

History 243: SOUTH ASIAN HISTORY AND CIVILIZATIONS Spring 2026

PROFESSOR: Dr. Tithi Bhattacharya

Office Hours: MW 12pm-1:00 pm and by appointment

Required Text:

Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy*; Fifth Edition

The book is available at: [Amazon](#) and Purdue Bookstores

COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES

This course introduces students to modern South Asian history and traces the lineages of the 'modern' from the time of Mughal rule. We will study the Mughal empire and explore its legacies after its demise; the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century successor states; the structure of British rule and organized resistance to it; and finally, key debates in the subcontinent's history and historiography. We will pay close attention to dynamic histories of caste, religious reform, and communal violence, and study the effects of colonialism on gender roles.

Course materials include both primary sources (diaries, autobiographies, speeches, and official correspondence) and secondary sources (historical accounts, review essays), and a selection of films.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Acquire basic knowledge of South Asian history including major political, social, religious, and cultural developments.
- Learn close reading of primary historical sources.
- Evaluate scholarly arguments, assess evidence and formulate historical questions
- Learn how to posit a grounded thesis and make an argument.
- Appreciate the role of history and historical memory in present-day debates.

Policy on Digital Devices: I do not allow ANY electronic devices during class: no laptops, no tablets, and no phones will be permitted. **You need to have hard copies of all your notes and your textbook.**

Participation: This course is structured around your active and informed participation.

Handouts:

All handouts will be posted on Brightspace, unless otherwise specified. You are responsible for having a **printed hard copy** of each handout in class with you during lectures.

Policy on Absences

1. All students are expected to attend ALL classes
2. If you are absent from class for an excused reason (other than official university business), you may make up work from that day. Excused absences include doctor's appointments, medical emergencies, family events such as weddings and funerals, job interviews. In order to be excused you must present DOCUMENTATION supporting the above reasons. **I strongly advise you** to contact me prior to class for your absence to be excused even on the above grounds. You may do this by phone, email, or in person.
3. Attendance will be taken EVERYDAY. You may have **three** absences, whether excused or unexcused, without penalty. All non-school-related absences will result in the loss of one point from the final grade.
4. If you miss class and/or an assignment you **absolutely must contact me** to set up an appointment to make up the missed assignment. Please remember it is YOUR responsibility to set up the meeting to make up for missed work.
5. **If you are absent for 10 classes or more you will earn an automatic F for this course.**

Assignments

Mid-term Exam	30%
Discussion Posts	20%
Final Exam	40%
Attendance, participation	10%
pop quizzes, extra credit (Weighted)	

Grades

96-100 (A)
90-95 (A minus)
86-89 (B)
80-85 (B minus)
76-79 (C)
70-75 (C minus)
66-69 (D)
60-65 (D minus)
0-59 (F)

This course is NOT graded on a curve.

ACADEMIC PROCEDURES AND REGULATIONS

Attendance & Absences

I will be taking attendance for this course; I expect students to maintain regular attendance on lecture days. Most importantly, I expect you to complete all discussion posts, projects, and written assignments on time. No late submissions will be accepted.

However, I understand that you may have to miss a class or an assignment. If a student needs accommodation for more than two weeks of absence or missed assignment, they will have to contact the Office of the Dean of Students at (765) 494-1747 to discuss needs for support.

Protect Purdue Guidelines

Any student who has substantial reason to believe that another person is threatening the safety of others by not complying with Protect Purdue protocols is encouraged to report the behavior to and discuss the next steps with their instructor. Students also have the option of reporting the behavior to the [Office of the Student Rights and Responsibilities](#). See also [Purdue University Bill of Student Rights](#) and the Violent Behavior Policy under University Resources in Brightspace.

Accommodations

Purdue University strives to make learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on disability, you are welcome to let me know so that we can discuss options. You are also encouraged to contact the Disability Resource Center at drc@purdue.edu or by phone: 765-494-1247

Mental Health/Wellness

If you find yourself beginning to feel some stress, anxiety and/or feeling slightly overwhelmed, try [WellTrack](#). Sign in and find information and tools at your fingertips, available to you at any time.

If you need support and information about options and resources, please contact or see the [Office of the Dean of Students](#). Call 765-494-1747. Hours of operation are M-F, 8 am- 5 pm.

Basic Needs Security

Any student who faces challenges securing their food or housing and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Dean of Students for support. There is no appointment needed and Student Support Services is available to serve students 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Considering the significant disruptions caused by the current global crisis as it relates to COVID-19, students may submit requests for emergency assistance from the [Critical Need Fund](#)

Emergency Preparation

In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances beyond the instructor's control. Relevant changes to this course will be posted onto the course website or can be obtained by contacting the instructors or TAs via email or phone. You are expected to read your @purdue.edu email on a frequent basis.

Learning Climate

Incidents of bias or discrimination contribute to creating an unwelcoming environment for individuals and group. Purdue encourages anyone who experiences or observes unfair or hostile treatment on the basis of identity to speak out for justice and support, within the moment of the incident or after the incident has passed. Purdue's policy on discrimination can be viewed [here](#). Following from the University's non-discriminatory policy, I will not tolerate any

such behavior in this class. If I judge any behavior to be harassing, disruptive or discriminatory, I will report the student to the Dean of Students.

Academic Dishonesty

Cheating, plagiarism, and other dishonest practices will be punished as harshly as Purdue University policies allow. Please review this helpful guide on how to avoid plagiarism [here](#) and Purdue's plagiarism policy [here](#) Purdue University's Official Academic Dishonesty Policy is applicable to ALL assignments and papers in this course. Any instances of cheating or plagiarism, however slight, on any assignment or paper will result automatically in a failing grade for the ENTIRE course and referral to the Dean of Students for further disciplinary action. If you have any confusion on this matter please visit the Online Writing Lab on the web for their useful handout on plagiarism. You are always welcome to consult me about all your assignments.

NOTE ABOUT THIS SEMESTER

Patience will be the key to our success this semester. Let us try to be patient with each other as we learn new things and be generous with the way we handle challenges. I am always available to talk!

Tentative Weekly Schedule

Please note that this schedule and the topics covered are subject to change depending upon a variety of factors. Changes will be announced in class. If you are not able to attend class, it is your responsibility to find out what was covered

Week 1: Jan 12

Introduction to South Asia

Questions: From Chapter 1, pick the terms, phrases or concepts YOU find difficult and input them in a Word Document. Then Upload the document to Brightspace.

Due by Friday, 1/16 at 5:00 pm.

Week 2: Jan 19

India and Modernity

Weekly Reading

Bose and Jalal: Chapter 1-3

Questions: Is South Asia a static, timeless society? Why is it thought as such? How have people of different faiths, cultures, and social backgrounds been accommodated in South Asia, and learn to accommodate others' differences?

Explain the Key words: syncretism, reactions to Vedic Hinduism, Indo-Islamic civilization, multilingualism

Due by Friday, 1/23 at 5:00 pm.

Week 3-4: Jan 26-Feb 6

The Indo Islamic World

NO CLASS on FEBRUARY 2nd and 4th.

Weekly Readings

1. Bose and Jalal: Chapter 4, 5

2. Tithi Bhattacharya, "Adventures in Islam,"

in *Huffington Post*
<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/tithi-bhattacharya/adventures-in-islam-is-th b 8920010.html?>

Key Questions: How did the Mughals maintain authority in a highly decentralized state? What tactics did they deploy in order to co-opt potential rivals? Why were Europeans so drawn to India for trading opportunities in the 16th and 17th centuries? How did the British emerge as the most powerful European power in India?

Key Concepts and Vocabulary: Ibadat Khana, din-i-illahi, Akbar, Aurangzeb, Shivaji, mansabdari system, Mughals as a source of legitimacy and authority, “military fiscalism,” spice trade, Indian Ocean trade, Estado da India, East India Company, Dutch East India Company, joint-stock company, factories.

Due by Friday, 2/6 at 5:00 pm.

Week 5-6: Feb 9-16

Weekly Readings

The World that the East India Company Built

1. Bose and Jalal: Chapter 5 and 6

Primary Source Document: selection from Nawab of Bengal, Richard Becher, Shah Abd Ul-Aziz pp. 52- 55 in *Sources*.

Key Questions: How did the East India Company transition from being a commercial enterprise into a political and military entity? Why did the East India Company feel the need to acquire territory and challenge local rulers?

Key Concepts and Vocabulary: Calcutta, Battle of Plassey, Battle of Buxar, nabobs, transformation of the economy of Bengal, diwani

Due by Friday, 2/20 at 5:00 pm.

Week 7-8: February 23-March 6

Weekly Readings

Company Raj

Bose and Jalal: Chapter 7 and 8

Key Questions: What reasons impelled the British to begin educating select Indians in the English language?

Key Concepts and Vocabulary: Thomas Macaulay and his “Minute on Indian Education,” Orientalist-Anglicist debates, Sati, Rammohun Roy, Thuggee

Due by Friday 3/6, at 5:00 pm.

Week 9: March 9

March 11

MIDTERM REVIEW

MIDTERM

Week 10: March 16-22

Spring Break

Week 11: March 23

Guest Lecture

Week 12: March 30

Weekly Readings:

The Revolt of 1857

Bose and Jalal: Chapter 9

Primary Source Document: Karl Marx, "The Indian Revolt,"
New York Daily Tribune, 16 September 1857

Key Questions: Was the uprising of 1857 a mutiny, rebellion, or jihad? Was it "backward"- or "forward"-looking?

Key Concepts and Vocabulary: sepoys, Mutiny-Rebellion of 1857, Bahadur Shah Zafar, Proclamation of 1858, transition from Company Raj to Crown Raj

Due on 4/3 at 5:00 pm

1.

Week 13: April 6

Weekly Readings:

Collaboration and Resistance under the Raj

Bose and Jalal: Chapter 10

Video: Shashi Tharoor at the Oxford Union (2015)

Primary Source Document: Dadabhai Naoroji,
"India Must be Bled" (1900), in *Poverty and
UnBritish Rule in India*, pp. 643-7

Key Questions: What major roles did India—and Indian resources—play in the British Empire? How did Indian political figures employ the "drain of wealth theory" to their advantage? Do the British deserve blame for the horrific famines of the late 19th century? Key Concepts and Vocabulary: drain of wealth theory, princely states, famines, famine codes, deindustrialization, Indian army, imperial darbars, Indian civil service, Lord Curzon

Due: Friday 4/9 at 5:00 pm.

Week 14-16: April 13-May 1

Discussions, Practice Tests, Makeup Tests

HAVE A GREAT SEMESTER