinese
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
1.0 Course Unit

SAST 554 Religion and Resistance in South Asia
In this course, we focus on various medieval and contemporary devotional forms of Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam in South Asia. Several definitions try to tie the idea of devotion to classicism and traditionalism with a set of conservative ideas. However, this course introduces the students to a diverse and pluralistic understanding of Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam that also has a history of resistance and protest beginning with poets such as Kabir and others from the Bhakti movement, and Sufi devotional contexts in South Asia. We read about the histories of these rebellious poets and their interventions into the traditional practices of devotion. We also discuss about how these medieval trends find their way into contemporary times enriching the discourses of Dalit, Muslim and Feminist movements.
For BA Students: Humanities and Social Science S
Taught by: Mohammad
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: SAST 054
Activity: Seminar
1.0 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
1.0 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
Also Offered As: SAST 262
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

SAST 571 Devotion's New Market: Religion, Economics, and the City
This graduate and undergraduate level course introduces students to the new forms of devotion as circulated in various urban centers in South Asia with a focus on growing market economy and urbanization. This course will particularly discuss case studies of how different modes of Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and other minor religions operate in an urbanized middle-class and educated communities. We will read theoretical and ethnographical works of contemporary research in religious studies and anthropology that deal with the questions of modernity, reformism and economic developmentalism. Throughout the semester, we focus on 1) how does religious forms such as saṅhāra practices, private and public rituals, narrative modes and everyday life evolve in the background of growing politics of development; 2) we discuss the tensions between classical notions of devotion and their new transformations in the city life, and finally 3) theoretically, we analyze concepts such as reformism, fundamentalism, recent discourses on identity politics and gender implications as connected to urban religious life.
Taught by: Mohammad
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: SAST 171
Activity: Seminar
1.0 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
Also Offered As: RELS 189, SAST 189
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

SAST 590 Silk Road: From the Mediterranean to the Pacific
A journey along the overland and sea routes that connected China, India, Iran, and Rome from 200-1000 CE and served as conduits for cultural exchange. Precursor and successor routes will also be taken into consideration. The lives of merchants, envoys, pilgrims, and travelers interacting in cosmopolitan communities will be examined. Exploration of long-known and newly discovered archaeological ruins, along with primary sources in translation, will be studied.
Taught by: Mair
Also Offered As: EALC 190, EALC 590, SAST 190
Activity: Lecture
1.0 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
Also Offered As: SAST 293
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit
SAST 603 Introduction to Indian Philosophy
Course usually offered in fall term
Also Offered As: PHIL 050, RELS 155, SAST 050
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

SAST 604 Neoliberalism and the City
Over fifty percent of the world's 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 neoliberalism 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 with 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 infrastructures, 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
Also Offered As: URBS 504
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

SAST 611 Sex, Sexuality and Sexual Science in South Asia: Perspectives from the Past and Present
This course will introduce students to the problems of sex, sexuality and sexual science in South Asia over the centuries. Its central problem will be how sex, society and knowledge about sex have been transformed in South Asia under the conditions of colonial and postcolonial modernity. It will consider how a multitude of indigenous practices and knowledges, from the famous Kamasutra and its allied knowledges to the transgender communities, from the Lazzat-un-Nisa to concubinage and the sexual norms of elite households, were framed and reframed during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries through the agency of a variety of institutions, groups and individuals. The course will also show how South Asia played a crucial role in the global evolution of sexual knowledge. Topics will include the varieties and functions of traditional sexual knowledges, colonial sexology, changing sexual identities and practices, the relationship of psychiatry and medicine to sex, queer and transgender sexualities, and the complex and shifting role of the state and civil society to all of these topics.
Taught by: Ali
Also Offered As: HSOC 211, SAST 211
Activity: Seminar
1.0 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
1.0 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
Also Offered As: COML 623
Activity: Seminar
1.0 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
Also Offered As: COML 324, COML 624, SAST 624
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

SAST 625 Philology and History: Reading South Asian Texts
Taught by: Patel, D
Activity: Seminar
1.0 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 interaction 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, Aijaz Ahmad, Gayatri Spivak, Aamir Mufti, Sheldon Pollack, David Shulman, Yigal Bronner, Shamshur Rahman Faruqi, Francesca Orsini, Subramanian Shankar, Sharan Kumar Kimble, and Torlæ 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
Also Offered As: COML 627
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

SAST 631 The Sanskrit Epics
Ancient India's two epic poems, composed in Sanskrit and received in dozens of languages over the span of two thousand years, continue to shape the psychic, social, and emotional worlds of millions of people around the world. The epic Mahabharata, which roughly translates to The Great Story of the Descendants of the Legendary King Bharata, is the longest single poem in the world (100,000 lines of Sanskrit verse) and tells the mythic history of dynastic power struggles in ancient India. An apocalyptic meditation on time, death, and the utter devastation brought upon the individual and the family unit through social disintegration, the epic also houses one of the great religious works of the world, The Bhagavad Gita (translation: The Song of God), which offers a buoy of hope and possibility in the dark ocean of the epic's violent narrative. The other great epic, The Ramayana (Rama's Journey), though essentially tragic, offers a brighter vision of human life, how it might be possible to live happily in an otherwise hopeless situation. It too is about struggles for power in ancient India but it offers characters--especially Rama--that serve as ideals for how human beings might successfully negotiate life's great challenges. It also provides a model of human social order that contrasts with dystopic polities governed by animals and demons. Our course will engage in close reading of selections from both of these epic poems (in English translation, of course) and thus learn about the epic genre, its oral and textual forms in South Asia, and the numerous modes for interpreting the epic. We will also look at the reception of these ancient works in modern forms of media, such as the novel, television, theater, cinema and the comic book/anime. In the process, through selected essays and reflections, we will pay special attention to the ways in which the ancient epics remain deeply relevant in the modern world, reflecting on topics such as the aesthetics of war, the psychic life of social ideals, and creative responses to ethical conflicts.
Taught by: Patel
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: COML 632
Activity: Seminar
1.0 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 discontents. 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
Also Offered As: RELS 632
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit
SAST 634 Realism and South Asian Literature
This course examines problems of realism as a concept in relation to South Asian literature in the 19th and 20th centuries. Realism, both in its broadest sense as mimetic depictions in literature, as well as specific instantiations in art history, literature, and politics, has had a decisive impact on South Asian literary history. Yet as a topic realism presents several unique challenges, not unlike its twin in twentieth-century literature, the equally-protein modernism. In part this may stem from its conceptual and disciplinary range, pulling together problems in the history of science, the politics of art, and aesthetics. With these caveats in mind, we will examine a range of texts, both those specifically dealing with South Asian literature, as well as those considered foundational to understandings of realism at play. Readings in criticism may include Hegel, Marx, Ian Watt, Rabindranath Tagore, Gyorgy Lukacs, Bertold Brecht, Raymond Williams, Frederic Jameson, Theodor Adorno Walter Benjamin, Namwar Singh, Ram Vilas Sharma, WReC, Michael Lowy, and Meenakshi Mukherjee, along with fiction and poetry by Nazeer Ahmed, Tagore, Munshi Premchand, Sa’adat Hasan Manto, Ismat Chughtai, O.V. Vijayan, and Uday Prakash. We will also discuss, when relevant topics related to art history and cinema studies. This course will be suitable both for those students who wish to investigate realism in South Asian history, as well as those who want a thorough grounding in the theory and literary historiography of realism more generally. Taught by: Goulding
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

SAST 645 Religion in Modern South Asia
Taught by: Soneji
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: RELS 644
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

SAST 668 Art and Empire in India, 1750-1900
This course surveys transformations in visual culture between the Mughal and British empires in India from the mid-eighteenth through the nineteenth centuries. We shall consider changes in artistic production, patronage, publics, and viewing protocols in the contexts of the court and bazaar. We shall examine the emergence of new technologies and its impact on visual forms, media, and genres, focusing on the interplay of photography, print, and painting. We shall explore the role of institutions - the art school, the museum, and the archeological survey - and the professions and practices they engendered. We shall analyze how architecture and urban planning created new built environments and social relationships in colonial India. We shall view objects first-hand in the Penn Museum, Penn Libraries, and Philadelphia Museum of Art. This is a reading- and writing-intensive course. Students with a background in related disciplines such as literature, history, religion, anthropology, and South Asian Studies are welcome. Taught by: Khullar
Also Offered As: ARTH 268, ARTH 668, SAST 268
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

SAST 701 Methodology Seminar: Topics
Topics vary
Taught by: Mitchell, L
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: ANTH 711, HIST 702
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

SAST 704 State, Society, and Culture in South Asia
This interdisciplinary course introduces graduate students to both classic and more recent theoretical frameworks used in understanding and analyzing society, culture, and the state, with particular reference to South Asia. Topics include bureaucracy and the state; power and performance; hierarchy and individualism; caste, community, and domination; money and markets; credit and debt; globalization and consumption; economic liberalization and political transformations; local and trans-local contexts of meaning; the environment, politics, and urban and rural ecologies; and culture and the changing shape of politics. Particular emphasis will be placed on the ways in which recent ethnographic and historical monographs have positioned their interventions in relation to broader debates and scholarship, both within scholarship on South Asia and more generally. Taught by: Mitchell
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: ANTH 706
Activity: Seminar
1.0 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. One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: ARTH 711
Activity: Seminar
1.0 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 millenia 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
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1.0 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 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. Taught by: Sreenivasan
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1.0 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, nationalist, 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 through which dissent is expressed, spread or quelled, how it might morph, or become obsolete, or give rise to new forms of disobedience.
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: COML 769, ENGL 769, GSWS 769, NELC 783
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

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