

# The Idea of India

## (SASSt 003)

*Fulfills General Requirement in History and Tradition*  
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:30am-12  
Williams Hall Room 723

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**Course Synopsis:** This course broadly surveys various perspectives about what constitutes “India” as a cultural, political, and geographic unity from the earliest period of record to the contemporary period. A straightforward chronology moves through significant articulations of “India” throughout history as we seek to understand India in terms of geography, culture, religion, society, gender, nationalism, and globalization. This survey is situated amid debates about the Indus Valley civilization; the “Golden” ages of Ashoka and the Guptas; Mughal India; devotionalism and region; the legacy of Shivaji; colonial formulations of India as part of the “Orient” and a “Jewel in the Crown”; the “Two-Nations” theory; the competing visions of Gandhi, Nehru, and Jinnah; Hindu Right nationalism; the Cold War and non-alliance; and the embrace of India as part of a global economic and cultural community. This is an entry-level survey course in Indian culture and hence there are no prerequisites.

### Requirements:

You’re required to attend all classes, read all materials carefully and thoughtfully, and engage with the subject matter in class and in your writing. This means that during class you’re expected to participate enthusiastically with **regular and direct reference to the reading and films**, and outside of class you’re expected to complete your readings conscientiously. Each week you’ll be asked to compose **a short reaction** paper (2 pages max.) on the readings of the week; you can send this to me and Amruta electronically by Sunday at 5pm. For at least one Thursday session in the semester, you’ll each give **a presentation** on the readings and/or viewings, and **lead discussion** for the remainder of the class.

Throughout the semester you’ll have three projects:

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|------------------------|--|
| <b>First Project:</b>  | Personal Map of India with Key (two pages)                               |
| <b>Second Project:</b> | How was India imagined before modernity? (seven to ten pages)            |
| <b>Third Project:</b>  | How has India been re-imagined in the modern world? (seven to ten pages) |

**The second and third projects must have a thesis, in other words, they cannot merely be descriptive or comparative—they must make an argument.**

**Grading:**

Fifteen percent (15%) of your grade will depend on your attendance and the quality of your classroom participation; fifteen percent (15%) will be based on the quality of your weekly reaction papers; twenty percent (20%) will depend on your day(s) of presentation and leading discussion; and fifty percent (50%) will hinge on three media projects [10%+20%+20%].

**Materials:**

These books will be available for purchase at House of Our Own:

1. Burton Stein, *A History of India*
2. *Sources of Indian Tradition*, Vols. I & II Embree and Hay, eds.
3. *The Ramayana*, R. K. Narayan, trans.
4. *The Mahabharata*, William Buck, trans.

Recommended:

5. Ayesha Jalal and Sugata Bose, *Modern South Asia*

In addition, a course-pack is available at University Copy Center, Houston Hall. All books are on reserve at Rosengarten.

# SYLLABUS

## **WEEK ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE AND ITS AIMS**

- 9/8 Introduction

## **WEEK TWO: THE REAL SEAL: INDIA AS THE LAND OF THE INVADING ARYANS**

Reading: Stein, 1-58; Bryant, 1-45.

- 9/13 Film/Documentary TBA
- 9/15 Lecture: The Aryan Debate and Modern Politics

## **WEEK THREE: IT'S A BRAHMIN'S WORLD: DHARMA, VARNA, AND THE LAWS OF MANU**

Reading: Stein, 59-86; Embree, 203-212.

- 9/20 Lecture: The Caste System in Theory and Practice
- 9/22 Discussion and Presentation

### **FIRST PROJECT DUE 9/22**

## **WEEK FOUR: INDIA SHINING: ASHOKA AND THE GUPTAS**

Reading: Stein, 87-104; Embree, 141-149; selections from the travelogue of Fa-Hein (*Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms*; Legge, J., ed. and trans.)

- 9/27 Lecture: What Makes a “Golden Age” Shine?
- 9/29 Discussion and Presentation

## **WEEK FIVE: RAM RAJYA—THE RAMAYANA**

Reading: R. K. Narayan's Translation of the *Ramayana*

- 10/4 Lecture: Ideal Social Relationships in the Epic World View
- 10/6 Discussion and Presentation

## **WEEK FIVE: THE POST-MODERN EPIC?—THE MAHABHARATA**

Reading: William Buck's Translation of the *Mahabharata*

- 10/11 Lecture: Time and Society in Decay
- 10/13 Discussion and Presentation

## **WEEK SEVEN: A MUSLIM TRAVELER'S VIEW OF INDIA IN THE SECOND MILLENNIUM**

Reading: Reading: Stein, 134-160; selections from *Alberuni's India*, Sachau, ed. and trans.

- 10/20 Lecture: India and the Dar-al Islam

**Last date to hand in a good draft of the second project 10/22**

## **WEEK EIGHT: THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE MUGHALS—AKBAR AND AURANGZEB**

Reading: Stein, 160-188; Pankaj Mishra, "The First Liberal Imperialist"

- 10/25 Lecture: The Vicissitudes of Islamicate Culture in India
- 10/27 Discussion and Presentation

## **WEEK NINE: "HINDU" KINGDOMS—SHIVAJI AND PROTO-NATIONALISM**

Reading: Stein, 189-200; Jim Laine, "The Patriot: Political Readings of Hindu Identity in the Tales of Shivaji, 1869-2001"

- 11/1 Lecture: Who put the "Hindu" in "Hindusthan"?
- 11/3 Discussion and Presentation

### **SECOND PROJECT DUE 11/3**

## **WEEK TEN: FROM MARKET TO SUBJECT: THE COLONIAL VIEW OF INDIA**

Reading: Stein, 201-283; Macaulay, "Minute on Education".

- 11/8 Lecture: How to Imagine a Colony
- 11/10 Discussion and Presentation

## **WEEK ELEVEN: BITTER-SWEET INDEPENDENCE: GANDHI, NEHRU, JINNAH, AND PARTITION**

Reading: Stein, 285-366; "The Partition of India and the Creation of Pakistan," A. Jalal and S. Bose; "Toba Tek Singh" by Manto.

- 11/15 Lecture: The End of Colonialism and the Age of Nations
- 11/17 Discussion and Presentation

## **WEEK TWELVE: HINDU INDIA—HINDUTVA AND THE HINDU RIGHT**

Reading: Selections from *Hindutva* by V. Savarkar in English

- 11/22 Lecture: The Battle Over Secularism and History

**Last date to hand in a good draft of the last project 11/22**

**WEEK THIRTEEN: THE COLD WAR, SOUTH ASIA, AND NON-ALLIANCE**

Reading: Jalal and Bose, "Post-Colonial South Asia: State and Economy, Society and Politics, 1947-1971."

- 11/29 Lecture: The Shape of India in the World
- 12/1 Discussion and Presentation

**WEEK FOURTEEN: CONTEMPORARY INDIA—NUCLEAR MISSILES, CALL CENTERS, AND GODMEN**

Reading: Sharif Shuja, "America and South Asia Since September 11" in *The National Review*; Amitabh Pal, "Indian by Day, American by Night," in *Progressive*; Tahir Shah, "Unholy Smoke," *Geographical*.

- 12/6 Lecture: India in the New Millennium
- 12/8 Recap and Discussion

**LAST PROJECT DUE 12/15**