SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES (SAST)

* SAST 226b / HIST 314jb, The Environmental History of South and Southeast Asia  Sunil Amrith
This is a research and writing seminar on the environmental history of South and Southeast Asia. We examine a range of approaches to studying the major environmental transformations in a region that is home to a significant part of the world’s population. Students write a substantial primary source-based research paper by the end of the course.  WR, HU

SAST 258b / PHIL 223b / RLST 133b, Indian Philosophy: Beginnings and Foundations  Aleksandar Uskokov
In this course, we introduce prominent themes that preoccupied the doctrinal communities of Ancient India—Brahmanism, Buddhism, and Jainism. These include first principles (or their absence), notions of personhood and soul (or their absence), the human good, and the means by which this human good is known. The primary objective is to survey in some depth philosophical ideas in Ancient India as they were advanced not by systematic philosophers but rather in foundational texts such as the Upaniṣads, the epics, and the Buddhist suttas. We occasionally read modern writings that attempt to engage the sources in their wider philosophical significance while keeping in mind their historical context. Knowledge of Indian languages is not required.  HU

* SAST 266b / ARCH 271b / HSAR 266b / MMES 126b, Introduction to Islamic Architecture  Kishwar Rizvi
Introduction to the architecture of the Islamic world from the seventh century to the present, encompassing regions of Asia, North Africa, and Europe. A variety of sources and media, from architecture to urbanism and from travelogues to paintings, are used in an attempt to understand the diversity and richness of Islamic architecture. Field trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.  HU

SAST 280a / HIST 342a / RLST 180a, Mughal India, 1500–1800  Supriya Gandhi
Exploration of religion and the state in Mughal India, focusing on the period between 1500–1800. Topics include sacred sovereignty, orthodoxy, Sufism, vernacular literary and religious cultures, and the early colonial encounter.  HU

* SAST 306a / ANTH 322a / EVST 324a, 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.  SO

SAST 330b / HIST 337b, The Indian Ocean World  Sunil Amrith
This lecture course provides a survey of the Indian Ocean’s history, from medieval to contemporary times. By foregrounding oceanic connections, the class links the histories of South Asia, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and East Africa. Long before the Atlantic, the Indian Ocean was “global”—it was a crossroads of trade and commerce, following the monsoon winds. We study the centuries-long movement of material culture, of cultural and religious ideas across the ocean’s arc of port cities. We examine how the Indian Ocean became a crucible of competition between empires, as Europeans hungered for its spices and fabled riches, and eventually established dominion. We examine the vast migration of people across the Indian Ocean that followed—indentured, indebted, and free migrants whose labor shaped the modern world. The legacies of that movement that can be seen to this day, in the multicultural but divided societies around the ocean’s rim. In the first half of the twentieth century, the Indian Ocean became a hotbed of political activism; anticolonial movements learned from each other and diasporas became a conduit for new political ideas about nation, race, and equality. Today the Indian Ocean is at the forefront of strategic competition between India and China; perhaps even more significantly, it stands at the front line of climate change and its growing impact. In the last part of the course, we seek to understand how both of these features of the contemporary Indian Ocean world are shaped by a deeper history. Throughout the course, we emphasize how the Indian Ocean world provides a distinctive vantage point from which to understand key processes in global history—slavery and unfree labor, the rise and fall of empires, the formation of diasporas, and massive environmental transformation.  HU

* SAST 334a / ER&M 433a / HIST 363Ja, Mobile South Asians and the Global Legal Order  Rohit De
South Asians make up the largest population of overseas migrants in the world, close to 33 million in 2017 and a diaspora that is almost double that number. This course looks at the unprecedented mobility of South Asians from the mid-19th century until now as merchants, indentured labor, students, pilgrims, professionals, domestic workers, political exiles, refugees, and economic migrants, through the lens of state attempts to control movement and individual resistance, subversion, and adaptation to such controls. Focusing on the legal consciousness of South Asian migrants and the emergence of South Asian nations as political players on the global stage, this class traces how South Asian mobility led to the forging of a new global order, over migration, multiculturalism, Islamic law, civil liberties, labor law, and international law.  WR, HU

* SAST 344b / PLSC 377b / PLSC 772b / WGSS 397b, Political Economy of Gender in South Asia  Sarah Khan
This course focuses on the political and economic underpinnings and implications of gender inequality in South Asia. We draw on evidence from Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India to guide our theoretical and empirical inquiry into the following broad questions: What is gender, and what approaches do social scientists use to study gender inequality? How does gender inequality manifest in different social, economic, and political spheres e.g. the household, the labor market, the electorate, the government? What are the cultural and structural drivers of gender inequality? How effective are different approaches to tackling gender inequality in South Asia? Previous course work in statistical data analysis is helpful, but not required.  SO
* SAST 366b / RLST 183b, The Bhagavad Gita  Staff
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.  HU

* SAST 384b / ARCH 324b / URBN 324b, The City Before and After the Tubewell  Anthony Acciavatti
What do such disparate cities as New Delhi, Jakarta, Mexico City, and Phoenix all have in common? In short, each city relies on a fantastic technology that few people know anything about but has transformed the shape and life of cities and their hinterlands: the tubewell. Technologies for drawing up groundwater, tubewells are used in places where municipal water supply is non-existent, unreliable, or often polluted. A minor technology with a global reach, the tubewell is to the city what the elevator was to the skyscraper in the booming American metropolis of the early twentieth century. In this course we look at how tubewells and other decentralized technologies have radically transformed urban and agricultural spaces across the globe since the nineteenth century to the present. We watch how people exult before these technologies; we witness how governments and philanthropies as well as farmers and townspeople appropriate them for radically different ends. And we consider why.  HU

* SAST 385a / ER&M 336a, South Asians in America  Sasha Sabherwal
The South Asian American diaspora is a heterogeneous group comprising multiple nationalities, religious practices, castes, classes, languages, and genders. This diaspora includes migrants from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka, as well as communities of North America, the U.K., the Caribbean, and East Africa. In this seminar, we chronicle the complex relationships of South Asians in the United States and the shifting understandings of the category “South Asian American.” Taking up the changing and contested meanings of the diaspora allows us to think through questions of identity, race, gender, caste, class, religion, and citizenship. We consider questions such as: how do South Asians reproduce and resist constructions of the model minority? How can we think about the relationship of South Asians in relation to a larger history of Asian American racialization, anti-blackness, and settler colonialism? How do we challenge the constructions of global terror, especially post-9/11? What are hegemonic cultural representations of South Asian Americans across Hollywood and Bollywood? And how can we move beyond these representations to theorize South Asian Americans transnationally? The course explores these questions through historical, ethnographic, cultural, and transnational feminist approaches to Asian American Studies.  HU

* SAST 459b / RLST 182b, Buddhist Traditions of Mind and Meditation  Eric Greene
Buddhist meditation practices examined in the context of traditional theories of mind, perception, and cognition. Readings both from Buddhist canonical works and from secondary scholarship on cognitive science and ritual practice. Recommended preparation: a course in Asian religions.  HU

* SAST 469a / HSAR 414a, Visual Storytelling in South Asia  Subhashini Kaligotla
This seminar explores the polyglot variety of visual narration in South Asia. We examine the lives of exemplary individuals like the Buddha, the epic story of Rama, and royal biography and autobiography. We consider stories told through stone, in the medium of paint, and in print, film, graphic books, and contemporary media. We experience story telling in sumptuous courtly settings and in temples, monasteries, and other sacred spaces. Weekly readings and discussions analyze the handling of narrative ambiguity and absence, double meaning and punning, the treatment of space and place, representations of sex, desire, and love, and the visual construction of political persona, power, and nation. The course is ultimately interested in how South Asian narratives unsettle and expand the notion of representation.
Prerequisite: one introductory course in Art History.  HU

* SAST 486a or b, 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 and SAST 492b, 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 per term