

Syllabus *History of South Asia 1*

Course number 21:510:280

Fall 2020, Rutgers University-Newark
Tuesday/Thursday 10:00 am – 11:20 am
*synchronous remote course

INSTRUCTOR

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:30 am -12:30 pm on Zoom and by appointment

GRADER

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Office Hours: By appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course covers the history of the Indian subcontinent from the Indus Valley Civilization until the 1520s CE. We proceed chronologically and cover some of the major political, social, religious, and cultural developments in premodern India. Students will be exposed to primary sources, written by a diverse array of people and translated from numerous languages, as well as the politics of history in the present day. Students will also learn about the practice of history more broadly, including how to read primary and secondary texts and how to assess historical arguments.

SYLLABUS OVERVIEW

General Information Pages 1–4

Weekly Readings, Schedule & Assignments Pages 5–8

PANDEMIC PEDAGOGY – NEED TO KNOW FOR REMOTE LEARNING

We have synchronous class meetings on Tues/Thurs. You need a reliable internet connection.

Class meetings on are Zoom; you can find the link on Canvas.

Our Canvas class site has a module for each week, with all readings, assignments, and quizzes. Each week features an overview document that lists everything you need to accomplish that week.

The professor wants you to succeed; if you have issues or concerns, please be in touch.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students can expect the following through successful completion of this course:

Acquire basic knowledge of South Asian history through the mid-second millennium CE, including major political, social, religious, and cultural developments.

Learn strategies for approaching and making sense of primary historical sources.

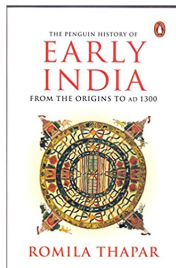
Learning to understand and evaluate scholarly arguments.

Formulate historical questions and identify the means of investigating those queries.

Learn how to assess different types of historical evidence and posit a grounded thesis.

Appreciate the role of history and historical memory in present-day debates.

REQUIRED TEXT



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

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

Purchase: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/0143029894/>
or through the campus bookstore

All other readings and links are available on Canvas.

GRADING AND ASSIGNMENTS

Your grade is based on four components:

Class Attendance and Participation	45%
Individual Writing Assignments	25%
Midterm Essay	10%
Final Exam	20%

Class Attendance: Your attendance grade includes

- (1) attendance and participation in the twice weekly class meetings
- (2) watching short online videos
- (3) participation in the group discussions on Canvas
- (4) individual online quizzes (participation grade-based)

Online lectures are held on Tuesdays and Thursday between 10 a.m. and 11:20 a.m. EST, and quizzes / recorded videos / group discussions should be completed during the listed week. Lectures are not recorded.

Class Preparation: You should carefully read all listed readings. There are three types of readings every week: (1) secondary texts (unmarked on the syllabus), (2) primary sources, and (3) present-day connections. These three types of materials require different critical reading skills, and all are important for making sense of South Asian history and its relevance today.

Midterm and Final: The midterm essay is worth 10% of your grade, and the final exam is worth 20% of your grade. Both exams are cumulative, drawing upon lectures and readings. They are both essay-based and open book / open note. You may not, however, collaborate with fellow students; if you consult other students, it will be considered an academic integrity violation.

Individual Writing Assignments: There are four writing assignments in the course:

- Sept. 21: Primary Source Analysis 1 (Mahabharata)
- Oct. 12: Primary Source Analysis 2 (Ashokan edicts)
- Oct. 26: Primary Source Analysis 3 (Kamasutra)
- Nov 16: Primary Source Analysis 4 (Al-Biruni)
- Dec 7: Primary Source Analysis 5 (Kabir and Tamil poetry)

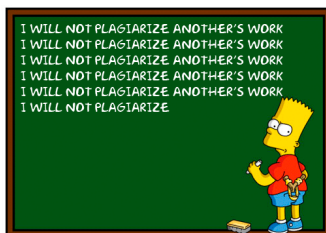
The primary source analyses are due at 11:59 pm via Canvas and are each worth 5% of your final grade. These exercises develop the skills necessary to read and make sense of primary sources, a key part of studying history and living in the world as a critical thinker.

CLASS POLICIES

Absences: If you have more than two absences from online lectures, discussions, or quizzes, your grade may suffer. If you find yourself missing class or having difficulties, whether for pandemic-related or other reasons, please reach out to the professor to discuss the best way to succeed in this course. Please note the following Rutgers University policies on absences:

- *Excused Absences:* Recognized grounds for absence include illness requiring medical attention, curricular or extracurricular activities approved by the faculty, and recognized religious holidays. You must contact the professor or grader, in advance where possible, or absences will be counted as unexcused.
- *Extended Absences:* Any student who misses eight or more sessions through any combination of excused and unexcused absences will not earn credit in this class. Such students should withdraw to avoid getting an F.

Academic Integrity: The professor and grader expect full academic honesty from all students. If you plagiarize, cheat, help another student cheat, or are otherwise academically dishonest, you will face disciplinary action. Being caught cheating is the last thing anybody needs in the middle of a pandemic, and you will be caught. So, Don't Cheat. See: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>



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

Intellectual Property. Lectures, powerpoints, assignments, and other materials utilized in this course are protected by United States copyright laws as well as Rutgers University policy. You are not permitted to share any of these without written consent from the instructor. Similarly, all original work that you produce for this course is covered by copyright protections, and neither the instructor nor grader will share your work without written consent from you.

Late Work: All late work incurs a penalty of one letter grade (10% reduction) for every 24 hours late. If you find yourselves having difficulties in this department for pandemic-related reasons, please talk to the professor.

SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE

Counseling Center: The Rutgers–Newark Counseling Center provides a number of counseling and consultative services to enrolled and eligible undergraduate and graduate students. For students, if you are seeking individual or group therapy, you can expect to find a safe, supportive space to collaboratively identify and begin to change the thoughts, behaviors, and beliefs that prevent you from being your best self. <http://counseling.newark.rutgers.edu>.

Disabilities: Rutgers welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University’s educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus’s disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form: <https://webapps.rutgers.edu/student-ods/forms/registration>.

Food: PantryRUN, the campus food pantry, helps students who have difficulty affording enough healthy food to remain focused on their studies and stay healthy. You can find hours and information here: <https://myrun.newark.rutgers.edu/pantryrun>.

Pandemic: Your go-to for how COVID-19 is being handled at Rutgers University-Newark is MyRun Student Resources: <https://myrun.newark.rutgers.edu/covid19>.

Writing: The Rutgers University-Newark Writing Center provides tutoring for students who want to strengthen their reading, writing, and research skills. They offer individual sessions and writing workshops to all undergraduate students currently enrolled in classes on the Rutgers University-Newark campus; they are offering remote tutoring. More details here: <https://sasn.rutgers.edu/student-support/tutoring-academic-support/writing-center>.

Week 1 Introduction to South Asia, Evidence, and the Practice of History

Sept 1 10–11 a.m. Lecture
Sept 3 10–10:30 a.m. Conversation with Taymiya Zaman, Associate Professor of History at the University of San Francisco

Thapar, *Early India*, excerpts of chapter 1, 1-29
Primary Source: Incredible India Poster
Present-Day Connection: Vinay Lal, “History and Politics” introduction

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

Week 2 Indus Valley (Harappan) Civilization and Modern Politics

Sept 8 NO CLASS
Sept 10 10–11:20 a.m. Lecture, including conversation with Mark Kenoyer, George F. Dales Jr. and Barbara A. Dales Professor of Anthropology, at 10:45

Thapar, *Early India*, excerpts of chapter 3, 69-71, 79-88
“A History of the World in 100 Objects” Podcast: Indus Seal
Primary Source: “Around the Indus in 90 Slides”
Present-Day Connection: Witzel and Farmer, “Horseplay in Harappa”

Week 3 Vedic India: The Beginning of Text-Based Indian History and Hinduism (maybe)

Sept 15 10–11 a.m. Lecture
Sept 17 10–10:30 a.m. Conversation with Tony Joseph, author of *Early Indians: The Story of Our Ancestors and Where We Came From* (2018)

Thapar, *Early India*, excerpts of chapter 4, 98-117, 122-136
Primary Source: *Rig Veda*, trans. Doniger, 29-31, 89-92, 289-90 (hymns 10.90, 1.162, 10.145)
Primary Source: *Upanishads*, trans. Olivelle, 34-36, 46-52, 69-71 (sections 3.1, 3.9, 4.5)
Present-Day Connection: Sen, “Argument and History”

Week 4 The Rise of Kingdoms: Society and Politics in the Mahabharata

*Sept. 21, Primary Source Analysis 1 on *Mahabharata* (due on Canvas by 11:59 pm)

Sept 22 10–11 a.m. Lecture
Sept 24 10–10:30 a.m. Conversation with Wendy Doniger, Mircea Eliade Distinguished Service Professor of the History of Religions at the University of Chicago

Thapar, *Early India*, first half of chapter 5, 146-164
Introduction to *Mahabharata*, Longman, 829-833 (introduction)
Primary Source: *Mahabharata*, excerpts in Longman, 850–70

Present-Day Connection: Madrigal, “An Indian Politician Claimed Ancient Hindus Invented the Internet”

Week 5 New Religions: Buddhism and Jainism

Sept 29 10–11 a.m. Lecture
Oct 1 10–10:30 a.m. Review of Therigatha assignment

Thapar, *Early India*, second half of chapter 5, 164-173
Sunil Khilnani’s podcasts on Buddha & Mahavira, from “Incarnations: India in 50 Lives”
Primary Source: *Therigatha*, trans. Hallisey, pp. 21, 23, 43-45, 51, 77, 111-15, 197-211
(read every other page)
Present-Day Connection: Dalrymple, “The Nun’s Tale”

Week 6 Ramayana: Social Ideals and their Discontents

Oct 6 10–11 a.m. Lecture., including conversation with Ajay Rao, Associate Professor
in Historical Study and Religion at the University of Toronto, at 10:30
Oct 8 10–10:30 a.m. Lecture

Introduction to *Ramayana*, Longman, 878-881
Primary Source: Valmiki’s *Ramayana*, trans. Pollock, vol. 2, 71-103 (every other page)
Primary Source: Valmiki’s *Ramayana*, Longman, 912-917
Ramanujan, “Three Hundred Ramayanas,” 131–160
Present-Day Connection: Doordarshan Ramayan episode 76, Fire Test

Week 7 Ashoka and the Mauryan Empire

*Oct. 12, Primary Source Analysis 2, Ashokan edicts (due on Canvas by 11:59 pm)
Oct 13 10–11 a.m. Lecture
Oct 15 10–10:30 a.m. Conversation with Nayanjot Lahiri, Professor of History at Ashoka
University in Sonipat, Haryana, India

Thapar, *Early India*, excerpts of chapter 6, 174-184, 194-208
Lahiri, *Ashoka in Ancient India*, 118–32
Primary Source: Ashokan edicts, Longman, 874-877
Present-Day Connection: Kapadia, “Why Ashoka, the emperor of India who inspired the
symbols of new republic, is still worth reading”

Week 8 India 200 BCE – 300 CE: The Silk Road and Dharma

Oct 20 10–11 a.m. Lecture
Oct 22 NO CLASS (work on midterm essay)

Davis, *Global India Circa 100 CE*

Primary Source: *The Law Code of Manu*, trans. Olivelle, 13, 19-20, 43-48

Present-Day Connection: Ambedkar on Burning the Manu Smriti

Present-Day Connection: Shantha, “As Symbols of Discrimination Fall Worldwide, Meet the Women Who Blackened Manu’s Statue”

*October 22, Midterm Essay due on Canvas by 11:59 p.m.

Week 9 Sex and Other Ideals in “Classical” India

*Oct 26, Primary Source Analysis 3, *Kamasutra* (due on Canvas by 11:59 pm)

Oct 27 10–11 a.m. Lecture
Oct 29 10–10:30 a.m. Conversation with Wendy Doniger

Thapar, *Early India*, second half of chapter 8, 280-302

Primary Source: Narayan, “Manmata” in *Gods, Demons, and Others*, 85-95

Primary Source: *Kamasutra*, trans. Doniger, 3-21, 48-51

Present-Day Connection: Excerpt from Doniger, *Redeeming the Kamasutra*

Week 10 India in the World c. 700 CE

Nov 3 10–11 a.m. Lecture
Nov 5 10–10:30 a.m. Midterm essay discussion

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

Sunil Khilnani, 15-minute podcast on Shankaracharya, “Incarnations: India in 50 Lives”

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

Present-day Connection: Arnold and Turner, “Why are we Surprised When Buddhists are Violent”

Week 11 South Indian Vignettes c. 700-1300 CE: Cholas, Temples, and Travelers

Nov 10 10–11 a.m. Lecture
Nov 12 10–10:30 a.m. Conversation with Katherine Kasdorf, Associate Curator of Arts of Asia and the Islamic World at Detroit Institute of Arts

Thapar, *Early India*, 348-370, 381-404

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

Primary Source: Ramanujan trans., *Hymns for the Drowning*, 3-13

Present-day Connection: “The Hindu Temple” Video (5 minutes)

Week 12 Game-changers: Mahmud of Ghazni, the Ghurids, & decline of Indian Buddhism

*Nov. 16, Primary Source Analysis 4 on al-Biruni's *India* (due on Canvas by 11:59 pm)

Nov 17 10–11 a.m. Lecture

Nov 19 10–10:30 a.m. Conversation with Manan Ahmed Asif, Associate Professor of History at Columbia University in New York

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

Eaton, "Temple desecration in pre-modern India"

Primary Source: Al-Biruni's *India*, 3-8, 17-26

Present-day Connection: Gandhi, "When Toppling Monuments Serves Authoritarian Ends"

Week 13

November 24 and 26 NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING RECESS

Week 14 Tale of Two Empires: Delhi Sultanate and Vijayanagara Empire

Dec 1 10–11 a.m. Lecture

Dec 3 10–10:30 a.m. Conversation with Richard Eaton, Professor History at Arizona State University

Asher and Talbot, *India Before Europe*, 35-77

Sunil Khilnani, 15-minute podcast on Krishnadevaraya, from "Incarnations: India in 50 Lives"

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

Present-day Connection: *Padmaavat* Trailer and Khalid, "'Padmaavat' puts together every stereotype of Muslims in India"

Week 15 Religious Updates: Bhakti, Sufis, and the Sikh tradition

*Dec 7: Primary Source Analysis 5: Kabir and Tamil poetry (due on Canvas by 11:59 p.m.)

Dec 8 10–11 a.m. Lecture

Dec 10 10–11 Class: 10–10:30 a.m. Conversation with Simran Jeet Singh, instructor at Union Seminary, activist, and far more; 10:30-11 a.m. review and debrief

Nesbitt, "Origins and development of Sikh faith: The Gurus"

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

Present-day Connection: Daily Show: Confused Islamophobes Target American Sikhs

Final Exam: December 17, 8:30–11:30 a.m.

*exam available December 15–17; must be completed by 11:59 a.m. on December 17.