

History 243: South Asian History and Civilizations

Spring 2026

Instructor: Dr. Tithi Bhattacharya

Office Hours: Monday & Wednesday, 12:00–1:00 PM, and by appointment

Required Text

Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy* (5th Edition)

Available through Amazon and the Purdue Bookstore.

Course Description

This course introduces students to modern South Asian history, beginning with the Mughal Empire and tracing the development of “modernity” in the region. Topics include:

- Mughal rule and its legacy
 - Successor states of the 17th and 18th centuries
 - British colonialism and anticolonial resistance
 - Histories of caste, religious reform, and communal violence
 - Gender and colonialism
 - Primary and secondary historical sources
 - Select films reflecting South Asian history
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Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate basic knowledge of major political, social, cultural, and religious developments in South Asian history
 - Practice close reading of primary sources
 - Evaluate scholarly arguments and formulate historical questions
 - Develop thesis-driven written arguments
 - Understand the role of history and memory in present-day debates
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Course Policies

Digital Devices

Electronic devices—including laptops, tablets, and phones—are not permitted in class. Bring printed notes and the textbook.

Participation

Active, informed participation is required.

Handouts

All handouts will be posted on Brightspace. Bring printed copies to class.

Attendance Policy

1. Attendance is required for every class.
 2. Excused absences (medical appointments, emergencies, family events, job interviews) require documentation. Contact the instructor beforehand when possible.
 3. You may have up to three absences (excused or unexcused) without penalty. Additional non-school-related absences subtract one point each from the final grade.
 4. If you miss class or an assignment, you must contact the instructor to arrange a makeup.
 5. Missing 10 or more classes results in an automatic **F**.
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Assignments and Grading

Assignments

- Midterm Exam — 30%
- Discussion Posts — 20%
- Final Exam — 40%
- Attendance, participation, quizzes, and extra credit — 10% (weighted)

Grading Scale

Percentage	Grade
96–100	A
90–95	A–
86–89	B
80–85	B–
76–79	C
70–75	C–
66–69	D
60–65	D–
0–59	F

This course is not graded on a curve.

University Policies

Attendance and Absences

Attendance is taken regularly. No late work accepted unless arranged through the Office of the Dean of Students when necessary.

Office of the Dean of Students: **(765) 494-1747**

Protect Purdue

Students may report safety concerns related to university protocols to the instructor or to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities.

Accommodations

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the Purdue Disability Resource Center:

- Email: drc@purdue.edu
- Phone: (765) 494-1247

Mental Health & Wellness

- WellTrack: on-demand mental health tools
- Office of the Dean of Students: (765) 494-1747, M–F, 8:00 AM–5:00 PM

Basic Needs Security

Students experiencing food or housing insecurity may seek assistance from the Dean of Students. Emergency support is available through the Critical Need Fund.

Emergency Preparation

Major campus emergencies may require changes to the course. Updates will be posted on Brightspace and emailed to students.

Learning Climate

Discrimination or harassment is not tolerated. Incidents may be reported to the instructor or the Dean of Students.

Academic Integrity

Cheating or plagiarism results in an **automatic failing grade for the entire course** and referral to the Dean of Students.

For support:

- Purdue OWL's plagiarism guide
 - University Academic Dishonesty Policy
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Note About the Semester

Patience and generosity are essential this semester. Students are encouraged to reach out to the instructor with concerns.

Tentative Weekly Schedule

Schedule subject to change; updates will be given in class.

Week 1 (Jan 12): Introduction to South Asia

Assignment:

Identify difficult terms or concepts from Chapter 1. Upload a Word Document to Brightspace.

Due: Friday, Jan 16, 5:00 PM

Week 2 (Jan 19): India and Modernity

Readings: Bose & Jalal, Chapters 1–3

Guiding Questions:

- Is South Asia a “static” society? Why is it portrayed that way?
- How have diverse cultural and religious communities coexisted?
- Define: syncretism, Indo-Islamic civilization, multilingualism, reactions to Vedic Hinduism

Due: Friday, Jan 23, 5:00 PM

Weeks 3–4 (Jan 26–Feb 6): The Indo-Islamic World

No Class: Feb 2 & Feb 4

Readings:

- Bose & Jalal, Chapters 4–5
- Tithi Bhattacharya, “Adventures in Islam” (Huffington Post)

Guiding Questions: Mughal authority, European trade aspirations, British rise in India

Key Terms: Ibadat Khana, Din-i-Ilahi, Akbar, Aurangzeb, mansabdari, military fiscalism, spice

trade, and more

Due: Friday, Feb 6, 5:00 PM

Weeks 5–6 (Feb 9–16): The World the East India Company Built

Readings:

- Bose & Jalal, Chapters 5–6
- Primary sources (Nawab of Bengal, Richard Becher, Shah Abd Ul-Aziz)

Guiding Questions:

Transformation of the East India Company, local resistance

Key Terms: Battle of Plassey, Buxar, diwani, nabobs

Due: Friday, Feb 20, 5:00 PM

Weeks 7–8 (Feb 23–Mar 6): Company Raj

Readings: Bose & Jalal, Chapters 7–8

Guiding Questions: British educational and cultural policies

Key Terms: Macaulay's "Minute," Sati, Rammohun Roy, Thuggee

Due: Friday, Mar 6, 5:00 PM

Week 9 (Mar 9 & Mar 11)

- Midterm Review
- **Midterm Exam**

Week 10 (Mar 16–22): Spring Break

Week 11 (Mar 23): Guest Lecture

Week 12 (Mar 30): The Revolt of 1857

Readings:

- Bose & Jalal, Chapter 9

- Karl Marx, "The Indian Revolt" (1857)
Guiding Questions: Mutiny vs. rebellion vs. jihad
Key Terms: sepoy, Bahadur Shah Zafar, Proclamation of 1858
Due: April 3, 5:00 PM
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Week 13 (Apr 6): Collaboration and Resistance under the Raj

Readings:

- Bose & Jalal, Chapter 10
 - Video: Shashi Tharoor at the Oxford Union (2015)
 - Dadabhai Naoroji, "India Must Be Bled"
Guiding Questions: British imperial economics, famine responsibility
Key Terms: drain of wealth, famine codes, Indian Civil Service
Due: Friday, April 9, 5:00 PM
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Weeks 14–16 (Apr 13–May 1): Review and Assessments

- Discussions
 - Practice Tests
 - Makeup Exams
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Have a Great Semester!