

India in Global Perspective – SAST 1600

Faculty: Richard J. Cohen

**“Only the young can live in the future,
and only the old can live in the past.”**

Will Durant, *The Story of Philosophy*

“Human collective activity does not proceed according to a plan.”

Roger Scruton, on the usefulness of government planning

The course will not be a conventional “introduction” to India which customarily emphasizes cultural history. India is the fourth largest economy, according to PPP index, currently the largest purchaser of military hardware, an established leader in information technology, off-shore business services, implementing aggressive domestic infrastructure projects, and much more. Students will be introduced to a wide range of initiatives taking place in a variety of public and private sectors, and be encouraged through focused case studies to learn about opportunities for them to discover their own interests, such as studying in India with the UVA semester program (offered in the Spring), or working in an internship during the summer through the UVA global internship program. Through this course, students will develop a sophisticated understanding of India’s past, how it influences the present, and what are the possible trajectories for India in the future.

This course has a broad-based agenda. **Firstly**, as a "gateway" course to understanding India holistically, we will keep in our rear view mirror the history of the "Indian" subcontinent, also called "South Asia" since the end of WWII. Though this is not a typical history course, as the past is palpably experienced no matter where you visit in India, we will sometimes put on our “history lenses” to have a more thorough perspective. **Second** on the agenda is to update the current situation regarding the nation-state of India, particularly since the early 1990s, which begins the period of "liberalization" of the Indian economy and related governmental controls and social programs impacting the pace of overall development. To this end, a portion of the readings, plus special lectures from outside speakers will help us to understand the data. **Third**, we will explore the theory of modernity, and ponder to what extent the western idea of modernity has impacted India over the past 200 years, and influenced how Indian civilization has

been imagined globally. The conditions through which India's culture(s) are articulated and find expression more often than not challenge our understanding of what it is that constitutes modernity. Can we say at what point India, understood as the nation state of India, qualifies as a “super power” member of the evolving globalized world? India is basically a cultural composite of traditions. By definition, “tradition” and “modernity” are diametric opposites. Due to the fact that India, an ancient civilization with at least a five thousand year track record, experienced a pernicious, destructive form of colonialism between 1757 and 1947, and is now changing exponentially and showing signs of regaining its earlier status as a "go to" global culture, India provides us an opportunity to test certain ideas, answers and solutions to current and future global crises. We will explore the extent to which the nation state remains a viable construct in which to produce laws that protect its citizens, to provide opportunities for the acquisition of education, jobs, build families and careers, prosper economically, maintain good health, live in a safe and secure environment. We will use what we learn about the Indian situation to engage a set of questions that have to do with the future not only of India, but indeed, humanity itself.

Inevitably, we must engage the idea of globalization. Is it really only about economics? Yes, it is about people exchanging goods and services. However, economic exchanges of the international kind have been going on for millennia; and when people exchange commodities, important facets of cultural life are also exchanged. It is naïve to assume that globalization is a recent phenomenon.

Requirements for the Class:

Attendance will be taken. Your presence in class is required. Two absences are tolerated.

More than two absences will affect your attendance grade.

Do not use a laptop or other electronic communication devices in class.

Bring a pad and pen/pencil to take notes.

Bring an open mind and your ideas.

Evaluation will be based on the following:

- **Attendance (10% of final grade)**
- **Participation in class discussions (25% of final grade)**
- **Quality of in-class presentations (15% of final grade)**

- **Four quizzes (4 x 10% = 40% of final grade)**
- **Final Exam (10% of final grade)**

Grading:

98 – 100 (A+), 95 – 97.99 (A), 91 – 94.99 (A-), 87.5 – 90.99 (B+), 83 – 87.4 (B), 80 – 82.99 (B-) 77.5 – 79.99 (C+), 73 – 77.4 (C), 70 – 72.99 (C-), 67.5 – 69.99 (D+), 63 – 67.4 (D), 60 – 62.99 (D-), below 60 (F). Note that the A- grade begins at 91%, not the usual 90%.

Texts to be Purchased: available in the UVa Bookstore, or from other sources.

1. Rahul Mukherji, *Political Economy of Reforms in India* (Oxford India Short Introductions), Oxford University Press, 2014.
2. Marc Jason Gilbert, *South Asia in World History*, Oxford University Press, 2017.

ADDITIONAL REQUIRED READINGS WILL BE AVAILABLE ON COLLAB IN THE “ARTICLES AND BOOK CHAPTERS FOR ASSIGNED READING.”