

PSC 3192W: Politics of South Asia Through Literature and Film

Seminar:	Monday 12:45 – 2:35 p.m. Online (Synchronous)	Emmanuel J. Teitelbaum Associate Professor Department of Political Science Hall of Government Room 411 Phone: (202) 994-9125 Email: ejt@gwu.edu
Office Hours:	Wednesday, 1:00-3:00 p.m.; please schedule an appointment on my Calendly page	

South Asia is home to approximately one-quarter of the world's population (about 1.8 billion people). The social, political, and economic landscape of the region is highly diverse. Many South Asians have enjoyed the freedoms associated with political democracy while others have suffered under brutal dictatorships. Some enjoy peace and stability while others experience persistent communal strife. In some places, women are treated with greater respect and dignity whereas many feature heavily patriarchal cultures and norms. Some in South Asia prosper in relatively egalitarian societies while others endure grinding poverty, inequality, and deprivation.

This course will explore South Asia's breathtaking political, social and economic variation through literature and film. A primary aim is to harness the insights from the realm of art to illuminate academic and policy debates. How do South Asian novels and films enhance our understanding of the legacies of colonialism, the causes of communal strife, potential solutions to endemic poverty, or the consequences of gender bias or social and economic inequality? Students will learn to develop arguments to explain variation by comparing, contrasting and synthesizing competing social scientific perspectives and to support their arguments with details from textual and visual materials. Through this exploration, students will develop a working familiarity with South Asian politics and society as well as a deeper appreciation for the unique ability of literature and film to illuminate the region's enduring challenges.

Course Objectives

- Develop a deeper understanding of how people in South Asia experience inequality and injustice through literature and film
- Critically reflect upon the role of literature and film as a tool for political and social reform
- Identify the primary effects of India's partition on contemporary politics in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan
- Explain why some countries and regions in South Asia are more democratic than others
- Formulate a theory for the prevalence of gender inequality and violence against women in South Asia
- Compose an argumentative essay through an iterative process (starting with an abstract then progressing to an outline, first draft and final paper draft)
- Critically monitor and evaluate the quality of your own writing

Course Requirements

- 1) Reading quizzes—10%
- 2) Weekly posts—20%
- 3) Class participation—20%
- 4) Final paper—50%

- a. Short summary = 5%
- b. Film/novel summary = 5%
- c. Research summary = 5%
- d. Extended outline = 5%
- e. First draft = 10%
- f. Final draft = 15%
- g. Peer review and discussion of another student's paper = 5%

Readings and Viewing Material

Students will read one novel or work of popular nonfiction and view a mix of films and other media for each of the four sections of the course: colonialism, independence and partition; democracy and authoritarianism; separatist movements and civil war and women's representation. In addition, students will be assigned academic readings that will help to illuminate these themes.

The academic readings will be posted to Blackboard. Students should purchase the novels through Amazon or some similar vendor. Students can rent or purchase the films online from YouTube, Amazon, Netflix and other sites. Links to the films and other media are provided below.

Required Novels:

- [*Midnight's Children*](#) by Salman Rushdie
- [*The Black Coat*](#) by Neamat Imam
- [*Funny Boy*](#) by Michael Ondaatje
- [*The Upstairs Wife: An Intimate History of Pakistan*](#) by Rafia Zakaria

Required Films:

- [*The Legend of Bhagat Singh*](#), Rajkumar Santoshi
- *1947: Earth*, Deepa Mehta
- [*Rajneeti*](#), Prakash Jha
- [*Bombay*](#), Mani Ratnam
- [*Valley of the Saints*](#), Musa Syeed
- [*White Sun*](#), Deepak Rauniyar
- [*Sairat*](#), Nagraj Manjule

Required TV Series and Documentaries:

- [*Panchayat*](#), Deepak Kumar Mishra
- [*Among the Believers*](#), Hemal Trivedi, Mohammad Ali Naqvi

Reading Quizzes

Students will complete short quizzes on the reading material each week. These will be posted on Blackboard.

Blog Posts

Students will post a question about the reading or film ahead of each seminar. These posts should be brief (no more than a few sentences). The primary purpose of these posts is to demonstrate your engagement

with the readings and media assigned for that day. Your posts should contain two elements: 1) a noteworthy quote taken from the assigned film or novel; and 2) a provocative statement or question about how the novel or film relates to the assigned academic readings. These posts should also be used to seek clarification regarding aspects of the reading that you do not understand or want further clarification on. Each post should be substantially different relative to earlier student posts. Please be sure to post your question by 11:59 p.m. the day before seminar to receive credit.

Class Participation

This class is a seminar that meets just once a week; consequently, participation and attendance are essential to learning. Students will be evaluated on the frequency and quality of their participation. At the same time, the more vocal students in the class should be mindful of other students' need to participate. The emphasis should be on facilitating dialogue and not on dominating the conversation.

Final Paper

The primary assignment for the course will be an extended review essay of about 20 pages in length. This essay should build on a common theme across the course materials (e.g. caste, religion, regionalism, gender, regime type, etc.) and should focus on how literature and film help us to reflect on contemporary political challenges in South Asia. The critical reviews can and should feed into the term paper. Crucially, students will write the paper in *multiple stages and drafts*. This is the core assignment for the course and constitutes half of the course grade. It should therefore not be treated as a typical term paper, written hastily at the end of the semester. More details regarding the assignment will be discussed in class.

Formatting and Lateness Policies

For all papers, pages should be double-spaced with 12-point Times New Roman font and one-inch margins on all sides. Essays will be due at 11:59 p.m. on the date of the schedule final exam. The penalty for papers that violate these guidelines is an automatic *one-half letter grade deduction*. Late papers and assignments will also receive the same standard one-half letter grade penalty. Students presenting a letter from a qualified professional may be exempted from this rule.

Week 1: Overview and Expectations (January 11)

--No class January 18, Martin Luther King Day
--Start reading *Midnight's Children*

Part I: Colonialism, Partition and Independence

Literature:

- *Midnight's Children*, Salman Rushdie (560 pages)
- "A Tale of 1947", Sadaat Hasan Manto

Films:

- *The Legend of Bhagat Singh*, Rajkumar Santoshi (1 h 42 min)
- *Earth*, Deepa Mehta (1 h 40 min)

Week 2: The Freedom Struggle (January 25)

- Read:
 - Bose and Jalal, *Modern South Asia*, Chs. 11, 12 and 13
 - B.R. Ambedkar, "The Annihilation of Caste" (skim Gandhi's response)
- Watch: *The Legend of Bhagat Singh*

Estimated study time: 5 h + read *Midnight's Children*

Week 3: Partition (February 1)

- Read:
 - Yasmin Khan, *The Great Partition*, Chs. 7 and 9
 - Manto, "A Tale of 1947"
- Watch: *Earth*

WARNING: *The materials for this week portray the graphic violence associated with Partition, which includes sexual violence.*

Estimated study time: 5 h + read *Midnight's Children*

Week 4: The Challenge of Independence (February 8)

- Read:
 - Ayesha Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia*, Ch. 2
 - *Midnight's Children*

Estimated study time: 6 h (if you have been keeping up with *Midnight's Children*)

*****Short summary due Monday, February 15**

--No class, February 15, President's Day

Part II: Democracy and Authoritarianism

Novel—*The Black Coat*, Neamat Imam (265 pages)

Films—*Rajneeti*, Prakash Jha (2h 50m); *Bombay*, Mani Ratnam (1 h 36m)

Documentary: *Among the Believers*, Hemal Trivedi (1 h 23m)

Week 5: India's Flawed Democracy I—Caste, Clientelism and Criminality (February 22)

- Read:
 - Milan Vaishnav, *When Crime Pays*, Ch. 5
 - Chauchard, *Why Representation Matters*, Ch. 2
- Watch: *Rajneeti*

Estimated study time: 5 h + read *The Black Coat*

Week 6: India's Flawed Democracy II—Communalism and Hindutva Politics (March 1)

- Read:
 - Christophe Jaffrelot, "The Rise of Hindu Nationalism"
 - Paul Brass, *Theft of an Idol*, Chapter 7
 - Milan Vaishnav and Jamie Hinton, "[The Dawn of India's Fourth Party System](#)"
- Watch: *Bombay*

Estimated study time: 5h + read *The Black Coat*

Week 7: Pakistan's Hybrid Regime (March 8)

- Read:
 - Vali Nasr, *Islamic Leviathan*, Ch. 6
 - Paul Staniland, Naseemullah and Butt, "Pakistan's Military Elite"
 - Bhutto, "[Democracy](#)"
- Watch: *Among the Believers*

Estimated study time: 4 h 30 m + read *The Black Coat*

*****Film/novel summary due Monday, March 15**

--No class March 15, Spring Break

Week 8: Authoritarian Legacies in Bangladesh (March 22)

- Read:
 - Christine Fair, "Hasina Consolidates One-Woman Rule"
 - David Jackman, "Politicization of Violence in Urban Bangladesh"
 - [All the Prime Minister's Men](#), Al Jazeera
 - *The Black Coat*

Estimated study time: 5 h (if you have been keeping up with *The Black Coat*)

Part III: Separatists Movements and Civil War

Novel—*Funny Boy*, Shyam Selvadurai (320 pages)

Films—*Valley of the Saints*, Musa Syeed (1 h 22 m); *White Sun*, Deepak Rauniyar (1h 29 m)

Week 9: Kashmir (March 29)

- Read:
 - Ashutosh Varshney, “India, Pakistan, Kashmir: Antinomies of Nationalism”
 - USIP, “Special Report: India’s Kashmir Conundrum”
- Watch: *Valley of the Saints*

Estimated study time: 4 h + read *Funny Boy*

*****Research summary due Friday, April 2**

Week 10: Revolution in Nepal (April 5)

- Read:
 - Aditya Adhikari, “The Fish in the Sea: Vignettes”
 - Michael Hutt, “The Changing Face of Nepal”
- Watch: [White Sun](#)

Estimated study time: 4 h + read *Funny Boy*

Week 11: Sri Lanka’s Civil War (April 12)

- Read:
 - Herring, “Making Ethnic Conflict”
 - Neil DeVotta, “From Turmoil to Dynasty”
 - *Funny Boy*

Estimated study time: 4 h (if you have been keeping up with *Funny Boy*)

*****Extended outline due Friday, April 16**

Part IV: Women’s Representation

Novel—*The Upstairs Wife* (265 pages)

Film—*Sairat*, Nagraj Manjule (2h 54m)

Netflix series—*Panchayat* (selected episodes)

Week 12: The Roots of Patriarchy (April 19)

- Academic readings:
 - Rachel Brule, *Women, Power and Property*, Ch 3
 - Robert Churchill, *Women in the Crossfire*, Ch. 1
- Watch: [Sairat](#)

WARNING: The film for this week portrays scenes of graphic violence.

Estimated study time: 5 h + read *Upstairs Wife*

*****First paper draft due Friday, April 23**

Week 13: Women's Leadership (April 26)

- Read:
 - Pande and Topalova, "Women in Charge"
 - *The Upstairs Wife*
- Watch: *Panchayat* (episodes TBA)

Estimated study time: 6 h (if you read a bit of *Upstairs Wife* last week)

Week 14: Paper Workshop (April 29)

--Please note that Thursday, April 29 is a designated Monday

*****Peer review due on day of paper workshop (April 29)**

*****Final paper due by end of day on scheduled date of final exam (TBD)**