HISTORY, CULTURE AND RELIGION(S) IN EARLY INDIA | SPRING 2023

SAST 003 / HIST 755 / RELS 003

Shaashi Ahlawat
shaashi@sas.upenn.edu

Office Hours: Wed. 4.00-5.00pm
calendly.com/shaashi/oh

TR 3:30-5:00pm
Room: TBA

Course Description

This course surveys the culture, religion and history of India from 2500 BCE to 1200 CE. It examines the major cultural, religious and social factors that shaped the course of early Indian history. The following themes will be covered: the rise and fall of Harappan civilization, the Aryan invasion and Vedic India, the rise of cities, states and the religions of Buddhism and Jainism, the historical context of the growth of classical Hinduism, including the Mahabharata, Ramayana and the development of the theistic temple cults of Saivism and Vaishnavism, processes of medieval agrarian expansion and cultic incorporation as well as the spread of early Indian cultural ideas in Southeast Asia. In addition to assigned secondary readings students will read select primary sources on the history, religion and culture of early India, including Vedic and Buddhist texts, Puranas and medieval temple inscriptions. Major objectives of the course will be to draw attention to India's early cultural and religious past and to assess contemporary concerns and ideologies in influencing our understanding and representation of that past.

Through the length of this course, students will develop an understanding and appreciation for the complexities of Indian socio-political history and its many religions, themes which are relevant to this day. Anyone who does/will engage with facets of India or South Asian subcontinent at large in their professional or personal lives will find themeselves informed through a critical-learning based approach. Thus is the instructor's goal and you got to do your part.

Requirements and Evaluation

Participation: 20%
Mid-term Examination: 20% - Feb 28, 2023
End-term Examination: 20% - Apr 27, 2023
Class Presentations: 20% - beginning Mar 16, 2023
Final Essays: 20% - due May 4, 2023, 5pm

1. <u>Participation – 20%</u>
   Each student is expected to come to class prepared to discuss assigned readings for a given class and participate in class discussions. Asking questions is highly crucial to facilitate effective discussions in the classroom. There will be pop quizzes and other class activties from time to time based on which your participation score will be assigned. If you fulfill these activities, in-class or pre-class, you get a full score for that segment. All pre-class segments will be announced in advance; in-class segments will be mini-surprises. There will be no assessment for any of these – done assignment equals a full score.

2. <u>Mid-term and End-term examinations – 40% combined</u>
   There will two written examinations in class comprising of three elements: MCQs, identification questions, and short essay questions.
   5 MCQs, 5 IDs, 2 essay prompts
   Feb 28: Mid-term exam in class
   Apr 25: End-term exam in class

3. <u>Class presentations – 20%</u>
   Students are expected to work in teams of two to present on a theme of their choice from the course. You will be paired based on a library exercise where you will be asked to submit three images of your choice. The presentations will begin on March 16th with 10 minutes for each team during the first half of every Thursday class. You may deliver the presentation in class or play your pre-recorded presentation. Each pair should focus on two complementing themes from their chosen topic and present for 5 mins each. You are encouraged to use powerpoint slides and read from papers (printed/electronic) which will be equivalent to 2 pages of text.

   Distribution: 50 points for group efforts + 50 points for individual efforts
   10 pts: title and abstract, as group
   40 pts: outline and annotated bibliography, as group
   50 points: 5min presentation (equivalent to 2 pages of text)

   Important dates:
   Feb 14 by 9 pm: Submit three images – library exercise
   Feb 16: teams announced
   Feb 21: title and abstract due by 9pm (10 points)
   Feb 23: presentation schedule available
   Mar 2: outline and annotated bibliography due by 5pm (40 points)
   Mar16-Apr20: class presentations on every Thursday; two pairs each day during the first half
   A week after your presentations, submit a 3-page essay on Canvas (double-spaced, TNR font, size 12)

4. <u>Final essays – 20%</u>
   Each student will build upon their essays from the presentation exercise to submit a 5-page essay (double-spaced, TNR font, size 12).

   Distribution: First draft: 20 points; second draft: 20 points; peer-review: 10 points; final essay: 50 points

   Important dates:
   First draft is your three-page submission after the class presentation exercise
   Apr 25: bring the second draft of your final essay to class for peer evaluation
   May 4: final essays due by 5pm

5. <u>Make-up assignments:</u>
   Make-up/bonus points are available to everyone to make up for an equivalent of up to four missed classes. These are not intended to boost a grade but to allow for students to miss a few classes without damaging their grades. For each class missed you may submit a single-page essay on either of the following:
   a. Reflection essay on a South-Asia related event – event list available on Canvas
   b. Curatorial note on an object of choice from the Philadelphia Museum of Art's South Asian collection
   Submit these via email with subject headline: "SAST003 Make-up essay - NAME". A good practice is to submit a make-up assignment within a week of your absence. Final date to submit any make-up assignment is Apr 26, 2023, by 5pm.

6. Numerical scales & letter grade equivalents
   94+ A; 90-93 A-; 85-89 B+; 80-84 B; 76-79 B-; 70-75 C+; 65-69 C; 60-64 C-; 55-59 D; Else F

Course Material

All materials will be available on Canvas Website under respective week modules.

Course Policies

No attendance will be taken for this class hence I do not require you to submit any course absence reports. I expect you to take charge of your own learning by doing the readings ahead of time, actively participation in classrom through questions and discussions, and meeting me in my office hours for additional questions, all of which I believe will demonstrate your true participation. Of course, I am required to assess this numerically for which there will be pop-quizzes and in-class activities for you to submit. The surprise element of this will ensure sincere attendance.

If you need special testing or classroom accommodations, please see me as soon as possible. The lectures, however, will not be recorded.

If you are feeling stressed, overwhelmed, anxious, or depressed or facing some other personal crisis, let's talk sooner than later. We can work together to address it.

**PLAGIARISM POLICY: http://www.college.upenn.edu/policies/integrity.php and http://www.gethelp.library.upenn.edu/PORT/documentation/plagiarism_policy.html

Other policies:
1. Technology policy: Put away your phones to avoid disruptions in class. This is also a laptop free classroom, and you will only be allowed to use your laptops when they are needed for group work in class. Any student found scrolling on their phones during class will be asked to leave.
2. Do not leave the classroom in the middle to use bathroom or drink water unless you must go for personal reasons.
3. While doing small-group works, engage in productive and informed scholarly discussions. Please avoid digressing from the theme of discussion. Respect others' opinions.
4. Late submissions will incur a deduction of 5 points after every 24 hours of the deadline.
5. I may introduce changes in the syllabus as and when deemed necessary to promote your learning. Any change will be notified to you in advance in the class and/or through Canvas.

Course Schedule

Jan 12:   **Introduction: India, Indians, Indian Civilization**
- Thomas Trautmann, 'Introduction', in *India: Brief History of a Civilization*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 1-15.
Keywords: South Asia, Monsoon, Penninsula

Jan 17:   **Sources, Approaches, Historiography**
- Romila Thapar, "Perceptions of the Past," in *Early India: From the Origins to A.D. 1300*, (London: Allen Lane, 2002), 1-36.

First Urbanization

Jan 19:   **The Indus Valley or Harappan Civilization, 3500-1900 BCE (First Urbanization)**
Beginning
- Thomas Trautmann, 'The Beginning of Indian Civilization, in *India: Brief History of a Civilization*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 16-31.
Later Phase and Decline
- Shereen Ratnagar, *Understanding Harrapa: Civilization in the Greater Indus Valley* (Delhi: Tulika 2001), pp. 139-57.

Aryans and Vedic Hinduism

Jan 24:   **The Arrival of Aryans, 1900-1200 BCE: Who were the Aryans?**
- Thomas Trautmann, 'Introduction', in Trautmann, ed., *The Aryan Debate* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. xiii-xliii.
- Podcasts:
Early Indians | The Seen and the Unseen (episode 112)
Understanding India Through Its Languages | The Seen and the Unseen (episode 232)

Jan 26:   **Vedic Age, 1500-500 BCE**
- Watch *Introduction to the Vedas* (length 7:28): youtu.be/h-b-OpzXwcU
Polity, economy, culture, and society during theVedic period:
- Ranabir Chakravarti, "India During the Days of the Vedic Corpus," in *Exploring Early India up to c. AD 1300*, (New Delhi: Primus Books, 2016), 44-81.

Jan 31:   **Vedic Age, 1500-500 BCE – continued**
             ▪ Watch: Robert Gardner, J.F. Staal, "Altar of Fire," 1976 (see video
               reserves)
             What were Vedic Sacrifices?
             ▪ Romila Thapar, *Early India: From the Origins to A.D. 1300*, (London: Allen
               Lane, 2002), 126–136.
             List of Vedic Sacrifices
             ▪ Louis Renou, *Vedic India*, trans Philip Spratt (Varanasi: Indological
               Bookhouse, 1971), 93-112.

Late Vedic Age; Second Urbanziation; New Religious Movements

Feb 2:   **The Growth of Cities and States, 600-400 BCE (Second Urbanization)**
             ▪ D. K. Chakrabarti, 'Mahājanapada States of Early Historic South Asia,' in
               M. H. Hansen, ed., *Comparative Study of Thirty City State Cultures*,
               Copenhagen, 2000, pp. 375-391.

Feb 7:   **The Dissolution of the Vedic Ritual World, 900-500 BCE**
             ▪ 'Introduction,' in Patrick Olivelle, trans. *The Upanisads* (Oxford: Oxford
               University Press, 1996), pp. xxiii-lvi.
             Primary text: excerpts from Upanishadic texts
             ▪ T. Embree et al, Thomas., *Sources of Indian Tradition.* Second edition, (New
               York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 29-39.

Feb 9:   **The Śramaṇas: New Religious Movements, 6th century BCE**
             ▪ Ian Mabbett, "The rise of Buddhism in a period of urbanization and state
               formation," Aichi Bunkyo Review, 4 (2001), pp. 35–59.
             Primary text: excerpt on bloodless sacrifice from a Buddhist scripture
             ▪ The Wrong Sacrifice and the Right' (Kūṭadanta Sūtta) *Dialogues of the
               Buddha,* trans T.W. Rhys Davids, Oxford, 1987, pp. 173-85.

Feb 14:   **Mauryan Empire, Kingship and the Triumph of Buddhism, 322-185 BCE**
             ▪ Thomas Trautmann, "New Religions, New Empires," , in *India: Brief History
               of a Civilization*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 48-61.
             Primary text: excerpts from treatises on science of polity, duties of a king, and state
             and interstate administration:
             ▪ T. Embree et al, Thomas., *Sources of Indian Tradition.* Second edition, (New
               York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 235-253.

Submit three images via Canvas based on which I will assign partners to work with for your
class presentations |due 9pm – pairs will be announced in the following class

Feb 16:   **Aśoka (304-232 BCE) and his world**
             ▪ Ranabir Chakravarti, *Exploring Early India up to c. AD 1300*, (New Delhi:
               Primus Books, 2016), 153-168.
             Primary text: Aśokan inscriptions
             ▪ D.C. Sircar, *Inscriptions of Asoka,* Delhi, 1957, pp. 33-77.

Post-Mauryan States; Foreign Contacts and Invaders

Feb 21:   **Northern Invaders, 200 BCE-300 CE**
Greeks, Śakas, Kūṣāṇas, and Sātavāhanas
- Thomas Trautmann, *India: Brief History of a Civilization*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 62-72.
Primary text: inscription of a Śaka ruler
- 'Rudradāman Rock Inscription', *Epigraphia Indica* 8 (1905-6), no. 6.

Submit a title and an abstract for your class presentation | due 9pm
| 10 points towards the presentation exercise

Feb 23:   **Review** for Mid-term Examination during the first half of the class
South India, 300 BCE-300 CE
Trade with Romans, Indian Ocean Network
- Federico De Romanis, "Introduction and Synopsis," in The Indo-Roman Pepper Trade and the Muziris Papyrus. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020. https://academic.oup.com/book/40562/chapter/347944484
Archaeology of a Tamil identituy, *Tamilakam*
- Shinu Anna Abraham, "Chera, Chola, Pandya: Using Archaeological Evidence to Identify the Tamil Kingdoms of Early Historic South India." *Asian Perspectives*, 42 (2), 2003: 207-23.

Feb 28:   **Mid-term Examination** during the first half of the class
South India, 300 BCE-300 CE – continued
Sangam (caṅkam) Literature
- K. Sivathamby, *Studies in Ancient Tamil Society*, Chennai: New Century Book House, 1998), pp. 1-25.

Mar 2:   Group library exercise for class presentations – VP rooms to be reserved in advance
Submit an outline and annotated bibliography for your class presentation | due 5pm | 40 points towards the presentation exercise

Mar 4-12:   Spring Break

Classical Hinduism

Mar 14:   **The Development of Theistic Religions**
From Vedic Rituals to Household Rituals, and from *yajna* to *puja*
- A.L. Basham, "The Ritual and Dharma Literature and the New Hindu Orthodoxy," in *Origins and Development of Classical Hinduism*. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 98-116.
Multi-cultic origins of Theistic sects within Classical Hinduism; case: Vaiṣṇavism
- R. N. Dandekar, 'Vaiṣṇavism: An Overview' Encyclopedia of Religion 14 (2005): 9498-9501.

Class presentations begin Mar 16th | every Thursday (submit a three-page essay within a week of your presentation aka first draft of the final essay)

Mar 16: **Theistic Cosmology and Ritual**
Devotion to Viṣṇu, Śiva, and Devī
- T. Embree et al, Thomas., *Sources of Indian Tradition*. Second edition, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 319-331.

"The Golden Age of India" (300-700 CE)

Mar 21: **Threshold Times of Guptas and Successors, 300-700 CE**
- Romila Thapar, "Threshold Time: c. AD 300-700," *Early India: From the Origins to A.D. 1300*, (London: Allen Lane, 2002), 280-302.
Primary text: stone pillar inscription of a Gupta ruler
- J.F. Fleet, 'Allahabad Posthumus Stone Pillar Inscription of Samudragupta', *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum, Vol. 3,* 1888, pp. 1-17.

Mar 23: **The Rise of Sanskrit Poetry and Court Culture**
- Romila Thapar, "Threshold Time: c. AD 300-700," *Early India: From the Origins to A.D. 1300*, (London: Allen Lane, 2002), 302-313.
On Kāma Sūtra, Nāṭya Sāstra, and poetry
- T. Embree et al, Thomas., *Sources of Indian Tradition*. Second edition, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 254-273.

The Peninsula

Mar 28: **Emerging Regional Kingdoms, 500-900 CE**
Pallavās, Chālukyas, Rāśṭrakūṭas
- Romila Thapar, *Early India: From the Origins to A.D. 1300*, (London: Allen Lane, 2002), 326-343.
Primary text: copper plate grant of a Rāśṭrakūṭa ruler
- Sanjan Plates of Amoghavarṣa
Term: Daud Ali, "Copper-plate charters," *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History: Asia and Africa*, 2022.

Mar 30: **Cholas, 900-1300 CE**
- Romila Thapar, *Early India: From the Origins to A.D. 1300*, (London: Allen Lane, 2002), 363-381.
- Browse: Chola bronzes at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, follow the links below:
https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search?q=chola+bronze
https://philamuseum.org/search?q=chola%20bronze
- Watch (technique): Bronze Deities: A Timeless Chola Art

Apr 2: Sunday visit to the **Philadelphia Museum of Art**; first Sunday of a month is pay-as-you-wish, 11am-2pm

Final Themes

Apr 4:   **Temples as Institutions**
- Hermann Kulke, 'Royal Temple Policy and the Structure of Medieval Hindu Kingdoms,' in *The Cult of Jagannatha and the Regional Tradition of Orissa*. A. edited by Escheman, H. Kulke, and G. C. Tripathi, (New Delhi: Manohar, 1978), 125-37.
- Ronald Inden, 'The Temple and the Hindu Chain of Being,', in Inden, *Text and Practice*: *Essays on South Asian History* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 192-212.

Term: Emmanuel Francis, "Brahmadeya/agrahāra," *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History: Asia and Africa*, 2021.

Apr 6:   **Temples: Art and Architecture**
- Adam Hardy, "Indian Temple Typologies," in Glimpses of Indian History and Art, edited by Tiziana Lorenzetti and Fabio Scialpi, (Roma: Sapienza Università Editrice, 2012), 101-125.
- Take virtual tour (pick any three): temple360.in/
- Prof. Adam Hardy on temple architecture and source text (56:14, watch at 1.5x): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aK1up0WrMqk

Apr 11:   **Acculturation and Long Duree Social Change**.
- M.N. Sreenivas, 'Sanskritization, Social Change in Modern India, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), pp. 1-45.
- Daud Ali, 'Violence, Courtly Manners and Lineage Formation in Early Medieval India', *Social Scientist* 35, 9 and 10 (2007): 3-21

Apr 13:   **Trade and Commerce, Third urbanization?**
Early Medieval Period:
- Brajadulal Chattopadhyaya, "Urban Centers in Early Medieval India: An Overview," in *The Making of Early Medieval India,* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994).155-189.
- Ryosuke Furui, "Merchant groups in early medieval Bengal: with special reference to the Rajbhita stone inscription of the time of Mahīpāla I, Year 33," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 76 (2013): 391-412

Apr 13:   **Interactions across Oceanic Networks (case: 700-1300 CE)**
- Upinder Singh, "Gifts from Other Lands: Southeast Asian Religious Endowments in India," in *The Idea of Ancient India: Essays on Religion, Politics, and Archaeology*, (New Delhi: SAGE, 2016), 371-392. Online.
- K. Kesavapany, Hermann Kulke, and Vijay Sakhuja, *Nagapattinam to Suvarnadwipa: Reflections on the Chola Naval Expeditions to Southeast Asia*. (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2009), 1-19, 61-75.
- David Pingree, 'Sanskrit Evidence for the Presence of Arabs, Jews and Persians in Western India, c. 700-1300.' *Journal of the Oriental Institute of the University of Baroda* 31 (1981): 172-82.

Apr.18   **Caste**
              ▪ Upinder Singh, "Inequality and Salvation," in *Ancient India: Culture of Contradiction,* (Delhi: Aleph, 2021), 1-39.
              ▪ B. R. Ambedkar, "The Riddle of the Shudras," in *Who Were the Shudras?: How They Came to Be the Fourth Varna In the Indo-Aryan Society*, (Bombay: Thackers, 1970), 21-36.

Apr 20:   **Review** for the End-term Examination during the first half of the class

Apr 25:   **End-term Examination;** bring the second draft of your final essay to class for peer evaluation
Apr 26:   Last Day of Classes – final day to submit any makeup assignments by 5pm

*   *   *