

ARTH 5110/SAST 5050: TOPICS IN SOUTH ASIAN ART: THE ART OF EVERYDAY LIFE
Wednesday 1:45-4:45
Fall 2023

Professor Sonal Khullar
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Jaffe 305
Office hours: Wednesday 12-1 pm, and by appointment



Recipes for samosas with illustrations showing cows being milked (right) and Sultan Ghiyas al-Din seated on his throne (left), attended by servants. British Library IO Islamic 149, ff4v-5r. <https://blogs.bl.uk/asian-and-african/2016/11/nasir-shahs-book-of-delights.html>.

Course description:

This course reconsiders the categories of art and craft, the role of artisans, and the relationship between thinking and making in South Asia from antiquity until the present. It brings together recent art historical scholarship on pleasure, cultivation, ephemerality, and the senses in courtly settings with a tradition of art historical writing on the division of labor, religious difference, and social organization, including but not limited to problems of class, caste, tribe, race, gender, and sexuality. We shall explore visual art, material culture, ritual, and performance in a range of media, including perfumes, textiles, books, gardens, food, music, dance, yoga, wrestling, sculpture, and painting, and examine their production, consumption, circulation, and reception

with special attention to embodied practices and ordinary experiences. We shall compare historiographical methods and priorities across the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and analyze investments in everyday life as a category of analysis, even the ground of freedom, for Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948), Ananda K. Coomaraswamy (1877-1947), Verrier Elwin (1902-1964), and Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay (1903-1988). We shall view objects in the Penn Libraries, Penn Museum, and Philadelphia Museum of Art. Students with a background in related disciplines such as literature, history, religion, architecture, anthropology, geography, cinema and media studies, and feminist studies are especially welcome.

Course requirements:

Your grade for the course will be assessed on the basis of active class participation, including weekly responses to the reading on our electronic discussion board (30%); presentations of reading (20%, sign-up sheet available on first day of class); a research statement and bibliography (10%); and a final paper (40%, 15-20 pages on any artistic practice studied in the course). All assignments must be completed for a passing grade.

If you need an extension on a paper, please contact the instructor at least 48 hours in advance of the deadline. You must have a valid reason such as a medical or family emergency. All papers must be typed, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins and in a 12-point Times font.

For each day (including weekends) your paper is late, 5 points will be deducted from your grade, that is, a 100 will become a 95, a 95 will become a 90, etc. Papers submitted on the day they are due but after the deadline are also late.

You must post your weekly responses (approx. 700-1000 words) to the reading by 12 midnight the day before class (Tuesday) on the Canvas site.

Course materials:

All required and recommended readings are on reserve in Fisher. Required reading will be posted on the Canvas site.

Course policies:

All scheduled lectures, readings, and screenings are subject to change. You are responsible for any changes mentioned in class, including changes to the class schedule or course policies.

No screens (laptops, iPads, etc.) are allowed in class. Please arrive in class on time and turn off your cell phones in advance.