PS 3325  South Asian Politics -- India: Reconciling Ancient Traditions and Modern Democracy
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Spring 2011  MWF 9-9:50  S-2036

The course will concentrate on the Indian political system, its roots in tradition, society and external sources and the problems it faces in dealing with new and old issues, some of them unique to India, others common to all political systems.

India: the world’s largest democratic polity where a billion citizens struggle over issues of equal rights and caste distinctions, women's rights and dowry deaths, communal violence, terrorism, nuclear proliferation, urbanization and outsourcing. How does the west begin to comprehend India today, a nation where business is conducted on the Internet while political life uses the language and imagery of ancient Hindu epics. Here is a country where the “immutable” caste system adapts to modern post-industrial life, a nation that while it prides itself on “unity in diversity” finds it necessary to suppress minorities seeking new relationships with the state.

How do ancient traditions influence modernity? What is the impact of historical foreign interventions (Muslims who stayed on and British who didn't)? How do concepts like “Indian-ness, independence, “development”, urbanization, globalization and terrorism shape Indian political life? What factors led to the creation of the “spinoff states”, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The subject is very large and the time available is short. Lectures, discussions, web visits to classic Sanskrit texts, scholarly works and news articles are linked to the syllabus and D2L site. Many of the concepts dealt with (notions of dharma, the yugas, varna vs. jati) are complex and commonly misunderstood in the west. Even the more “recent” events of 1857, the the British legacy, and Gandhi’s contributions to present-day India are all too often simplified into inaccurate caricatures. Students unable to keep up with the reading assignments and lectures or unwilling to attend class should not take this course. Novels, memoirs and “recommended” films are included to illuminate certain topics and make the subject --- the development of modern India --- more comprehensible.

There is no text but there are many readings which can be accessed through the D2L website and/or the internet. Those few not available online will be in the QE II Library on reserve. Students will also read two novels, included to give additional perspective to issues within a society that might otherwise appear alien to the uninitiated. These are not optional though there is some choice in their selection and all, including Mistry, may be read at a different, i.e. faster, pace than indicated by the syllabus. The novels may be covered in the final exam and the term paper assignment. PTO.

*“Recommended” films are just that: recommended --- included in the syllabus because they introduce a human dimension to various topics that when presented as theory or historical narrations might seem dry or as news articles too brief and out of context to be completely meaningful to someone not familiar with India. Students are not required to see them and specific content will not be included on any exam or exercise. I had hoped to show these in optional extra sessions but the task of getting copyright permissions for all films may prove too onerous. Some of the films are available from the A.C. Hunter Library, some are legally downloadable and still others should be available at quality video rental firms like Capitol Video or from Netflix. Students interested in seeing those I cannot arrange to show to groups are suggested to make their own viewing arrangements.
Novels: you must read

Mistry: *A Fine Balance* … and one of the following†:

Swarup: Q&A  
Chandra: *Sacred Games*  
Adiga: *White Tiger*  
Swarup: *Six Suspects*  
Roy: *The God of Small Things*

**Supplementary:** Readings, marked “Supplementary” in the syllabus elaborate on themes dealt with in various weeks. They are optional. In addition, the last pages of this syllabus is a list of additional India-related readings under various categories. Students wishing to substitute one of these books for the second, i.e. non-Mistry, novel should consult with the instructor.

**Recommended Films** (and related topics):

- **Weeks 2, 10** Deepa Mehta’s *Water*  
  Dharma, caste, gender issues and/or  
  *Sita Sings the Blues* [http://www.thirteen.org/sites/reel13/blog/watch-sita-sings-the-blues-online/347/](http://www.thirteen.org/sites/reel13/blog/watch-sita-sings-the-blues-online/347/)  
  The enduring past. Epics, Classical period and gender issues  
  and (optional): PBS: *The Buddha*

- **Week 5** Satyajit Ray’s *The Chess Players*  
  Steps en route to 1857: The British  
  consolidate power, takeover of Awadh (Oudh)

- **Week 6** Satyajit Ray’s *The Music Room*  
  Social change in rural India during  
  the early days of the Independence Movement

- **Week 7** Deepa Mehta’s *Earth*  
  Partition: Culmination of the Independence  
  Movement

- **Week 8** Louis Malle’s *India*  
  the controversial series made 20 years after  
  Independence (40 years ago), recut to feature film length. A simpler time?

- **Week 11** Danny Boyle’s *Slumdog Millionaire*  
  Present day problems (poverty,  
  communalism, urbanization, crime. police excesses)

**AND WITHOUT CONNECTION WITH ANY PARTICULAR WEEK**

- **BBC:** *The Story of India*  
  6 hours to cover 5+ millennia

- **CBC:** *India Unbound*  
  present-day India  
  Good for comparison with Malle.

**Grading:**

Midterm exam = 30%  
Final exam = 35%  
One medium-length paper = 35% < 5000 words. Topic will be assigned June 6.  
**Plagiarism is unacceptable and will be rewarded with a zero grade.**  

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† There are sufficient copies of Mistri’s A Fine Balance in the MUN Bookstore as well as limited quantities of the others (which will be available on a first come, first served basis). All novels are also available from The Bookery, Chapters or Amazon.com:
Week 1  week of May 9  Introduction “What is all this ‘Midnight’ stuff?” The notion of India: Problems of definition, continuity, terminology

Readings: D2L Folder 01 Intro - Different views: Over the top? Balanced? Short video  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nIV-Z2NU9zg&feature=related

And for future reference throughout the course download: http://www.webindia123.com/history/facts/time.htm

Week 2, 3: weeks of May 16, 23  Classical Thought and Political Culture 1: “A man’s got to do what a man’s got to do”: Ancient India and the importance of tradition: Power, what are its roots; how should it exercised? What can be inferred from the sacred and other ancient texts? Do they have relevance today? the notion of Dharma, in the the Mahabharata, Ramayana, Arthasastra, Bhagavad Gita, Canti Parva, Laws of Manu. How can one live and/or rule in Kali Yuga?

Readings:  D2L Folder 02  Classical Thought --- Selections (see below)

Oral Traditions, Dharma, The Ramayana,
Bhagavadgita segments (click on translation and then read Chapters 1,2,3 (Arjuna’s Sorrow, The Path of Knowledge, Karma-Yoga);
Manua Dharmasastra (The Laws of Manu) 1,2  Read Book 1 Ch. 1 verses 31,45, 81 to end, skim Chapters 2 –6, Read Chapter 8 41-46, 170-175, Ch. 9 verses 317-336, Chapter 10 verses 51-130
The Arthasastra --- selections
The Edicts of Asoka --- selections

For a more complete Gita, with some commentary go to www.gita-society.com/

May 25 ??? Film show: Sita Sings the Blues (date may change)

Week 4  week of May 30  Political Culture 2: Caste and religion: Is this what holds it all together? Or is this the weak link in the system? varna vs. jati, jajmani. Did the British create the caste “system”? Scheduling and reservation issues.

Readings: D2L Folder 03  Caste  and start Mistry: A Fine Balance, pp. 3-105 -- scene setting, getting to know the characters

Weeks 5,6,7  Is (was) there an “India” and how did we get to that state (pun intended) of affairs? Early times, gaps, Muslims who are not Mughals, Mughals and Mahrattas, the “Company Bahadur”. 1857: myths and reality, late 19th century, Congress and Independence movement, The Giants: Naoroji, Gokhale, Tilak, Aurobindo, Gandhi, Ambedkar, Jinnah. Nehru. Partition, Constitution, Emergency.

Week 5  Week of June 6  Early rulers, Muslims: their contributions, impacts, legacies and decline  their impacts: land settlement under the Afghans. The Mughals arrive, expand, build and fade away, Todor Mall and Akbar, Aurangzeb... dissolution. Marathas, Sikhs, Pindar... decline of Oudh, the Company in Bengal

Readings: D2L Folder 4 Earlier Rulers:
Mistry: A Fine Balance pp. 107-189 life in the village
JUNE 6: PAPER TOPIC ASSIGNED

Week 6  week of June 13  The British impact. The “Angreez” try to grasp the common concerns of rulers of every age, from local power holders to emperors, and impose “answers”: extraction of surplus, i.e. land revenue, regularization of power relationships, as well as deal with new issues: education, language and urbanization. caste and the Census of India.

Readings: D2L Folder 05 - Early British Influence
Continue reading Mistry, A Fine Balance pp. 193-296

Prichard, Iltudus: Chapter from Chronicles of Budgepore, QE II
Dirks, Nicholas, Castes of Mind (chapter 1) http://pup.princeton.edu/chapters/s7191.html

Supplementary: Dalrymple, William: White Mughals...
Farrell, J.G. The Siege of Krishnapur

Week 7  week of June 20  After 1857: Lurching ahead….Some British and some Indians work towards an unclear future: Responsible government or Independence, unity or separation, Gandhi, Jinnah, Ambedkar … and Partition.

Readings: D2L Folder 06 - The Company goes, the Raj begins... and fades, the Nationalists, Gandhi

Continue reading Mistry: A fine Balance,

Supplementary: Rushdie: Midnight's Children  OR
Kesavan: Looking Through Glass

OR any one or all of Scott, Paul: The Raj Quartet

JUNE 20-22      MIDTERM BREAK

JUNE 24 MIDTERM PART 1
JUNE 27 MIDTERM PART 2


Readings: TBA

Supplementary: Rushdie, Midnight's Children
Rushdie: The Moor's Last Sigh  OR
Seth: A Suitable Boy
Week 9 week of July 4  Progress or Problems? Maybe both? Development, Agriculture, Urbanization: Globalization, hi-tech vs. village economies, urbanization

Readings: D2L Folder 7 Development, Agriculture, Urbanization

Arundhati Roy on Democracy and capitalism
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jX2IEselc08&feature=related
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gIr9d8qaVWY&feature=fvwrel

Weeks 10, 11, 12 (weeks of July 11, 18, 25) Challenges: Communalism, Naxalism, Gender Issues, Corruption:

Week 10 week of July 11 Communalism today… Unity vs. fragmentation: The Sikhs and Khalistan, Muslim-Hindu tensions (Shah Bano, Babri Masjid, Gujarat) BJP, BD, RSS, Shiv Sena protectors or bully-boys… and the Kashmiris, the Northeast

Readings: D2L Folder 08 Communalism

Finish Mistry; Start one of the optional novels

Supplementary: Hariharan, Githa, In Times of Siege

Week 11 week of July 18 Rural distress, Naxalism, Tribal areas and multinationals

Readings: D2L Folder 09 Rural distress, Naxalism

Finish the optional novel

Supplementary: Mishra, The Romantics; OR Suri: The Death of Vishnu

Week 12 Gender Issues: Status of women Sati, Dowry, “Bride-burning”,

Readings: D2L Folder 10 – Gender Issues

also Google “Sati” and learn what it's all about

Supplementary: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tarapith
http://ajai-shakuntala.tripod.com/id40.html and

Suri: The Age of Shiva

Week 13 week of August 1 Corruption? Excesses? Excuses? And (time permitting), Foreign Affairs (Kashmir, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nuclear Issues, A “world power” dealing with dwarf neighbors).

Readings: D2L Folder 11 Corruption, Excesses, Excuses
SUGGESTED SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS (As of 032511)

MEMOIRS, TRAVEL, ETC.

Blaise and Mukherjee, Days and Nights in Calcutta
Blank, Jonah, Arrow of the Blue-Skinned God
Crossette, Barbara, India: facing the twenty-first century
Dalrymple, William, The Age of Kali
Dalrymple, William, City of Djinns: A Year in Delhi
Dalrymple, William, Nine Lives: In Search of the Sacred in Modern India
Dutta, Krishna: Calcutta
Frater, Alexander: Chasing the Monsoon
Kamdar, Mira, Motiba's Tattoos
Mehta, Suketu: Maximum City: Bombay Lost and Found
Moxham, Roy, The Great Hedge of India
Paz, Octavio, In Light of India
Sainath, Roy, Everybody Loves a Good Drought
Silver, Robert B and Epstein, Barbara, India: A Mosaic
Tully, Mark, The Defeat of a Congress-Man.
Tully, Mark The Heart of India
Weller, Anthony Days and Nights on the Grand Trunk Road: Calcutta to Khyber

INDIAN FICTION

Adiga, Aravind: The White Tiger
Chandra, Vikram, Sacred Games
Chatterjee, Upamanyu, English, August
Desai, Kiran, The Inheritance of Loss
Ghosh, Amitav, Sea of Poppies
Ghosh, Amitav, The Glass Palace
Hariharan, Githa, In Times of Siege
Jha, Raj Kamal, The Blue Bedspread
Kesavan, Mukul, Looking Through Glass
Lahiri, Jhumpa, The Namesake
Mishra, Pankaj, The Romantics
Mistry, Rohinton, Family Matters
Mistry, Rohinton, A Fine Balance
Nair, Mira, Video
Narayan, R.K, Any of the Malgudi novels
Roy, Arundhati, The God of Small Things
Rushdie Salman, Midnight's Children
Rushdie Salman, The Moor's Last Sigh
Seth Vikram, A Suitable Boy
Suri Manil, The Age of Shiva
Suri Manil, The Death of Vishnu
Swarup, Vishwa, Between the Assassinations
Swarup, Vishwa, Q&A
Swarup, Vikas., Six Suspects
Tharoor, Shashi, Riot!
Tharoor, Shashi, The Great Indian Novel
Umrigar, Thrity, Bombay Time
--- Also check the B&N list of notable Indian fiction and Amazon.com
RELIGION/PHILOSOPHY/SOCIETY, HISTORY and MISCELLANEOUS

Banerjee-Dube, Ishita: *Caste in History*
Dalrymple, William, *Nine Lives: in Search of the Sacred in Modern India*
Dalrymple, William, *The Last Mughal*
Dalrymple, William, *White Mughals: Love and Betrayal in Eighteenth - Century India*
Das, Gurcharan, *India Unbound*
Doniger, Wendy, *Hindu Myths*
Doniger, Wendy, *The Hindus: An Alternative History*
Dumont: Rene: *Homo Hierarchicus*
Gilmour, David, *The Ruling Caste: Imperial Lives in the Victorian Raj*
Glucklich, Ariel, *Climbing Chamundi Hill: 1001 Steps With a Storyteller and a Reluctant Pilgrim*
Guha, Ramachandra, *India After Gandhi*
Guha, Ramachandra, *Makers of Modern India*
Jasanoff, Maya, *Edge of Empire: Lives, Culture, and Conquest in the East, 1750-1850*
Johnsen, Linda: *The Complete Idiot’s Guide to Hinduism*
Keay, John, *The Great Arc: The Dramatic Tale of How India was Mapped and Everest was Named*
Khilnani, Sunil, *The Idea of India*
Lelyveld, Jopseph, *Great Soul: Mahatma Gandhi and His Struggle with India*
Madan, Vandana, ed., *Religion in India*
Michaels, Axel: *Hinduism: past and present*
Mishra, Pankaj, *Temptations of the West: How to Be Modern in India, Pakistan, Tibet …*
Misra, Maria, *Vishnu’s Crowded Temple: India Since the Great Rebellion*
Nilekani, Nandan, *Imagining India*
Tharoor, Shashi, *India: From Midnight to the Millennium*
Wiser, William Henricks, 1890-1961 *The Hindu jajmani system*
Zimmer, Heinrich, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization*
Zimmer, Heinrich, *Philosophies of India*

*[Penguin Classics have in recent years brought out modern translations of *The Mahabharata* (Smith); *The Ramayana* (Sattar); *Rama the Steadfast* (Brockington and Brockington)]*

WESTERN FICTION

Calasso, Roberto, *Ka*
Forster, E. M., *A Passage to India*
Jhabvala, Ruth Prawer, *Heat and Dust* or another novel or short story collection set in India
Kipling, Rudyard, *Kim*
Payne, Peggy; *Sister India*
Scott, Paul, *The Raj Quartet*
Siegel, Lee, *Love in a Dead Language*

VILLAGE STUDIES (if interested. see the instructor. Since imposition of restrictions on foreign researchers most are somewhat dated)

CURRENT AFFAIRS

Gilani, Iftikhar: *My Days in Prison*
Peer, Basharat: *Curfewed Night: One Kashmiri Journalist’s Frontline Account of Life, Love and War in His Homeland*