SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES (SAST)

* SAST 020a / HIST 039a, Bombay/Mumbai: Life in a Megacity  Rohit De
Mumbai as a case study for the transformations brought by urbanization and modernity in Asia. Focus on how Mumbai’s residents and its planners navigated the challenges of living in a rapidly growing cosmopolitan city and reflected it in their art and ideas. Themes include capitalism, globalization, British empire, religious pluralism, radical politics, organized crime, and Bollywood. Enrollment limited to first-year students.  WR, HU

SAST 224b / HIST 396b, India and Pakistan since 1947  Rohit De
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 259b / MUSI 280b, Music of South Asia  Ameera Nimjee
An introduction to some of the music traditions that hail from South Asia—a region defined by the countries of India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Afghanistan, Maldives, and their diasporas. “Music” in this course is considered broadly, and refers to performance and ritual traditions in which music, movement, dance, poetry, and theater all figure. The course approaches music from the disciplinary vantage point of ethnomusicology, where music is studied with respect to its complex intersections with culture, daily life, and society. Course content is introduced weekly through a series of analytical lenses, such as gender, sexuality, caste, and migration, through which South Asian music can be understood in their social and cultural contexts.  HU

* SAST 303b / ANTH 383b, 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.  SO

* SAST 308b / ANTH 318b / URBN 412b, Peril and Possibility in the South Asian City  Kalyanakrishnan Sivaramakrishnan
The first time in human history, at some point in the last decade a majority of humankind became city dwellers. A fifth of these city-dwelling masses inhabit the massive and massifying megacities of the Indian sub-continent. Karachi, Dhaka, and Bombay frequently threaten to be the most populous urban centers on earth, and it may only be faith in the accuracy of government census data that defers this dubious honor. For while these cities are plugged into the global flows of people, ideas, things, and capital; such developments also bring with them anomic, alienation, dispossession, and depredations. Historical social conflicts born of a century of European colonialism
and millennia of caste society have in some cases been mitigated, in others intensified in ways both insidious and invidious. Much ink has been spilt on contouring both the perils and possibilities attending the urbanization of the sub-continent. This course explores a ground-up view of the many ways in which the urban denizens of these bustling cities where pasts and futures collide, experience this collision. While this course draws on interdisciplinary scholarly examinations engaging the urban emergent, it focuses on the realm of experience, desire and affect germinating in the city. Students sample ethnography, art, speculative fiction, and film to map out the textures of this complex and mutating fabric. In doing so we chart the emergence and application of new ideas and cultures, practices and constraints, identities and conflicts in the contemporary urban landscapes.  

* SAST 345a / GLBL 226 / PLSC 197a, National Security in India in the Twenty-first Century  Sushant Singh
This course examines the state and dynamics of national security in India in the past two decades. As an emergent power, India is an important country in Asia, with its economic and geo-political strength noticed globally. A major share of the country’s heft comes from its national security paradigm which has undergone a significant shift in the twenty-first century. This course intends to take a holistic look at the conceptions for the basis of India’s national security, its evolution, the current challenges and its future course by exploring its various dimensions such as China, Pakistan, global powers, Indian Ocean region, Kashmir, nuclear weapons, civil-military relations and defense preparedness.  

* 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 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 491a, Senior Essay  Priyasha Mukhopadhyay
A semester-long research project completed under faculty supervision and resulting in a substantial paper.