SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES (SAST)

*SAST 061a / AMST 095a / ER&M 095a / THST 095a, South Asian American Theater and Performance  Shilarna Stokes

South Asian Americans have appeared on U.S. stages since the late nineteenth century, yet only in the last quarter century have plays and performances by South Asian Americans begun to dismantle dominant cultural representations of South Asian and South Asian American communities and to imagine new ways of belonging. This seminar introduces you to contemporary works of performance (plays, stand-up sets, multimedia events, and more) written and created by U.S.-based artists of South Asian descent as well as artists of the South Asian diaspora whose works have had an impact on U.S. audiences. With awareness that the South Asian American diaspora comprises multiple, contested, and contingent identities, we investigate how artists have worked to manifest complex representations of South Asian Americans onstage, challenge institutional and professional norms, and navigate the perils and pleasures of becoming visible. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program.  HU

*SAST 224a / HIST 396a, India and Pakistan since 1947  Staff

Introduction to the history of the Indian subcontinent from 1947 to the present. Focus on the emergence of modern forms of life and thought, the impact of the partition on state and society, and the challenges of democracy and development. Transformations of society, economy, and culture; state building; economic policy.  HU  o Course cr

*SAST 261a / PHIL 118a / RLST 127a, Buddhist Thought: The Foundations  Staff

This class introduces the fundamentals of Buddhist thought, focusing on the foundational doctrinal, philosophical, and ethical ideas that have animated the Buddhist tradition from its earliest days in India 2500 years ago down to the present, in places such as Tibet, China, and Japan. Though there will be occasional discussion of the social and practical contexts of the Buddhist religion, the primary focus of this course lies on how traditional Buddhist thinkers conceptualize the universe, think about the nature of human beings, and propose that people should live their lives. Our main objects of inquiry are therefore the foundational Buddhist ideas, and the classic texts in which those ideas are put forth and defended, that are broadly speaking shared by all traditions of Buddhism. In the later part of the course, we take up some of these issues in the context of specific, regional forms of Buddhism, and watch some films that provide glimpses of Buddhist religious life on the ground.  HU  o Course cr

*SAST 282a, Medicine Multiple: Biomedicine in the Global South  Kiran Kumbhar

It is commonly believed that modern science is a universal enterprise which gives rise to the same, standard cultures of practice irrespective of where it is put to work. This course complicates that understanding through the prism of biomedical practice. Students learn how throughout modern history, biomedicine and biomedical technologies have invariably witnessed different fates in different contexts. Specifically, we see how biomedicine has been differently implemented, received, and adapted by people in different regions of the Global South. At the same time, using examples from the U.S., we also complicate the East/West (South/North) binary and problematize the common belief that medicine and science are practiced in supposedly ideal, universalized forms in the “West.” Proceeding roughly chronologically and using
secondary literature as well as primary sources, this course introduces students to the rich and expanding corpus of research on the histories of medicine and public health in Global South regions, as well as to relevant literature from the field of medical anthropology.

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* SAST 303a / ANTH 383a, In Ordinary Fashion  Jane Lynch
Clothing fashions not only our bodies but also our experiences in and claims about the world. It has been used to define the nature and radical possibilities of indigeneity, anti-colonial nationalism, counter-cultural narratives, and capitalist critiques. At the same time, dress–and its social and legal regulation–also creates and reinforces social hierarchies, systems of morality, and forms of exclusion. This course centers these competing social realities and histories using clothing as a way into understanding the poetics and politics of everyday life. Readings include ethnographies and social histories of textiles, fashion, and the manufacture of garments including cases from India, Guatemala, Italy, China, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Trinidad, and the United States.

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* SAST 306b / ANTH 322b / EVST 324b, Environmental Justice in South Asia  Kalyanakrishnan Sivaramakrishnan
Study of South Asia's nation building and economic development in the aftermath of war and decolonization in the 20th century. How it generated unprecedented stress on natural environments; increased social disparity; and exposure of the poor and minorities to environmental risks and loss of homes, livelihoods, and cultural resources. Discussion of the rise of environmental justice movements and policies in the region as the world comes to grips with living in the Anthropocene.

* SAST 331b / HIST 362Jb, The Economic History of India  Sunil Amrith
India has more billionaires than almost anywhere in the world, behind only the US and China; India is also home to more of the world's poorest people than any other country on earth. How do we explain these contrasts? How far are India's economic opportunities and its challenges rooted in its history? What were the economic consequences of colonialism? How have Indians, in the past and in the present, negotiated the economic obstacles and opportunities they face in their daily lives? This research seminar assumes no prior knowledge of Indian history. We approach economic history from the broadest possible standpoint, reading novels as much as statistics, photographs and movies as much as political documents. We cover the period from the nineteenth to the twenty-first centuries. Topics include: the economic impact of colonialism, the changing nature of poverty in India, the role of the state in India's economic development, and the historical roots of India's recent economic growth. We also consider connections and comparisons between India and its South and Southeast Asian neighbors. There is emphasis on understanding the roots of inequality in modern India, in particular gender and caste inequality. All students write a final research paper based on primary sources, and are encouraged to draw on material in the Yale collections, including the Beinecke and the Yale Center for British Art.

WR, HU

* SAST 362a / RLST 321a, Hindus and Muslims in South Asia  Supriya Gandhi
Study of engagements between Hindu and Muslim traditions in South Asia from medieval to modern times. Exploration of historical case studies of Hindu-Muslim
relations and the formation of religious identities, as well as how memories of the past intersect with modern discourses on religion and politics.  

* SAST 363a / RLST 373a, Introduction to Pali Language and Literature  Aleksandar Uskokov

The purpose of this course is to introduce Pāli, the canonical language of Theravāda Buddhism practiced across South and Southeast Asia, and to provide an overview of Pāli Buddhist literature. The course is focused on readings from Pāli in several genres. In terms of language instruction, it proceeds primarily by way of tracking phonetic changes from Sanskrit, providing grammar overview in comparison to Sanskrit, and introducing the characteristic Buddhist jargon. While all Pāli texts are read in their original, an overview of Pāli literature is provided through select secondary sources. Prerequisite: One year of Sanskrit (i.e., SKRT 120/530 or equivalent).

* SAST 366a / RLST 183a, The Bhagavad Gita  Sonam Kachru

An examination of the Bhagavad Gita in its historical and religious context. Exploration of the major interpretations of this important religious text. All readings in translation.

* SAST 421b / HIST 458Jb, Environmentalism from the Global South  Sunil Amrith

Most histories of the environmental movement still privilege the American and European experience. This research seminar examines the diverse forms of environmental thought and activism that have emerged from the global South — drawing examples from Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America — since the early twentieth century. The course examines: the environmental legacies of colonialism, the role of ecology in anticolonial movements, early articulations of environmental justice in the 1970s, the role of violence and repression in state responses to environmental activism, the rise of increasingly networked environmental movements from the Global South that made themselves heard at the Rio Earth Summit of 1992 — which took place 30 years ago, and the moral and political histories that underpin the negotiating stance of countries of the Global South in climate change negotiations. This class makes extensive use of primary sources, including material from the Yale collections and it straddles the boundaries between environmental, intellectual, and political history. WR, HU

* SAST 474a / ENGL 368a / HIST 341Ja, The Novel and the Nation: Reading India in Vikram Seth’s A Suitable Boy  Priyasha Mukhopadhyay and Rohit De

This course pairs two interconnected phenomena: the rise of the Indian Republic and the birth of the postcolonial novel. Over the course of the semester, we read a single primary text: Vikram Seth’s A Suitable Boy (1993). Set in the 1950s in the aftermath of India’s Independence and Partition, Seth’s encyclopaedic novel is the story of four families brought together by a mother’s search for a “suitable boy” for her daughter to marry. In the process, it builds a microcosm of an Indian society coming to terms with postcolonial statehood and weighing the aftereffects of British colonialism. Entwined in its plot about marriage, love, and relationships are some of the most urgent cultural and political concerns facing the new nation: legislative changes and land reforms, the violent aftermath of the Partition, secularism tainted by communal tensions, the disintegration of courtly forms of sociality, the reconstruction of city life, and the fate of the English novel in the postcolonial classroom. We read A Suitable Boy as literary critics and historians, pairing close readings of language and literary form with historical scholarship. Over the course of our discussions, we address the following
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questions: what is the relationship between the nation, the novel, and identity in the postcolonial world? How do we read narratives of “nation building” as literary and cultural constructions? What do we make of “literature” and “history” as disciplinary categories and formations? The seminar introduces students to methods of literary criticism and textual studies, and teaches them how to read a range of primary sources, from legislative debates, bureaucratic reports, newspapers, poetry, cinema, and radio.

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* SAST 486a, Directed Study  Staff
A one-credit, single-term course on topics not covered in regular offerings. To apply for admission, a student should present a course description and syllabus to the director of undergraduate studies, along with written approval from the faculty member who will direct the study.

* SAST 491a, Senior Essay  Staff
A yearlong research project completed under faculty supervision and resulting in a substantial paper. Credit for SAST 491 only on completion of SAST 492. ½ Course cr