

## **Hist 135: Indian Subcontinent to 1750**

Lecture: TuTh 8.00-9.15 (Howell 115)

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 11-12, Thursdays 11-12

### **Course Description**

This course will provide you with a factual and analytical understanding of the broad sweep of Indian History from the rise of the Indus Valley Civilization (ca. 2500 BCE) until the arrival of the British (1750 CE). The course examines the major cultural, religious and social factors that shaped the course of Indian history, introducing students to the major processes, narratives and historical interpretations. We will explore themes such as urbanization, the growth of empires and regional states, the establishment of mercantile and trade networks, and the development and transformation of Indian religions including Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam. In addition to assigned secondary readings students will read select primary sources on the history, religion and culture of the Indian Subcontinent. We will also make use of literary, archaeological and visual sources in class. Major objectives of the course will be to draw attention to India's cultural and religious past and to assess contemporary concerns and ideologies in influencing our understanding and representation of that past. Prior knowledge of Indian history or culture is not required, but intellectual engagement is expected.

### **Goals**

By the end of the course, I hope that you will not only have learned about the history of Ancient and Medieval India, but also developed the analytical skills you will need to present your ideas effectively and coherently. More specifically, I hope that by the end of the course you will:

- understand that states, peoples, and even religions change over time and that historical factors, affect people's lives.
- understand how historians write history, that historical works are written in specific contexts and that they must be read with those contexts in mind.
- have learned that the people of the Indian subcontinent are diverse in ideology, class, race, education, politics, and religion.
- understand the continued importance of the past in understanding today's South Asia.

**Teaching Team:** There is one teaching assistant for this course, a historian with experience as a teacher and researcher. The TA will lead three recitation sections, hold

office hours, grade your participation and written work, and generally ask challenging questions and help you navigate the project of thinking like a historian. Your TAs is: Gabriel Moss [gwmoss@live.unc.edu](mailto:gwmoss@live.unc.edu)

### Materials

There are two general textbooks, which will be used for much of the course:  
Thomas R. Trautmann, *India: Brief History of a Civilisation*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).  
Catherine B. Asher and Cynthia Talbot, *India before Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

It is recommended that students purchase these two books.

All other readings will be posted on Sakai.

**Please note: I may occasionally introduce changes to the syllabus as and when deemed necessary to promote your learning. Any change will be notified to you in advance on Sakai and through email.**

### Course Policies

- Attendance at all recitations is compulsory and regular attendance is expected at lectures.
- Some of the in-class activities will be graded.
- More than 3 unexcused absences from your recitations will result in your final grade being lowered by half a letter grade for each additional class that you miss.
- Extensions, make up exams, incompletes, excused absences, etc. will only be given in cases of documented personal/medical emergencies.
- All late assignments will be penalized by half a letter grade for every date that it is late. For example an A- that is one day late will be a B+.
- If you are experiencing any difficulty with your assignments, please speak with me or your TA immediately, preferably before the assignment deadline.
- If you need special testing or classroom accommodations, please see me or your TA as soon as possible.
- **Plagiarism is a serious offense in the historical profession, and is unacceptable at this university; the provisions of the honor code are applicable to this as to other courses, and students will be expected to follow them.** <http://honor.unc.edu/honor/code.html>

## Class Schedule

Please complete the reading listed under each class date before you arrive in class. Lectures will not duplicate the reading assignments, but will develop related topics in greater depth. As part of your grade, I will regularly ask you questions about the assigned readings in class through the Poll Everywhere system (see below).

### Week 1

August 22: **Introductions – What is History and why should we study it?**

August 24: **South Asia: Sources, Approaches, Historiography**

Thomas R. Trautmann, *India: Brief History of a Civilisation*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp.1-15.

### Week 2

August 29: **The Indus Valley or Harrapan Civilization**

Trautmann, *India*, pp. 16- 31.

September 31: **The Aryan Controversy**

Thomas Trautmann, 'Introduction', in Trautmann, ed., *The Aryan Debate* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. xiii-xliii.

### Week 3

September 5: **Vedic Society**

Trautmann, *India*, pp. 32-47

A.L. Basham, *Origins and Development of Classical Hinduism* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 20-35.

*The Rig Veda: an Anthology: 108 Hymns*, trans. Wendy O'Flaherty, (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1981), pp. 29-32; 89-93.

September 7: **The Sramanas – New Religious Movements**

Trautmann, *India*, pp. 48-56

A.L. Basham, *Origins and Development of Classical Hinduism* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 36-67 (chapters 3 and 4).

'The Wrong Sacrifice and the Right' (Kutadanta sutta) *Dialogues of the Buddha*, trans T.W. Rhys Davids, Oxford, 1987, pp. 173-85.

### Week 4

September 12: **The Mauryan Empire**

Trautmann, *India*, pp. 56-61.

D.C. Sircar, *Inscriptions of Asoka*, Delhi, 1957, selections

September 14: **Trade, Empire and Cosmopolitan Buddhism**

Trautmann, *India*, pp. 62-72

James Heitzman, 'Early Buddhism, Trade, and Empire', in G. Kennedy and G. Possehl, eds, *Studies in the Palaeoanthropology of South Asia*, 1984, pp. 121-37.

Week 5

September 19: **Brahmanical Reformulations**

A.L. Basham, *Origins and Development of Classical Hinduism*. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 98-116.

*The Laws of Manu*, tr. W. Doniger, (Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1991), pp. 74-82 and 99-104.

September 21: **The Gupta Empire**

Trautmann, *India*, pp. 72-84.

*Kamasutra* trans Doniger and Kakar, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 7-27.

**September 21, 8am: Essay due**

Week 6:

September 26: **Gupta Game**

September 28: **The Rise of Theistic Religions**

Trautmann, *India*, pp.102-127.

A.L. Basham, *Origins and Development of Classical Hinduism*. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 82-97.

*Bhagavadgita*, selections.

Week 7

October 3: **Political Structures in Early Medieval India**

Kulke and Rothermund, *History of India*, pp.109-22, 127-131, 137-140

Ronald Inden, "The Temple and the Hindu Chain of Being," in Ronald Inden, *Text and Practice: Essays on South Asian History*, pp. 192-212.

The Visnupurana

October 5: **The 'Advent' of Islam**

C.B. Asher and C. Talbot, *India before Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) pp. 13-24.

A. T. Embree, ed., *Alberuni's India* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1971) (Selections).

**October 5, 8am: First Primary Source Analysis due**

Week 8

October 10: **Sultanates of North India**

Asher and Talbot, *India before Europe*, pp. 25 – 32.

Sunil Kumar, "Qutb and Modern Memory," in ed. Finbarr Barry Flood, *Piety and Politics in the Early Indian Mosque* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008).

October 12: Review

Week 9

October 17 **Mid-term exam**

October 20 no class (Fall break)

Week 10

October 24: **The Delhi Sultanate: Emergence and Expansion**

Asher and Talbot, *India before Europe*, pp. 32-52.

October 26: **Sufism: Religion, Society and Politics**

Simon Digby, 'The Sufi Shaikh as a Source of Authority in Medieval India', *Purusartha*, Vol. 9, pp. 57-77.

Nizam Ad-Din Awliya, *Morals for the Heart: Conversations of Shaykh Nizam Ad-Din Awliya Recorded by Amir Hasan Sijzi*, trans., Bruce B. Lawrence (Paulist Press, 1991) Selections.

Week 11

October 31: **Iconoclasm or Admiration?**

Richard M. Eaton, "Temple Desecration and Indo-Muslim States," in David Gilmartin and Bruce B. Lawrence, *Beyond Turk and Hindu: Rethinking Religious Identity in Islamicate South Asia*, (University Press of Florida, Gainesville, 2000) pp. 246-281.

November 2: **The Mughal Empire: Establishment and Expansion**

Asher and Talbot, *India before Europe*, pp. 115-126

Week 12

November 7: **Administering the Empire**

Asher and Talbot, *India before Europe*, 126-151

Abu'l Fazl Alam, *Ain-i Akbari*, Selections

November 9: **Courts and Households**

Asher and Talbot, *India before Europe*, pp. 186-216.

Abul Fazl, *Ains* 72-75, in *The A'in-i Akbari*, trans. H. Blochmann (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers), vol.1, pp. 162- 9.

Week 13

November 14: **State and Religion**

Iqtidar Alam Khan, "The Nobility Under Akbar and the Development of his Religious Policy, 1560-80," in *India's Islamic Traditions*, ed. Richard Eaton, (New York Oxford University Press, 2003) pp. 120-132.

Satish Chandra, "Jizya and the State in India during the Seventeenth Century," in *India's Islamic Traditions*, ed. Richard Eaton, (New York Oxford University Press, 2003) pp.133-150.

November 16: **Bhakti and Sufi Movements**

Asher and Talbot, *India before Europe*, pp. 105-114.

John Stratton Hawley and Mark Juergensmeyer, *Songs of the Saints of India*, 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed. (New Delhi: OUP, 2008) selections.

Week 14

November 21: **South Asia and the Early Modern World**

Asher and Talbot, *India before Europe*, pp. 152- 185.

Account of William Hawkins, ambassador of King James I of England and his visit to Jahangir, *Visions of Mughal India*, pp 59-75.

**November 21, 8am Second Primary Source Analysis due.**

November 23: no class (Thanksgiving recess)

Week 15

November 28: **Challenges: Marathas, Sikhs and Jats**

Asher and Talbot, *India before Europe*, pp. 225-255.

November 30: **The Eighteenth Century Debate**

Asher and Talbot, *India before Europe*, pp. 256-86.

Week 16

December 5: Review

December 7: Revision (no class)

Week 17

**Final Exam: 8am Thursday December 14.**

### **Requirements and Evaluation**

20% In-Class Activities.

20% Assignment 1: Essay, due **September 22, 8am.**

20% Midterm Exam, on **October 18, 8am.**

10% Assignment 2: First Primary Source Analysis, due **October 6, 8am.**

10% Assignment 3: Second Primary Source Analysis, due **November 22, 8am.**

20% Final Exam, on **December 15, 8am.**

**In-Class Activities Grade:** This grade will be composed of three parts:

- 1) Poll-everywhere questions about the reading. These will take place every lesson and you may drop 4 questions.
- 2) Pop quizzes: you will have 4 pop quizzes during the course. You may drop the lowest of these.
- 3) Participation: your active participation in recitation sessions.

Poll Everywhere: In each class I will use the Poll Everywhere system in order to ask you questions about the readings. You may drop 4 questions. You'll need to register either your phone or your laptop on the Poll Everywhere system (if you haven't already for another class) which you can do by following the instructions at:

<http://help.unc.edu/help/poll-everywhere-faq/>

If you don't want to use your phone for texting, your laptop works as well. **Please register your phone or laptop before the first class.**

Pop Quizzes: There will be 4 pop-quizzes at various points during the semester. These will include questions about maps, questions based on the list of important terms, questions about chronology. You may drop the lowest of these quizzes.

Participation:

Your participation in recitation discussions is crucial to making this course work. You will be responsible for helping to assign your own grade. Here are some general guidelines for activities that involve discussions:

- If you show up on time, every time, and offer insightful comments multiple times at every session—in other words, if you are one of the people on whom I can depend at each meeting— then you will receive a participation grade in the **A** range. (Excellent)
- If you show up on time, every time, and speak up once or twice each meeting, you can expect a participation grade in the **B** range. (Good)
- If you show up on time, every time, and speak up occasionally, you can expect a **C+** or **C** in participation. (Satisfactory)
- If you show up on time, every time, but almost never (or never) speak up, you can expect a **C** or **D** in participation. (Passing)

### **Assignments**

All assignments should be printed out, stapled and submitted to your TA in class on the day that they are due. Remember to include your name and the title of your assignment and please ensure you follow the Chicago citation style – see the following link for details:

<http://www.lib.unc.edu/instruct/citations/>

#### **Assignment 1: Essay**

Answer the following question:

What role have conceptions of race played in the reconstruction of the beginnings of Indian history?

Your essay should be 6 pages long, double-spaced in a standard 12-point font. You should make use of library resources and scholarly articles, and you may also make use of lectures, discussions, and the textbook. It should be accompanied by a bibliography and all sources should be properly cited. See below for some suggested reading. These essays will be graded based on your ability to formulate a coherent argument and support it with evidence.

So, for example:

An "A" essay

- makes a coherent argument that responds to the question
- supports that argument well with appropriate and compelling evidence
- is organized coherently and written clearly
- has a strong analysis, an awareness of the "so-what" significance.

A "B" essay has an argument and supports it, but is lacking clarity, coherence, or strong analysis. A "C" essay lacks a coherent argument or adequate evidence to support the argument. A "D" essay lacks both, but still presents relevant information in partial answer to the question.

Make sure that you leave enough time after drafting your essay to read it again and reflect on these questions:

- Identify your central argument. Have you proved it with evidence? If you have not, what does your evidence actually prove? Should that be your argument instead?
- Outline what you have already written. Does the organization make sense?
- Find your evidence. Have you interpreted it so your reader can understand why you included it?
- Look back over your paragraphs. Does each one have a strong topic sentence?
- Reflect on the process of writing. When did you begin? Where did you write? What did you find most challenging? What do you like best in the current draft? What will you do differently for the next assignment? What will make the next assignment different?

**Suggested Readings for Essay:** (NB. These are neither compulsory nor exhaustive)

Romila Thapar, *Early India: From the Origins to AD 1300*, (London: Penguin, 2002), pp. 98-136.

D.D. Kosambi, *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, Bombay, 1956, pp. 80-143.

Peter Robb, ed., *The Concept of Race in South Asia*, (New York : Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 1-76.

F.R. Allchin, *The Archaeology of Early Historic South Asia: The Emergence of Cities and States*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 41-53, 75-98.

*The History and Culture of the Indian People, Vol. 1*, General Editor, R.C. Majumdar, Bombay, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1956 'The Aryan Problem'. pp. 205-21; 'Aryan Settlements in India', pp. 245-70.

Bridget and Raymond Allchin, *The Rise of Civilization in India and Pakistan*, Cambridge,

Cambridge University Press, 1982.

A.L. Basham, 'Aryan and Non-Aryan in South Asia', in M. Deshpande and P. Hook, eds, *Aryan and Non-Aryan in South Asia*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1979, pp. 1-10.

T.R. Trautmann, *Aryans and British India*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1997.  
Navaratna Rajaram, *Aryan Invasion of India: The Myth and the Truth*, Delhi, Voice of India, 1993.

### **Assignment 2: Primary Source Analysis**

In this class we will be reading a lot of primary sources. You should choose **one** of the following sources that we have talked about in class and analyse it. The sources are:

- *Asoka's edicts*, Edict XIII (Shahbazgahi text) pp. 42-45.
- *The Laws of Manu*, The rules for eating and not-eating meat, pp.102-104.
- *The Kama Sutra*, The reasons for taking another man's wife, pp. 22-26

Your analysis should not summarise the details of the source, but should analyse and evaluate it as historical evidence about India's past. Armed with the knowledge you have gained from lectures and assigned readings, try and put the source in context. Ask who wrote it, when was it written, where was it written, why was it written and for whom was it written. Then ask yourself how this source could help answer questions about the past – and which questions does it not answer. Your analysis should be 4 pages long, double-spaced in a standard 12-point font.

You can find helpful advice on analyzing a Primary Source at the following link (from Carleton College's History Department)

<https://apps.carleton.edu/curricular/history/resources/study/primary/>

### **Assignment 3: Primary Source Analysis**

This assignment is the same as Assignment 2, but the choice of sources to analyse is different. The choices for this assignment are:

- Al-Biruni's *India*, selection from Chapter 1: On the Hindus pp. 17-20 (stop where indicated on page 20)
- Nizam al-Din Awliya, *Morals for the Heart*, Assemblies 23-25 pp. 106-110.
- Abu'l Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, Ain 72, The Manner in which his Majesty spends his time, pp. 162-5.