

**SAST106-001:** Beginning Sitar I (2022C)

**Instructor:** Jagadeesh Gokhale.

## Syllabus

This course will introduce students to playing on the *Sitar*. Students will acquire command over the instrument and learn to perform musical elements integral to *Hindustani* (north Indian) music – melodic forms (*ragas*) within rhythm cycles (*talas*).

Home assignments will involve listening to popular clips of Indian Art music, gain insights into its intricacies, and understand dynamic melody-rhythm interconnections that performers often generate spontaneously.

Class instruction will cover information on musical notes and their production on the *Sitar*. Students will follow simple (non-western) musical notation to learn and perform musical scales, figures, and embellishments that are often employed by *Hindustani* musicians. The course will progress in the following steps:

- Sitar posture and address: “dos and don’ts” of handling and playing on the *Sitar*
- Selected note sequences in the base (diatonic) melody scale and string-plucking exercises to acquire command over the *Sitar*. These will be regularly performed during class.
- Performing melodic phrases (*sargam*) within a preselected melodic form (*raga*).
- Introduction to *Hindustani* rhythm cycles - time signatures marking opposing cycle phases – accents (*sam*), null/off beats (*khali*) and their attributes and roles in facilitating interaction with melody.
- Students will listen to examples of off-cycle melodic innovations and alternative point-counterpoint melody-rhythm arrangements.
- Performance of a fixed composition (*gat*) within a preselected *raga*’s melodic structure anchored to a 16-beat rhythm cycle (*Teen-tala*).
- Performance of auxiliary melodic sequences in low, mid, and high pitch ranges to complement the *gat* (*stahyi*, *manjha*, *antara*, respectively) within the context of the pre-selected *raga*.
- Performance of melodic extensions to explore the aural spectrum of the *raga* – toward free innovation within the *raga* – with the *gat* as a melodic anchor to the rhythm cycle.

- Students will complete home-listening assignments on various aspects of *Hindustani* music – historical developments and contemporary performance practices. Students will post their responses to class assignments on Canvas.
- Students will perform material in the *raga* that they have learned for a semester-end group performance before a live audience.

### **Course Notes**

Students are expected to devote two hours per week outside of class- and review-session times to practice playing on the *Sitar* and one hour every two weeks for posting answers to assignments.

The final course grade will be based on a weighted average of scores on posted assignments, two practical quizzes, a written multiple-choice mid-term exam, semester-end live performance, and a final exam including practical and written elements. Students at/near the top of the score distribution will receive grade A.

Access to the Williams Hall Music Room will be given to enrolled students for practicing – throughout the day excluding *tabla* class times of MW 5:15-6:45p. Please work around schedule conflicts with *tabla* students who will also use the Music Room for their practice.

A one-hour review session will be held upon student request on Fridays after 5p.