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## Politics of South Asia

PS391-001

Spring 2025

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**Course Time:** TR 9.30 am-10.45 am

**Location:** Taylor Education Bldg Rm 122

**Instructor:** Tasnia Symoom

**Email:** [tasnia.symoom@uky.edu](mailto:tasnia.symoom@uky.edu)

**Office Hours:** F 11 am-12.30 pm (POT1602)

### COURSE OVERVIEW

This course examines the political landscapes and international relations in South Asia, covering foundational and contemporary issues in countries including India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, and the Maldives. Through readings, discussions, and assignments, students will analyze state-building, policy challenges, political systems, and interregional dynamics in South Asia.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Understand key historical and contemporary political issues in South Asia.
- Develop analytical skills to interpret policy, media, and diplomatic negotiations.
- Engage critically with political issues through collaborative assignments.

### COURSE INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

The course will be taught using multiple instructional methods. These methods will include lectures, group discussions, and hands-on work to help students work through problems in class. It will be critical for students to attend all sessions to ensure mastery of course content. Much material for the course, including PowerPoint slides and review lectures, is/will be available on the Canvas website.

### COURSE-REQUIRED TEXT AND MATERIALS

*Raju, A.S., & Srinivasan, R. (Eds.). (2023). The Routledge Handbook of South Asia: Region, Security and Connectivity (1st ed.). Routledge India. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.uky.edu/10.4324/9781003279662>*

*Ganguly, S., O'Donnell, F., Taylor & Francis., & Taylor & Francis. (2022). Routledge handbook of the international relations of South Asia (S. Ganguly & F. O'Donnell, Eds.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003246626>*

Students will need access to the internet to view course materials and their grades in Canvas. For technical assistance, contact ITS Customer Services 24/7 at 859-218-HELP (4357) for urgent needs. For non-urgent matters, choose the option that works best for you at

<https://techhelpcenter.uky.edu/gethelp>.

## EVALUATION BREAKDOWN

- **Assignment 1: Timeline Project:** 10%
- **Assignment 2: Media Analysis Project:** 15%
- **Assignment 3: Poster Presentation:** 25%
- **Assignment 4: Movie Reflection:** 10%
- **Assignment 5: Policy Memo:** 15%
- **Assignment 6: Role-Playing Simulation:** 15%
- **Class attendance and Participation:** 10%

### **Assignment 1: Interactive Timeline Project (Due Week 4: Feb 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>)**

**Goal:** This group project will help you better understand South Asia's political history.

**What to Do:** In small groups, create an interactive timeline of significant events in South Asia from post-independence to the present day. For each event, include a brief description, visual aids (like images or maps), and an analysis of its historical and political impact. Think of this timeline as a visual summary of South Asia's political journey.

**Presentation:** Your group will present the timeline to the class, walking us through each major event and its importance.

#### **Tips:**

- Focus on events that were turning points in the region.
- Use reliable sources for accurate dates and details.
- Be creative! Interactive timelines are much more engaging with images and short, impactful descriptions.

### **Assignment 2: Media Analysis Project (Due Week 7: Feb 25<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup>)**

**Goal:** This assignment encourages you to think critically about how South Asian events are portrayed globally and locally.

**What to Do:** Pick a recent South Asian political event (e.g., an election, a major policy change, a protest) and find articles covering it in both international and local media. Write a 2-3 page analysis comparing how different sources frame the event. Focus on differences in tone, emphasis, bias, or the narrative each source presents.

**Outcome:** This will give you insight into how media impacts public perception, especially in political contexts.

**Tips:**

- Look for reputable sources with differing perspectives.
- Identify specific phrases or terms that suggest bias or emphasis.
- Reflect on why each source might frame the story the way it does.

**Assignment 3: Poster Presentation (Midterm, Due Week :9 March 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup>)**

**Goal:** This is your chance to dive deep into a South Asian political issue and help educate your classmates—and possibly faculty members—about it.

**What to Do:** Choose a major political issue affecting South Asia today, such as the Kashmir conflict, civil-military relations, economic reform, or communalism. Research the topic, gather visuals and key data, and design a poster that highlights the background, current developments, and implications. Think about what makes the issue significant and the impact it has on the region.

**Presentation:** This is considered your midterm assignment. You'll present your poster in class, where we'll invite other department members to join the discussion. Be prepared for questions—think of it as a mini-conference.

**Tips:**

- Use visuals and concise language; your poster should be engaging and clear at a glance.
- Practice explaining your issue in a few sentences.
- Anticipate questions and know your material well.

**Assignment 4: Film Reflection – Hira Raja Deshe (Due Week 10: March 18<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup>)**

**Goal:** This reflection encourages you to think critically about authoritarianism, propaganda, and resistance through cultural and artistic expression.

**What to Do:** Watch *Hira Raja Deshe* (The Kingdom of Diamonds, 1980), a Bengali political satire directed by Satyajit Ray. In a 2–3 page reflection, analyze how the film uses symbolism and allegory to depict political control and resistance. Draw comparisons to real-life political events or regimes in South Asia or elsewhere, and discuss what the film reveals about power, conformity, and dissent.

**Submission:** Upload your reflection (PDF or Word file) to Canvas. Full instructions, discussion questions, and grading rubric are available in the Canvas assignment.

### **Assignment 5: Policy Memo (Due Week 12: April 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup>)**

**Goal:** This assignment is about putting yourself in a policymaker's shoes and thinking critically about solutions.

**What to Do:** Select a current political or policy challenge in South Asia, such as human rights issues in Sri Lanka, environmental policy in Bangladesh, or women's rights in Pakistan. Write a 2-3 page policy memo that includes a brief overview of the issue, a clear analysis based on evidence, and 2-3 actionable recommendations aimed at addressing the problem.

**Format:** Use a professional, straightforward tone. Imagine a government official or NGO leader will read your memo to make decisions, so focus on clarity and effectiveness.

**Tips:**

- Be concise but thorough in your background section.
- Ensure each recommendation is realistic and backed by evidence.
- Think practically—what will your recommendations realistically achieve?

### **Assignment 6: Role-Playing Simulation (Due Week 15: April 22<sup>nd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup>)**

**Goal:** Apply your knowledge in a simulated diplomatic negotiation.

**What to Do:** Each of you will represent a South Asian country in a fictional regional crisis requiring diplomatic negotiation. Prepare a one-page summary of your country's stance and goals. In class, engage in a role-play session to negotiate a resolution.

**Preparation:** Stay true to the country's real-life interests and constraints.

**Tips:**

- Research your country's political position and alliances.
- Be persuasive but realistic in your arguments.
- Embrace teamwork and compromise to reach a solution.

## **ACADEMIC POLICY STATEMENTS & RESOURCES**

Please see the website below for Academic Policy Statements related to (1) excused absences and acceptable excuses; (2) religious observances; (3) verification of absences; (4) make-up work; (5) excused absences for military duties; (6) unexcused absences; (7) prep week and reading days; (8) accommodation due to disability; (9) non-discrimination statement and Title IX information; and (10) regular and substantive interactions (11) Diversity, Equity and Inclusion statement

<https://www.uky.edu/universitysenate/acadpolicy>

<https://www.uky.edu/universitysenate/syllabus-dei>

For resources available to students, including Counseling Center, Libraries, MLK Center, etc., please see the following website:

<https://www.uky.edu/universitysenate/student-resources>

## **RESPONSIBLE USE OF AI IN CLASS**

In this course, you may use AI tools to assist with brainstorming, refining ideas, and generating outlines or summaries. However, it's essential to use AI as a supplement rather than a substitute for your original thinking. All assignments must reflect your personal understanding, critical thinking, and individual contributions. If you use AI in any capacity, please disclose its role in your work and review all content generated to ensure accuracy and integrity. Misuse of AI—such as submitting unmodified AI-generated content—will be treated as academic misconduct. Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns about the policy before submitting any assignments.

Please see the UKY policies on Generative AI:

[https://advance.uky.edu/sites/default/files/2023-08/2023.08.11\\_ADVANCEfacultyguidelines.pdf](https://advance.uky.edu/sites/default/files/2023-08/2023.08.11_ADVANCEfacultyguidelines.pdf)

## **MISSED ASSIGNMENT POLICY**

Completing assignments on time is crucial to keep up with course material. If you anticipate missing a deadline due to extenuating circumstances, please notify me as early as possible to discuss possible accommodations. For unexcused late submissions, penalties may apply based on how late the work is turned in. Generally, late assignments without prior arrangements may lose partial credit per day overdue. Exceptions will be considered on a case-by-case basis, with appropriate documentation if needed.

## **OUTSIDE OF CLASSROOM**

I highly encourage all students to contact me outside of the classroom if you have any questions about the course or the content. I can be reached at [tasnia.symoom@uky.edu](mailto:tasnia.symoom@uky.edu). While I am a responsible emailer and typically fast reply, I reserve the right to respond to an email for up to 24 hours (this policy excludes weekends and holidays). You should plan ahead and not email right before a quiz or exam is due, as there is no guarantee that I will be able to respond in time to your question. DO NOT text me in Canvas if you want a fast reply. I tend to review the CANVAS platform less frequently than my emails.

## **CANVAS**

This course utilizes Canvas for essentially all facets of the course (quizzes, exams, readings, videos). You are expected to check Canvas regularly for all information about this course

## **WEEKLY THEMES AND READINGS**

### **Weeks 1-4: Foundations of South Asian Politics**

*Focus:* Colonial legacies, independence movements, state-building

- **Readings:**
  - *Handbook of South Asia:* Chapters 1–3 (Colonialism, Nationalism, and State Formation)
  - *Handbook of International Relations of South Asia:* Chapters 1 & 2 (Colonial Impact on Foreign Relations)

### **Weeks 5-8: Political Systems and Governance in South Asia**

*Focus:* Governance structures, democracy, authoritarianism, and civil-military relations

- **Readings:**
  - *Handbook of South Asia:* Chapters 5, 6, 8 (Comparative Political Systems, Democracy and Governance, Civil-Military Relations)
  - *Handbook of International Relations of South Asia:* Chapter 3 (Security and Governance Challenges)

### **Weeks 9-12: Current Political Challenges and Policy Issues**

*Focus:* Nationalism, gender politics, economic policy, and development

- **Readings:**
  - *Handbook of South Asia:* Chapters 10, 12, 15 (Economic Policy, Gender and Politics, Development Challenges)
  - *Handbook of International Relations of South Asia:* Chapters 5 & 6 (Regional Development and Gender Issues)

### **Weeks 13-16: South Asia in International Relations**

*Focus:* Regional conflicts, alliances, global impact, and foreign policy

- **Readings:**
  - *Handbook of South Asia:* Chapter 18 (International Relations)
  - *Handbook of International Relations of South Asia:* Chapters 8, 9, 10 (Foreign Policies of India, Pakistan, and the Region)