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 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 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 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 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: Miner
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: MUSC 265
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit
SAST 006 Hindu Mythology
Premodern India produced some of the world’s greatest myths and stories: tales of gods, goddesses, heroes, princesses, kings and lovers that continue to capture the imaginations of millions of readers and hearers. In this course, we will look closely at some of these stories especially as found in Purana-s, great compendia composed in Sanskrit, including the chief stories of the central gods of Hinduism: Visnu, Siva, and the Goddess. We will also consider the relationship between these texts and the earlier myths of the Vedas and the Indian Epics, the diversity of the narrative and mythic materials within and across different texts, and the re-imagining of these stories in the modern world.
For BA Students: Arts and Letters Sector
Taught by: Patel
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: RELS 066
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 007 Introduction to Modern South Asian Literatures
This course provides an introduction to the literatures of South Asia - chiefly India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh- between 1500 and the present. We will read translated excerpts from literary texts in several languages - Braj, Persian, Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Marathi, Malayalam, and Tamil - and explore the relationship between these literary texts and their historical contexts. No prior knowledge of South Asia is required.
Taught by: Goulding, G
Also Offered As: COML 013
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 008 India: Culture and Society
What makes India INDIA? Religion and Philosophy? Architectural splendor? Kingdoms? Caste? The position of women? This course will introduce students to India by studying a range of social and cultural institutions that have historically assumed to be definitive India. Through primary texts, novels and historical sociological analysis, we will ask how these institutions have been reproduced and transformed, and assess their significance for contemporary Indian society.
For BA Students: Humanities and Social Science S
Taught by: Sreenivasan
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: HIST 085, RELS 068
Activity: Lecture
0 Course Units

SAST 009 Introduction to Hinduism
This course introduces students to the history, texts, philosophies and rituals of South Asia's oldest living religious traditions, represented today by the term "Hinduism." At the same time, it problematizes the idea of a monolithic "Hindu Tradition", in favor of an approach that recognizes several distinct, dynamic, yet symbiotic Hindu religious cultures. The course also places emphasis on the vitality of today's Hinduism(s), and the various historical, ritual, cultural, and social contexts that they represent and constitute. The course is organized around six modules: (1) Issues in the Academic Study of Hinduism; (2) Sanskrit (textual) tradition; (3) Philosophy; (4) Theology; (5) Ritual; and (6) Modernity and Contemporary Politics.
Taught by: Soneji
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: RELS 163
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 012 Spices, Gunpowder, and Pagodas: A History of Southeast Asia
This undergraduate course introduces students to the history of Southeast Asia from the earliest centuries of the Common Era to c.1950. It introduces students to Southeast Asia as religion, constituent historical societies of the region, and to the major academic literature and debates pertaining to the historical development of Southeast Asian societies and the region. Key themes explored include the origins and character of early civilizations, ideas and ideology about power and prowess, material culture, the transformation of ethnic, class, and gender relations, the impact of the arrival of world religions and early European expansion, and the nature of indigenous responses to the diffusion of new beliefs and ideas and intercultural contact.
Taught by: Sevea
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: RELS 012
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 050 Introduction to Indian Philosophy
This course will take the student through the major topics of Indian philosophy by first introducing the fundamental concepts and terms that are necessary for a deeper understanding of themes that pervade the philosophical literature of India -- arguments for and against the existence of God, for example, the ontological status of external objects, the means of valid knowledge, standards of proof, the discourse on the aims of life. The readings will emphasize classical Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain philosophical articulations (from 700 B.C.E to 16th century CE) but we will also supplement our study of these materials with contemporary or relatively recent philosophical writings in modern India.
Taught by: Patel
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: PHIL 050, RELS 155
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 057 Planning to be Off-shore?
Freshman Seminar. In this course we will trace the economic development of India from 1947 to the present. Independent India started out as a centrally planned economy in 1949 but in 1991 decided to reduce its public sector and allow, indeed encourage, foreign investors to come in. The Planning Commission of India still exists but has lost much of its power. Many in the U.S. complain of American jobs draining off to India, call centers in India taking care of American customer complaints, American patient histories being documented in India, etc. At the same time, the U.S. government encourages highly trained Indians to be in the U.S. Students are expected to write four one-page response papers and one final paper. Twenty percent of the final grade will be based on class participation, 20 percent on the four response papers and 60 percent on the final paper.
Taught by: Gangulee
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
Sugar and Spices. Tea and Coffee. Opium and Cocaine. Hop aboard the Indian Ocean dhows, Chinese junks, Dutch schooners, and British and American clipper ships that made possible the rise of global capitalism, new colonial relationships, and the intensified forms of cultural change. How have the desires to possess and consume particular commodities shaped cultures and the course of modern history? This class introduces students to the cultural history of the modern world through an interdisciplinary analysis of connections between East and West, South and North. Following the circulation of commodities and the development of modern capitalism, the course examines the impact of global exchange on interactions and relationships between regions, nations, cultures, and peoples and the influences on cultural practices and meanings. The role of slavery and labor migrations, colonial and imperial relations, and struggles for economic and political independence are also considered. From the role of spices in the formation of European joint stock companies circa 1600 to the contemporary cocaine trade, the course’s use of both original primary sources and secondary readings written by historians and anthropologists will enable particular attention to the ways that global trade has impacted social, cultural, and political formations and practices throughout the world.
For BA Students: Humanities and Social Science S
Taught by: Mitchell
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: ANTH 063, HIST 087
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 104 Beginning Tabla 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
Also Offered As: MUSC 060
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 105 Beginning Tabla II
A continuation of Tabla I, also open to beginning students.
Taught by: Bhatti
Course usually offered in spring term
Also Offered As: MUSC 062
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 106 Beginning Sitar I
This course is an introduction to the repertoire and performance practices of the North Indian sitar. Fundamentals of sitar technique, composition, and improvisation are presented and practiced in class. Class lectures and discussions, audio and video material, and reading and listening assignments on selected topics supplement practice, to provide an overview of the social and historical context and the formal structures of North Indian music in general. There are no prerequisites for the course, but some experience with instrumental or vocal music is suggested. Each student is expected to put in two hours of individual practice per week, and complete reading, audio, and written assignments. The class gives a group performance at the end of the semester.
Taught by: Miner
Two terms. student may enter either term.
Also Offered As: MUSC 061
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 107 Beginning Sitar II
This is the second semester of a performance course in the North Indian sitar. Students who have not taken the first semester but play any musical instrument are permitted to join. Principles of composition and improvisation will be explored in practice and supplemented by readings and listening. The class gives a group performance at the end of the semester.
Taught by: Miner
Course usually offered in spring term
Also Offered As: MUSC 063
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 108 Intermediate Sitar I
This is a performance course open to students who have completed both semesters of Beginning Sitar, or to others by permission from the instructor. Students will work with right and left-hand techniques, study three ragas in depth, learn the contours of several other ragas, and work with concepts of tala, composition, and improvisation. Assigned readings and listenings will complement the performed material. A group performance will be given at the end of the semester.
Taught by: Miner
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: ARTH 514, MUSC 161
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 109 Intermediate Sitar II
This is a continuation of an intermediate performance course in the North Indian sitar. It is open to students by permission of the instructor. Students who play other instruments and have had at least a beginning level of training in Hindustani music may also join, with the permission of the instructor.
Taught by: Miner
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: MUSC 162
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 112 Religion and Cinema in India
This seminar examines key themes in the study of religion and Indian cinema. The aim of the seminar is to foreground discussions of performativity, visual culture, representation, and politics in the study of modern South Asian religions. Themes include mythological cinema, gender and sexuality, censorship and the state, and communalism and secularism. The films we will be deploying as case studies will be limited to those produced in Hindi, Telugu and Tamil (the three largest cinema cultures of India). No knowledge of any South Asian language is needed for this course however.
Taught by: Soneji
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: CIMS 113, RELS 118
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit
SAST 116 Music Cultures of North India and Pakistan
A great variety of song and instrumental genres have thrived in the Hindu and Muslim milieus of North India and Pakistan. In this course we examine a selection of urban and rural musics, such as instrumental music in Baluchistan, qawwals in Delhi, the garba of Gujarat, ballad singing of Rajasthan and the urban music of Calcutta. We will explore the sounds, poetry, historical, and social contexts of chosen genres and trace aspects of continuity and adaptation in the changing environment of contemporary South Asia. Readings are supplemented by audio-visual material and live performances.
Taught by: Miner
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: MUSC 266
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 124 Narrative Across Cultures
The purpose of this course is to present a variety of narrative genres and to discuss and illustrate the modes whereby they can be analyzed. We will be looking at shorter types of narrative: short stories, novellas, and fables, and also some extracts from longer works such as autobiographies. While some works will come from the Anglo-American tradition, a larger number will be selected from European and non-Western cultural traditions and from earlier time-periods. The course will thus offer ample opportunity for the exploration of the translation of cultural values in a comparative perspective.
For BA Students: Arts and Letters Sector
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: COML 125, ENGL 103
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 139 Introduction to Islam
This course is an introduction to Islam as a religion as it exists in societies of the past as well as the present. It explores the many ways in which Muslims have interpreted and put into practice the prophetic message of Muhammad through historical and social analyses of varying theological, philosophical, legal, political, mystical and literary writings, as well as through visual art and music. The aim of the course is to develop a framework for explaining the sources and symbols through which specific experiences and understandings have been signified as Islamic, both by Muslims and by other peoples with whom they have come into contact, with particular emphasis given to issues of gender, religious violence and changes in beliefs and behaviors which have special relevance for contemporary society.
Taught by: Elias
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: NELC 136, RELS 143
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 141 Islam in South Asian Culture
Islam reached South Asia in the eighth century and Muslim rulers held sway over large parts of the Subcontinent for much of the period from the late 12th century until the colonial period. However, the majority of the population never converted to Islam, and since independence in 1947 Islam--its interpretation, realization, and influence--has been a major factor underlying many difficult political issues. This has been true not only in the largest country, India, where Muslims form 12% (unevenly distributed) of the population, but in Bangladesh and Pakistan where non-Muslims are relatively insignificant minorities. This course explores the realities and the perceptions related to Muslim identities and the Islamic heritage in the Subcontinent, and sets it in global context by comparison with other parts of the world which share various aspects of the South Asian experience. The course will conclude with an assessment of the larger significance--social, economic and political, as well as cultural--of Islam in South Asia today.
Taught by: Spooner
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: RELS 142
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 142 Introduction to Buddhism
This course seeks to introduce students to the diversity of doctrines held and practices performed by Buddhists in Asia. By focusing on how specific beliefs and practices are tied to particular locations and particular times, we will be able to explore in detail the religious institutions, artistic, architectural, and musical traditions, textual production and legal and doctrinal developments of Buddhism over time and within its socio-historical context. Religion is never divorced from its place and its time. Furthermore, by geographically and historically grounding the study of these religions we will be able to examine how their individual ethic, cosmological and soteriological systems effect local history, economics, politics, and material culture. We will concentrate first on the person of the Buddha, his many biographies and how he has been followed and worshipped in a variety of ways from Lhasa, Tibet to Phrae, Thailand. From there we touch on the foundational teachings of the Buddha with an eye to how they have evolved and transformed over time. Finally, we focus on the practice of Buddhist ritual, magic and ethics in monasteries and among aliy communities in Asia and even in the West. This section will confront the way Buddhists have thought of issues such as "Just-War" Women's Rights and Abortion. While no one quarter course could provide a detailed presentation of the beliefs and practices of Buddhism, my hope is that we will be able to look closely at certain aspects of these religions by focusing on how they are practiced in places like Nara, Japan or Vietnam, Laos.
Taught by: McDaniel
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: EALC 015, RELS 173
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit
SAST 144 Islamic History to 1517
The transformation of the Middle East into an Islamic civilization and its historical development from the time of Mohammed to the establishment of Ottoman, Savavid, and Mughal empires in the sixteenth century. Rise of Islam, the early Islamic empire, political fragmentation and cultural continuity in Muslim societies from Spain to North India. Within this wide chronological and geographical framework we will focus on the role of Islamic thought, institutions, and identities in a limited number of particularly revealing historical contexts. Primary sources in translation complement the two course textbooks.
Also Offered As: ENGL 262
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 146 Islam in the 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 sexuality (including 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 Course Unit

SAST 147 Love, Sex & Power
This course explores the ways in which some of the biggest issues in human life are dealt with across religious traditions. Beginning with important questions of sexual identity, politics, religion and the individual in contemporary life, we will examine questions of eroticism, sex and love as they are reflected in religious literature, art and history. The concept of divine love and religious devotion will be explored in relation to acts of violence, including human sacrifice and self-sacrifice in the form of martyrdom seen in pre-modern concepts of saintly martyrdom and religious chivalry as well as the religious legitimacy of modern self-sacrifice of soldiers in war and terrorist suicides. The course focuses in particular on examples drawn from Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Mesoamerican Religion, although discussions of contemporary issues will be conducted with a broader sweep. Important questions considered in this course include: how does the body function as the locus in which religion is enacted? What is the conflict between our agency over our bodies and socio-religious claims over the individual? Is violence an integral part of religion? What are religious understandings of the relationship between love and sex? How can a human being love gods erotically?
Taught by: Elias, J
Also Offered As: RELS 069
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 166 HISTORY OF INDIAN BUSINESS
With annual growth rates between 5-10 percent for much of the last fifteen years, it may seem that the turn of the millennium has marked a fundamental shift in the state of Indian business. Yet at the same time stories continue to abound about the dark side of India’s recent “shining” where matters such as distributional justice and the fate of social strata like the subaltern poor and agrarian are concerned. Moreover, broader intra-regional forces continue to affect the state of business in a way that constantly reminds us that traditionally lacked any absolutely clear cut geographical correlate. How then should we think of the history of Indian business? In what ways is such a history different from or the same as the economic history of the South Asian subcontinent, its borderlands, and the broader Indian Ocean world it was long connected to? Can isolating something to be thought of as business in the past illuminate the structure or challenges of what we all so intuitively think of as the financial, commercial, and industrial aspects of business in the present?
In this course we will consider these and other questions by tracing the interactions between the three-fold forces of entrepreneurialism, labor, and kinship/sovereignty—considered as the underlying conditions of business activity’s possibility—from ancient to modern times in South Asia. By looking at topics ranging from merchants and their bills of exchange in South Asia’s antiquity to the impacts of colonial rule to the current fervor over liberalizing independent India’s retail sector; the course will thus be both a history of the past as well as a history of the present.
Taught by: Mitchell
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: ANTH 166
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 169 Merchants, Saints, Slaves and Sojourners: the Worlds of the Indian Ocean
Do oceans serve to divide and demarcate distinct cultures and regions? Or do they facilitate exchange, connection and cosmopolitanism? This course will explore the manner in which the Indian Ocean has played both roles throughout history, and how the nature of those divisions and connections has changed over time from the ancient to the modern world. We will reconstruct the intertwined mercantile, religious and kinship networks that spanned the Indian Ocean world, across the Middle East, East Africa, South Asia, Southeast Asia and China, illuminating the histories of Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam, while also considering the role of successive imperial political formations, from Rome to Britain. Throughout the semester we will seek to understand the Indian Ocean through the people who lived and worked in its milieu - from consuls and military commanders, to traders, brokers, sailors, prisoners and slaves. Course materials will draw on a variety of disciplines (anthropology, archaeology, material culture, religious studies) to construct the cultural, economic, and environmental history of the Indian Ocean.
Taught by: Petrie
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: ANTH 169, NELC 189
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
SAST 170 Asian American Psychology
Using a cultural perspective, this course is intended to provide knowledge of Asian American personality, identity, and its relationship to mental well-being; analyze psycho-social research pertinent to Asian Americans; and develop critical thinking skills on Asian American issues through experiential learning/discussions.
Taught by: Kumar, M
Also Offered As: ASAM 170
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 189 Islam in Modern South Asia
This course will examine Islam in modern South Asia, particularly in Pakistan, from diverse disciplinary perspectives. In popular discourse and media, Pakistan is usually presented as a volatile Muslim country primarily of interest as a "security problem". Most Western discussions and commentaries about Pakistan abound with stereotypical depictions of religious fundamentalism and/or the threat of the country's nuclear weapons to global security. This course will complicate and bring into question such stereotypes and alarming narratives. It will do so by examining the complexity of Pakistan's religious and political past and present. The focus of this course is on the intellectual history and traditions, as well as the lived practice of Islam in Pakistan. By drawing on a range of primary and secondary sources including film, literature, and anthropological texts, we will explore the diversity of Islam and Muslims in Pakistan. We will begin with the context of colonial India, and interrogate transformations in South Asian Islam during the 19th and early 20th century, before moving to Pakistan in the contemporary period. Among the major themes discussed in this course include modern South Asian Muslim reform movements, intra-Muslim polemics on questions of normative practice and ethics, contestations of religious authority, sectarianism, minorities, Madrasses (Islamic seminaries) and Muslim traditions of education, religion and the state, Cyber Islam, and religion and the media. While focusing on modern South Asia and Pakistan, this course will also engage Islam in Afghanistan in both historical and contemporary contexts.
Also Offered As: ANTH 189, SAST 589
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 199 Independent Study
Directed Study for Undergraduates
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Independent Study
0.5 Course Units

SAST 200 Introduction to Art in South Asia
This course is a survey of sculpture, painting and architecture in the Indian sub-continent from 2300 B.C. to 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
Taught by: Meister/Staff
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: ARTH 104, SAST 500
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 208 Doing Research: Qualitative Methods and Research Design
This interdisciplinary course introduces students to qualitative research methods and frameworks in the social sciences and humanities. Students will learn how to frame an effective research question, situate it in relation to existing research, select the most appropriate methods for addressing the question, and develop an effective research plan. Each week students will be introduced to a new set of frameworks for analysis, see specific examples of their application drawn from anthropological, historical, and related scholarship and have opportunities to practice applying and evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of specific methodological tools. The goals of the semester will be for each student to develop their own research proposal for a specific project. Students will be introduced to a range of textual, archival and media collections and databases available at Penn, with particular attention to South Asia and other specific regions of interest to course participants. Students will also have the opportunity to identify sources of funding for summer and/or thesis research projects, and submit applications for these opportunities as part of the course. The course is ideal for students considering summer research, an undergraduate thesis, or an application to the Fulbright or other research program. It may be taken by itself as a freestanding course, or may be sequenced with SAST 209, Writing Research, the following fall semester.
Taught by: Mitchell
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: ANTH 201, SAST 508
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 241 Devotion and Ecstasy: Bhaktas and Sufis
This course is designed to introduce students to the wide array of devotional and mystical literatures of pre-modern South Asia. We will focus on the texts, practices, and discourses of the religious and literary communities which create these forms of literature, placing them within social and historical contexts. Topics covered include the formation of Sufi silsilahs in India, Krishna bhakti and the Vaisnava sects, Kabir, Guru Nanak and the Sikhs, Tulsidas's Ramcharitmanas, and other texts in translation.
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: SAST 540
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 247 Gender and Sexuality in Hinduism
Issues related to gender and sexuality occupy a complex, often contradictory place in Hinduism. Sexual desire, sexual activity, and the body are simultaneously celebrated, manipulated, controlled, and restricted. This fundamental ambiguity is at the core of this course, which concerns itself with religious perspectives on the body, gender and sexual activity in Hinduism. Topics include: dharma, morality, and sexual practice; menstruation; pregnancy and childbirth; Bhakti and Tantra; same-sex relations; masculinities; hijras and the notion of the "third sex"; eroticism in the literary, visual, and performing arts; colonialism; and somatic nationalism.
Taught by: Soneji
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: GSWS 608, RELS 631, SAST 607
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
SAST 249 Re-enchanting Modernity: A Guide to Sufism in South Asia
This undergraduate level course introduces students to Sufism in modern South Asia, with a particular focus on how Muslim 'mystics' and their 'mystical' methods interacted with modernity, colonialism, technological developments and globalization. This course is divided into three parts. In the first part of this course, students are provided with an overview of the theological and historical background of the dominant expression of Islam that came to be identified as 'Sufism' or 'Islamic mysticism', the historical development of Sufi institutions and spaces in South Asia, and the historical emergence of South Asia as a prominent global center of Sufism. The second and main part of this course introduces students to a range of anthropological and historical works that are revelatory about how Sufi in modern South Asia were and remain intimately connected to modern political and technological developments. Providing students with an overview of Sufi re-enchancements 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 contemporary 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: Sevea
Also Offered As: RELS 249
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 250 History of Hinduism
This course will explore the history of the religion(s) designated by the term 'Hinduism' from their earliest articulations down to the rise of modern reforms in the nineteenth century. The study of Hinduism is perhaps unique among the scholarly traditions on world religions in that it has to date had no serious connected account of its historical development, as scholars have preferred to take structural, sociological, phenomenological, and doctrinal approaches to the religion. The course, after a brief review of scholarly approaches to Hinduism and their interpretive legacies, will seek to develop a historical sense of the religion through attention to shifts in liturgy, ritual, theology, doctrine, sacral kingship, and soteriology. The course will include the reading of primary sources relevant to understanding these changes as well as highlight both modern and premodern traditions of their interpretation. It will also consider and assess some of the key interpretive ideas in the study of Hinduism, including, Sanskritization, Great and Little Traditions, cult formation, regional and popular religious movements, and canon formation. There will also be sustained consideration of the question of religion and socio-political power as well as relations between Hinduism and other religions like Buddhism and Islam.
Taught by: Soneji
Also Offered As: RELS 251
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 251 Muslim Sainthood Practices
This course aims at introducing various classical, popular and modern Muslim saints in South Asia. We will read the life stories of these saints and focus on their contribution to various religions in South Asia. We will read the life stories of these saints and focus on their contribution to various religions in South Asia. We will learn about the major concepts initiated and circulated by these saints and their distinctive ways of dealing with spiritual aspects. While focusing on their sainthood practices, we also study the nature of the dialogue which addresses the questions such as pluralism, localism, and a new paradigm of spirituality that continually interacts with diverse modes of everyday life in South Asia. In order to understand their impact on visual and media cultures, we also watch two documentaries and compare these visual sources with sainthood literature and practices.
Taught by: Mohammad, M.A.
Also Offered As: RELS 242, SAST 551
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 252 Music of South and Southeast Asia
What role does music play in articulating religious identities and spaces? What is the importance of ritual musics as they persist and change in the modern world? How does music reflect and articulate religious ways of thinking and acting? In this course, we explore these and other questions about the interrelations between music, religion, and ritual in South and Southeast Asia. Focusing on India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, and Indonesia, the course emphasizes music 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
Also Offered As: ANTH 242, MUSC 252
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit
SAST 262 The Making of Medieval India
This course will provide an in-depth understanding of South Asia in what is often called its ‘medieval’ period--from the rise of the great temple kingdoms until the end of the Delhi Sultanate in the sixteenth century (c. 500 CE - c. 1500 CE). This millennium is arguably one of the most transformative in South Asia’s history, a period when many of its most distinctive social and cultural features evolved. The course will provide both an overview of the period as well as an introduction to major interpretations and types of sources (textual, visual, and archaeological). The focus throughout the course will be on the heterogeneous development of states, societies and cultures with special attention to long-term processes of transformation. One set of themes explored will be largely social and economic, focusing on the development of agrarian and peasant societies, aristocracies and intellectuals, as well as the role of mercantile, pastoralist, nomadic and forest-living groups. Another set of themes will explore cultural transformation, including the development, transformation and interaction of religious practices, the emergence of cosmopolitan and regional literary cultures, and the rise of distinctive urban, courtly, and rural world views. Special themes of discussion may include violence and manners, material cultures, religious conflict, devotional religion and gender relations.

Taught by: Ali
Course usually offered either term
Also Offered As: SAST 562
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

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

Taught by: Sharkey
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: ASAM 239, NELC 239
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

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

SAST 282 Gender & Development in India
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: GSWS 282, INTR 290, SAST 582
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

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, SAST 590
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

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

SAST 300 Directed Study
This course is required for all senior honors majors, and open to senior majors. Majors must, in addition, prepare a research paper. One-term course offered either term
Activity: Independent Study
1 Course Unit

SAST 312 20th Century South Asian Art
Topic varies. Spring 2015: Using resources of the Philadelphia Museum of Art’s exceptional collection, this workshop will explore India’s remarkable traditions of sculpture produced for singular narrative and iconic ends.

Taught by: Meister
Also Offered As: ARTH 311, ARTH 312
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
SAST 324 Sanskrit Literature and Poetry
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
Also Offered As: COML 324, COML 624, SAST 624
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 334 A Survey of Sanskrit, Pakrit, and Classical Tamil Literature in Translation
This course will cover most of the genres of literature in South Asia's classical languages through close readings of selections of primary texts in English translation. Special focus will be given to epics, drama, lyric poetry, satirical works, and religious literature.
Taught by: Patel
Also Offered As: COML 334, SAST 534
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

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

SAST 403 Beginning Bengali
This course introduces students to colloquial Bengali. It gives equal emphasis to each of the four skills, reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Language will be studied in the context of socio-cultural aspects of West Bengal and Bangladesh. Besides lessons from the text, a major portion of the syllabus will be based on topics drawn from films, cultural events, festivals, food, and religion.
Taught by: Banerjee
Two terms. student must enter first term.
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit
Notes: Offered through Penn Language Center. This is a two-semester course.

SAST 405 Beginning Pashtu I
For BA Students: Language Course
Course usually offered in spring term
Also Offered As: PERS 111, PERS 511
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit
Notes: Offered through Penn Language Center

SAST 406 Beginning Pashtu Part II
For BA Students: Language Course
Course usually offered in spring term
Also Offered As: PERS 112, PERS 512
Prerequisites: Beginning Pashtu Part I or equivalent ascertained through placement test or permission of instructor.
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
Notes: Offered through Penn Language Center.

SAST 407 Beginning Kannada Part I
This is a systematic introduction to the Kannada language and culture for beginners. The course aims at developing listening and comprehension and a real life interactive speaking ability in a variety of everyday topics. The Kannada script is introduced from the beginning and the language is presented in its socio-cultural context for achieving a meaningful and operational control of the language. Students acquire basic rules for structural and socio-cultural appropriateness. Students learn vocabulary related to a variety of topics during the semester. Class activities include watching videos, role-playing, language games and group work. Evaluation is based on class participation, performance in quizzes and tests and completed assignments.
For BA Students: Language Course
Taught by: Swaminathan
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit
Notes: Offered through Penn Language Center

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

SAST 410 Beginning Marathi Part I
The first year course in Marathi begins with learning the Devnagari script which is common for other important languages like Hindi and Nepali. With proper emphasis on grammar, vocabulary, and phonetics, the syllabus will see the student becoming able to speak conversational Marathi, read Marathi data from the Internet, and compose simple short essays on selected topics.
For BA Students: Language Course
Taught by: Ranade
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit
Notes: Offered through Penn Language Center
SAST 411 Beginning Marathi Part II
For BA Students: Language Course
Taught by: Ranade
Course usually offered in spring term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit
Notes: Offered through Penn Language Center

SAST 412 Intermediate Marathi Part I
For BA Students: Language Course
Taught by: Ranade
Course usually offered in fall term
Prerequisite: Beginning Marathi Part II or equivalent ascertained through placement test or permission of instructor
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 413 Intermediate Marathi Part II
For BA Students: Last Language Course
Taught by: Renade
Course usually offered in spring term
Prerequisites: Intermediate Marathi Part II or equivalent ascertained through placement test or permission of instructor.
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 421 Intermediate Urdu
In Intermediate Urdu, the curriculum focuses on the development of reading, listening and speaking skills. Although there are short assignments for writing in Urdu, the emphasis on developing writing as a skill is not part of the course objectives. Authentic texts in the three skills include conversations, short stories, current events, articles, films and plays. There is a continuous emphasis on vocabulary development and students are expected to add about five hundred new words to their active vocabulary per semester. The rules of grammar for structural accuracy and social/cultural propriety are parts of the regular curriculum. Class activities include students' short presentations, role-plays, singing and conversations. There are weekly assignments and quizzes, a mid-term and a final examination. The final evaluation will rest on class participation, performance in quizzes and tests, and completed assignments. This is a two-semester course.
Taught by: Menai
Two terms. student must enter first term.
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit
Notes: Offered through Penn Language Center.

SAST 425 Intermediate Pashtu Part I
For BA Students: Language Course
Course usually offered in fall term
Also Offered As: PERS 113, PERS 513
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit
Notes: Offered through Penn Language Center

SAST 426 Intermediate Pashtu Part II
Two terms. student must enter first term.
Also Offered As: PERS 114, PERS 514
Prerequisites: Intermediate Pashtu Part II or equivalent ascertained through placement test or permission of instructor.
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
Notes: Offered through Penn Language Center.

SAST 427 Intermediate Kannada Part II
For BA Students: Language Course
Taught by: Sundaram
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit
Notes: Offered through Penn Language Center

SAST 428 Intermediate Kannada Part II
For BA Students: Last Language Course
Taught by: Sundaram
Course usually offered in spring term
Prerequisites: Intermediate Kannada Part II or equivalent ascertained through placement test or permission of instructor.
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
Notes: Offered through Penn Language Center.

SAST 445 Advanced Pashtu Prose Literature
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: PERS 116, PERS 516
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit
Notes: Offered through Penn Language Center.

SAST 447 Advanced Kannada: Selected Topics
Taught by: Rajagopalan
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 480 Readings in Sanskrit Literature
Readings of selected texts.
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: COML 507
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 494 Early Marathi
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit
Notes: Offered through Penn Language Center

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.
Taught by: Meister/Staff
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: ARTH 104, SAST 200
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit
SAST 502 The Mullah & The Englishman - Islam in Modern South Asia
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
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: SAST 209, RELS 549
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 503 Historical Transitions In Early India
This course will focus on major historical transitions in the South Asian subcontinent until approximately AD 1200. It will focus on particularly on political, social and liturgical philosophical change. It will also introduce students to the major narratives and interpretations of the ancient and early medieval periods as they bear on these questions and will also familiarize students with the sources upon which this history has been based. It will review debates, critical perspectives and recent trends in this historiography with a view toward developing a sensitivity to the theoretical problems that attend the study of pre-modern India. Its persistent themes will be historical continuity and disjuncture in the history of religious practices and ideas, the emergence of political forms and the nature of the 'state' in precolonial India, transformations of society and economy, and the relationship between discursive production and relations of power. It will be of interest to students of history, literature, religion and archaeology.
Taught by: Ali
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 505 Topics in Indian Art
Aspects of sculpture, painting, iconography, or architecture in the Indian sub-continent. Topic varies. Fall 2016: Important as texts have been to South Asia's history, perceptions of the physical world dominate experience within South Asian cultures. Seeing and being seen, vocalizing and hearing, contribute to the construction of meaning. This pro-seminar will approach South Asia's perceptual world as expressed and tested by art, and methods to frame art as a source of knowledge.
Taught by: Meister
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: ARTH 511
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 507 Introduction to Modern South Asian Literature
Taught by: Sreenivasan, R.
Also Offered As: SAST 007
Prerequisites: This course provides an introduction to the literatures of South Asia - chiefly India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh- between 1500 and the present. We will read translated excerpts from literary texts in several languages - Braj, Persian, Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Marathi, Malayalam, and Tamil - and explore the relationship between these literary texts and their historical contexts. No prior knowledge of South Asia is required.
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 508 Doing Research: Qualitative Methods and Research Design
This interdisciplinary course introduces students to qualitative research methods and frameworks in the social sciences and humanities. Students will learn how to frame an effective research question, situate it in relation to existing research, select the most appropriate methods for addressing the question, and develop an effective research plan. Each week students will be introduced to a new set of frameworks for analysis, see specific examples of their application drawn from anthropological, historical, and related scholarship and have opportunities to practice applying and evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of specific methodological tools. The goals of the semester will be for each student to develop their own research proposal for a specific project.
Students will be introduced to a range of textual, archival and and media collections and databases available at Penn, with particular attention to South Asia and other specific regions of interest to course participants. Students will also have the opportunity to identify sources of funding for summer and/or thesis research projects, and submit applications for these opportunities as part of the course. The course is ideal for students considering summer research, an undergraduate thesis, or an application to the Fulbright or other research program. 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
Also Offered As: SAST 208
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
SAST 524 Growing up Funny: Nation and Identity in South Asian Writing
It is a curious fact that some of the most compelling fiction about and by South Asians features the coming of age of a child protagonist. This body of writing appropriates and reshapes the classic European Bildungsroman, but it also uses narrative traditions from South Asia in order to tell the story of the postcolonial nation, and to chart the contours of contemporary South Asian identity and sexuality. In this course, we will read novels, short stories and plays—some well known and others less so, some now considered ‘classics’ and others very recent, produced from within the Indian subcontinent as well as from the West. All of these speak of the excitement and trauma of growing up ‘Indian’. Through them, we will discuss key features of the political and social upheavals of the Indian subcontinent, as well as the dynamics of the family, gender relations, sexual identities and cultural belonging. The course will include writings by Rudyard Kipling, Salman Rushdie, Bapsi Sidhwa, Amitav Ghosh, Mahasweta Devi, Hanif Kureishi, Anjana Appachana, Arundhati Roy, Meera Sanyal, Sara Suleri, Shyam Selvadurai, and Mahesh Dattani.
Taught by: Loomba
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

SAST 529 An Introduction to Religion in South Asia
This undergraduate-level course introduces students to the multi-religious complexion of South Asia as a region, with a particular focus upon key religious traditions and the resemblances and interactions between them. This course is divided into two parts. In the first part of this course, students are introduced to key religious traditions of South Asia, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Islam and Sikhism. Students will be encouraged to survey academic works pertaining to, on the one hand, the literature, doctrines, cosmologies, rituals and histories of, and prominent places of worship in, the Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Muslim and Sikh religious traditions. On the other hand, the development of South Asia into a distinctive space and spiritual ‘homeland’ for multi-religious communities. Whilst the first part of the course focuses upon religious traditions autonomously, the subsequent section of the course is thematic and encourages students to make comparisons, and discover sophisticated relationships and dynamic interactions between religious traditions in South Asia. Students are introduced to scholarly writings that are revelatory of the materiality of religious traditions in pre-modern and modern South Asia; everyday forms of piety in South Asia; gender positions in religious traditions; encounters of religious traditions with European colonialism; and, perceptions of the ‘other’ in pre-modern religious traditions. Herein, students will find multiple sites of resemblances or differences, and cultural negotiations, engagements and contests, within religious traditions in South Asia.
Taught by: Elias
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: RELS 119, RELS 519
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 540 Religions of India in Practice
This course uses ethnography and documentary film to examine religious practice in India, looking at daily rituals and habits associated with religion and special moments in collective religious life, such as festivals, pilgrimage and "rites of passage." We'll also investigate ways that religious life intersects with secular life, the state, the nation, and media.
Taught by: Novetzke
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: SAST 241
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

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

SAST 548 Hindu-Muslim Relations in South Asia
This seminar examines engagements between Hindu and Muslim traditions in South Asia from medieval to modern times. We explore historical case studies of Hindu-Muslim relations and the formation of religious identities, together with the ways in which these identities have been contested and constructed in modern discourses on religion and politics. Through the course of the seminar, we interrogate the analytical categories of conquest, iconoclasm, conversion, and syncretism, around which several current debates on Hindu-Muslim relations have been framed. Topics discussed include: the interactions of Sufi, Bhakti and Yogic traditions, Mughal religious cultures; the impact of colonialism on religious identities and sectarian relations; the partition of India and creation of Pakistan, and nationalist historiographies.
Also Offered As: RELS 250, SAST 248
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit
SAST 550 History of Hinduism
This course will explore the history of the religion(s) designated by the term 'Hinduism' from their earliest articulations down to the rise of modern reforms in the nineteenth century. The study of Hinduism is perhaps unique among the scholarly traditions on world religions in that it has to date had no serious connected account of its historical development, as scholars have preferred to take structural, sociological, phenomenological, and doctrinal approaches to the religion. The course, after a brief review of scholarly approaches to Hinduism and their interpretive legacies, will seek to develop a historical sense of the religion through attention to shifts in liturgy, ritual, theology, doctrine, sacral kingship, and soteriology. The course will include the reading of primary sources relevant to understanding these changes 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
Also Offered As: RELS 551
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 551 Muslim Sainthood Practices
This course aims at introducing various classical, popular and modern Muslim saints in South Asia. We will read the life stories of these saints and focus on their contribution to various religions in South Asia. We will read the life stories of these saints and focus on their contribution to various religions in South Asia. We will learn about the major concepts initiated and circulated by these saints and their distinctive ways of dealing with spiritual aspects. While focusing on the 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.
Also Offered As: RELS 242, SAST 251
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 560 Modern History of Pakistan
This course is designed as an introduction to the contemporary history of Afghanistan and Pakistan, with an emphasis on the intertwined history of both countries; their other regional neighbors; and global politics. The course focuses on global trends such as empire, nationalism, the Cold War, superpower competition, and transnational Islamism. At the same time, participants will explore how local people viewed their lives amidst these trends, and how local dynamics on this northwestern fringe of the Subcontinent changed the face of global politics. The readings supplement political and economic history with primary sources drawn from popular poetry, oral narrative, and memoir. Finally, we'll be following current events in the region, and placing them in their sociohistorical context. Therefore, there are two main goals for this course: (1) to introduce the specific history of Afghanistan and Pakistan up to present, and (2) to introduce typologies of social institutions and events, assisting class participants to develop their own frameworks for interpreting current events in the region after the end of the course.
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: HIST 384
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 562 The Making of Medieval India
This course will provide an in-depth understanding of South Asia in what is often called its 'medieval' period—from the rise of the great temple kingdoms until the end of the Delhi Sultanate in the sixteenth century (c. 500 CE - c. 1500 CE). This millennium is arguably one of the most transformative in South Asia's history, a period when many of its most distinctive social and cultural features evolved. The course will provide both an overview of the period as well as an introduction to major interpretations and types of sources (textual, visual, and archaeological). The focus throughout the course will be on the heterogeneous development of states, societies and cultures with special attention to long-term processes of transformation. One set of themes explored will be largely social and economic, focusing on the development of agrarian and peasant societies, aristocracies and intellectuals, as well as the role of mercantile, pastoralist, nomadic and forest-living groups. Another set of themes will explore cultural transformation, including the development, transformation and interaction of religious practices, the emergence of cosmopolitan and regional literary cultures, and the rise of distinctive urban, courtly, and rural worldviews. Special themes of discussion may include violence and manners, material cultures, religious conflict, devotional religion and gender relations.
Taught by: Ali
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: SAST 262
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit
SAST 589 Islam in Modern South Asia
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: Tareen
Also Offered As: ANTH 189, SAST 189
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 589 South Asia Studies (SAST)

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 neo-liberalism in global context with particular attention to neoliberalism’s relationship to cities, and exam the role that urban growth has played in spurring neoliberal policies and practices. It asks how policy makers, voters, and private interest worldwide have responded to the growth of urban poverty and slums, challenges wthiing 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
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: ANTH 503, ARTH 104, URBS 504
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 610 Topics in South Asian Cinema
In this course we will focus on post colonial global modernity as they are imaged through cinema. Foregrounding the concept of affect, we will consider topics such as: the role of mass affect and mass culture; nationalism, community, sentimentality and nostalgia; film technology and film industry development as productive of a history of the senses; affect and the (gendered and racialized) subject and body, film genres and development of post colonial modernism; style; cinephilia and production of publics; representat ions of popular religiosity; and the relationship between feeling and ideology. We will examine films that suggest particular affective states. Our study will be interdisciplinary and readings will draw on fields of cinema, area studies as well as anthropology, philosophy and history.
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
SAST 617 Readings in Modern Indian History
This course will introduce students to the major themes and debates of modern Indian historiography. Though the course will not provide a survey outline of events, it will be organized around themes that have a broad chronological sequence. It will touch on key topical themes like the transition to colonialism, the development of the colonial economy, the evolution and significance of colonial knowledge systems, the impact and shape of religious and social reform, the rise of nationalism and communalism, and peasant, labour and subaltern history. The goal of the course will be to provide students with an understanding of the significance of debates around key themes in modern Indian history and a familiarity with the different 'schools' or 'traditions' of historical interpretation, including Nationalist, Marxist, the so-called 'Chicago', and 'Cambridge' schools, as well as the Subaltern collective and post-Subaltern historiography.
Taught by: Ali
Course usually offered in spring term
Also Offered As: COML 217, HIST 670, SAST 217
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

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

SAST 627 South Asia Literature as Comparative Literature
This course takes up the question of reading South Asian Literature both as a collection of diverse literary cultures, as well as the basis for a methodology of reading that takes language, region, and history into account. It takes as a starting point recent work that foregrounds the importance of South Asian language literatures, and their complex interactions, to an understanding of South Asian literary history, as well as critiques of the concept of world literature that question its underlying assumptions and frequent reliance on cosmopolitan languages such as English. In what ways can we describe the many complex interactions between literary cultures in South Asia, rooted in specific historical contexts, reading practices, and cultural expectations, while maintaining attention to language and literary form? How, in turn, can we begin to think of these literatures in 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, Sharankumar Kimbale, and Torlae Jatin Gajarawala. We will also examine selected works, in English and in translation, as case studies for discussion. This course is intended both for students who intend to specialize in the study of South Asia, as well as for those who focus on questions of comparative literature more broadly.
Taught by: Goulding
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: COML 627, SAST 227
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 632 Hinduism and Colonial Modernity
This seminar deals with the question of modernity in South Asia, with a specific focus on the construction, dissemination, and politicization of Hinduism in nineteenth and twentieth century India. It focuses on three central heuristic lenses—namely those of European imperialism, Orientalism, and nationalism—to study modernity and its 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
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: RELS 632
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
SAST 633 THE PERSIAN INTELLECTUAL TRADITION
What makes Persian culture distinctive within broader Islamic intellectual history, and what constitutes the historical and geographical boundary of the Persianate intellectual and cultural zone? These questions lie at the center of inquiry in this seminar in which participants will read and discuss a broad range of works from the 11th to the 20th centuries. Readings will include works on philosophy and language, Sufi epic poems, religious and cultural geographies, accounts of natural and manufactured wonders, urban and political histories, as well as other kinds of texts. All readings will be in English for the regular meeting of the seminar; students with a reading knowledge of Persian and an interest in participating in an additional meeting to read the assignments in their original language should register for the higher of the two numbers listed for this course.
Taught by: Elias
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: RELS 643, RELS 743
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 640 Religious Bodies and Sex in South Asia
This graduate-level course introduces students to the writings of key religious scholars in modern South Asia who associated the regeneration of Hinduism, Islam, and Sikhism with the cultivation of bodies and sexual practices. Particular attention will be paid towards religious texts produced in modern India, Pakistan and Bangladesh pertaining to sexual bodies, exercises and health; celibacy; body-building; the transmission of sexual knowledge; and the political roles of the 'Hindu,' 'Muslim' and 'Sikh' body. In this course, students will be encouraged to engage a range of sources including religio-sexual manuals, autobiographies, novels, speeches, pamphlets, official records, recipes and films. Moreover, students will be introduced to the academic literature on South Asian religious scholars and 'sex gurus' in South and Southeast Asia; religious sexuality in South Asia, Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Europe; and, the transcultural literary networks that led to the production of religio-sexual texts in modern South Asia.
Taught by: Sevea
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: RELS 670
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 700 Proseminar in South Asia: History & Society
This course will focus on the history of Islam in Southern India, Sri lanka and Indian Southeast Asia from its early history to contemporary times. The study of Islam in South Asia has ben overwhelmingly oriented toward northern India and more recently the states of the upper Deccan. The goal of this course will be to develop an historical awareness of islam in South India and Sri Lanka, taking note of the distinctive dynamics that have shaped Muslim communities in these regions. It will also explore the linkages between these regions and the wider world of the Indian Ocean, with a particular focus on Southeast Asia. Themes covered in the course will include the emergence of Muslim trade disporas in South India, Islamization, the articulation of caste and Islam, the role of Islam in peasant revolt, Sufism in South India, Muslim trading and Sufi networks in the Indian Ocean, Muslim monuments and material culture, inter-religious and inter-ethnic dynamics, modern Muslim identities, and minority politics in South India and Sri Lanka.
Taught by: Ali
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 701 Methodology Seminar: Topics
Topics vary
Taught by: Patel
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: ANTH 711, HIST 702
Activity: Seminar
1 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; economic liberalization and political transformations; land, law, and eminent domain; capital, banking, and credit; kinship, community, and approaches to the concept of identity (including caste, nation, language, and religion); and the environment, politics, and urban and rural ecologies. 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 South Asia scholarship and more generally. Particular attention will be devoted to the different material forms through which publics have been imagined, addressed, and brought into being within specific historical moments and contexts (including each student's own areas of research interest). Although the course will pay particular attention to the unpacking and application of these concepts, debates, and issues as they pertain to South Asia, readings will be drawn from a range of authors and would be of use to students studying similar issues in other parts of the world.
Taught by: Mitchell
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: ANTH 706
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 711 Seminar in Indian Art
Research seminar. Topics change. Spring 2016: We will examine the practice and symbolism of South Asian Architecture with case studies of how to build and how to make buildings meaningful.
Taught by: Meister
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: ARTH 711
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 710 Seminar Classical Indian Studies
Two terms. student may enter either term.
Prerequisites: Two years of Sanskrit is required.
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 701 Methodology Seminar: Topics
Topics vary
Taught by: Patel
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: ANTH 711, HIST 702
Activity: Seminar
1 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; economic liberalization and political transformations; land, law, and eminent domain; capital, banking, and credit; kinship, community, and approaches to the concept of identity (including caste, nation, language, and religion); and the environment, politics, and urban and rural ecologies. 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 South Asia scholarship and more generally. Particular attention will be devoted to the different material forms through which publics have been imagined, addressed, and brought into being within specific historical moments and contexts (including each student’s own areas of research interest). Although the course will pay particular attention to the unpacking and application of these concepts, debates, and issues as they pertain to South Asia, readings will be drawn from a range of authors and would be of use to students studying similar issues in other parts of the world.
Taught by: Mitchell
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: ANTH 706
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 711 Seminar in Indian Art
Research seminar. Topics change. Spring 2016: We will examine the practice and symbolism of South Asian Architecture with case studies of how to build and how to make buildings meaningful.
Taught by: Meister
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: ARTH 711
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

SAST 760 Seminar in Modern South Asian History
Centered on major recent work and on writing by class participants, this seminar is primarily for Ph.D candidates doing research on South Asia. Each week we read the equivalent of one book and meet to discuss its contribution to South Asian historiography. Each participant will submit a major piece of writing for discussion and will assign auxiliary readings to be read with their own work for one class meeting.
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
SAST 769 Feminist Theory
Specific topic varies. Dissent is a key word in our world today—from the Arab Spring to the American Fall, we have seen expressions of political disobedience and protest around the world. It is more urgent than ever to consider what dissent might mean, what shapes it has taken historically, what connection might exist between it and literature, and what futures are possible. We will read key critical and theoretical work alongside some powerful, tender and controversial writings and films (largely but not exclusively produced in the postcolonial world), to inquire into the politics and poetics of governance and dissent. Students are invited to make connections with other historical and geographical contexts, and explore the different forms of dissent individual, collective, urban, rural, 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 attention to different performances of dissent at a popular, mass orSee the English Department’s website at www.english.upenn.edu for a complete description of the current offerings.
Also Offered As: ENGL 769, GSWS 769, PSCI 683
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

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