HIST 162 Ancient India: Interpreting South Asia’s Pre-Modern Past  
Tuesday / Thursday 3:00-4:15pm

Professor Sarah Waheed  
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Office Hours: M/W: 2-3:30pm or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION  
This course will begin by investigating how India was understood by European outsiders, and what affect this has had on the shaping of Indian history. After an initial discussion of how the present informs our readings of the past, we will move on to explore South Asia’s rich pre-modern past, from 50,000 BCE through the Mughal Empire, 1650 AD, prior to extended contact with Europe.

The peoples of India have produced some of the oldest and most dynamic of the world’s cultures. We will survey a wide host of topics, including the Indus River Valley civilization; the emergence of various dynasties, kingdoms, and empires; the making of Sanskrit epics such as the Ramayana, and Mahabharata as well as Sanskrit court plays; the creation of regional and linguistic cultures; early encounters with Buddhism and Islam; and the making of Indo-Islamic cultures and rule. We will examine the wide mosaic of beliefs and practices in pre-modern India, and we will trace the major elements and patterns of society as they changed over time. This course will draw heavily on primary sources (in translation) to develop our own understandings of events, ideas, and peoples, as well as political and cultural processes.

A Brief Overview  
South Asia is home to nearly a quarter of humanity. The region is immense in its diversity, with hundreds of languages, a place where most world religions are represented. It is immense not only over space, but time, with some of the world’s most ancient civilizations spanning five millenia. South Asia’s geography has helped to shape the patterns of its civilizations, which in turn have contributed to the cultural, economic, and religious history of humankind as a whole. The Indus Valley peoples built cities (flourished 2600-1700 BCE), followed by the migrations of Indo-Aryan Vedic peoples, who provided quite visible components to what became Hindu traditions. Over time, South Asia also produced Jain and Buddhist traditions, with profound implications for all of Asia. Each of these traditions contained political as well as social and religious forms.

South Asia is also home to the largest populations of Muslims worldwide, who first arrived to the Indian subcontinent, as early as 711—less than a hundred years after the beginnings of Islam.
Like many peoples before them, their arrival to the region occurred through conquest, trade, and travel. Moreover, the regional identities of South Asia each have their own histories, nested within that of the sub-continent as a whole. This course will end prior to the conquests and cultures of Europe (circa 1650 CE). Working within an historical framework, we will explore the most important aspects of Indian history and trace the major elements and patterns of society as they changed over time.

**LEARNING GOALS**

1. You will gain a better appreciation of the nature and practice of history as a discipline, and as the study, based on evidence, of human experiences, interactions, and relationships as they change over time. You will learn to appreciate that history does not consist of a simple succession of self-evident facts, and that evidence-based interpretation and analysis are central to all historical work.

2. You will learn to identify, analyze, and contextualize different types of primary sources, and to distinguish between primary and secondary sources, thus developing your overall ability to evaluate and use evidence; in particular, you will learn to differentiate between prejudiced assertions and informed interpretations.

3. Your reading, writing, and oral communication skills will be honed; you will develop your ability to think historically, that is to situate events and developments in their historical context for the purpose of critical analysis; and you will expand your ability to engage with complex causal analysis, and to articulate arguments that integrate supporting evidence and analytical commentary.

4. You will learn to better appreciate the differentness of the past and the distinctiveness and richness of diverse societies and cultures, and learn to view the world from perspectives other than your own.

5. You will gain an appreciation for the long-term and nuanced mechanisms of historical change and causality, and for the past and present accomplishments and challenges of various societies and cultures.

6. You will also be introduced to the rudiments of historical research, including the use of library and on-line resources, basic notions of historiography, and the purpose and practice of proper citation methods.
**Learning goal specific to South Asia:** This course will enable students to question the picture of South Asia as a society ensconced in timeless mysticism and forever ruled by oriental despots; as a society beset by religious rigidities and constant conflict between Hindus and Muslims; a world that was nudged out of its slumber only with the advent of the ‘West’; and allow them to assess how contemporary ideologies of nationalism are imputed onto the ancient past. In particular, students will come to appreciate the transformations over South Asia’s 5 millenia long history as numerous polities emerged and gave way to new ones. South Asia’s many political formations are best understood as patterns of consolidation and decentralization. By the end of the course students will be sensitized to the diversity and multiplicity of cultures which constitute the South Asian historical potpourri. Students will learn to appreciate the enormous diversity of the region: the peoples of pre-modern South Asia were differentiated along lines of caste, class, region, language, occupation, and faith.

**Books for Purchase:** Available at the Oberlin Bookstore, Powell’s, Amazon, and Alibris
- Catherine B. Asher, Cynthia Talbot, *India Before Europe*, Cambridge University 2006
- P. Lal, *Great Sanskrit Plays in Modern Translation*

**Books on Reserve for Reference:** Available at the library
- Anne-Marie Schimmel, *The Empire of the Great Mughals: History, Art, and Culture*
- Wendy Doniger / O’Flarety, *The Rig Veda*
- Romila Thapar, *Early India From Its Origins to 1300*
- Romila Thapar, *A History of India: Volume I*

**ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADE BREAKDOWN**
You will be expected to complete the reading assigned for each class on, or before, the day that it is listed on the syllabus. Completing the reading means that you have not only literally read the assignment, but that you have spent time putting together your thoughts and questions about the texts and how all of these relate to the themes of the course. The participation portion of your final grade will take in to account your attendance and active participation in class. The * denotes optional reading, which may prove useful for your final paper.

- 5% Map quiz [DUE: 9/17]
- 20% Open book, take-home exam [DUE: 10/17]
- 25% Response paper of Sanskrit play (of your choosing) - (3-5 pages) [DUE 11/7]
- 30% Final paper (5 pages) [DUE: 12/18]
- 20% Reading questions + class participation

**GRADE SYSTEM**
The grading is as follows: A+ 100-97; A 96-93; A- 92-90; B+ 89-87; B 86-83; B- 82-80; C+ 79-77; C 76-73; C- 72-70; D 65-69, F below 65.

**PARTICIPATION**
Active class participation means that you are not just physically present, but that you are mentally engaged in class. Students are expected to attend all classes; complete all reading; and
participate in discussion (please always bring texts to class and be prepared to reference them). To prepare for class discussions, students should mark passages in readings that excite, inspire, disturb, or puzzle so that they can ask questions, articulate confusions and to engage in lively but open-minded and respectful debate. Quality of participation is more important than quantity.

READING QUESTIONS
Reading questions will not be graded, but typed responses in 12 point font must be handed in on time in class, for full class participation credit [pass/fail].

RESPONSE PAPERS / FINAL ESSAY
Essays should be double-spaced, in Times New Roman 12-point font, with 1” margins and page numbers. Points will be taken off for not following this format. You will be evaluated based on your grasp of the readings in this course. You must use the Chicago-MLA style of citation for either in-text citations or footnotes. A citation guide is here: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/02/ Wikipedia will not be accepted as a source citation. All the standard forms (English language and historical) must be used (e.g. reference notes, bibliography, proper grammar and spelling). For additional writing guidelines, you may also seek the assistance of Oberlin’s Writing Center: http://new.oberlin.edu/arts-and-sciences/departments/rhetoric/writing-associates-program/writing-center.dot

Central Issue for Your Response Paper: Sanskrit drama can provide a valuable source for the history of ancient India. The nature of these plays, however, makes them a special type of source. Your paper is to examine and analyze one specific play as an historical source. What can or cannot it tell us about history? You are to compare and contrast your selected play and any one other historical work.

Specific Options: Choose any one of the plays in Lal, Great Sanskrit (EXCEPT “Toy Cart”) 1) Assess that one play as an historical source either: (a) for the time it was (probably) written or (b) for the period of history when the events of the play are set, and 2) Compare and contrast this one play as an historical source with at least one other historical source (a book or reading assigned for the class or a source agreed upon after consultation with Professor Waheed).

Due Date for Response Paper on Sanskrit Play: November 7, 2013
You must meet with me by the first week of October to discuss your Sanskrit play paper.

Final Paper: Question will be handed out in advance, and will be due December 18.

POWER POINT LECTURES
I will try to regularly post the power-point presentations on Blackboard. If you miss class, be sure to obtain the lecture notes from a classmate, or come see me. Viewing the power point presentations will not make sense without first having done the reading.

PRIMARY SOURCES
We will be using several primary sources in this class. What is a primary source? Here is a useful definition: http://www.yale.edu/collections_collaborative/primarysources/primarysources.html.
While reading works by historians and other scholars, it is useful to ask, ‘What sources is the author using?’ ‘How does a narrative change depending upon the sources used?’

**IN-CLASS GUIDELINES: Please…**
Switch off all cell phones for the duration of the class

Laptop / Tablets / I-Pads Policy: There will be NO electronic devices allowed during class

Avoid eating or sleeping in class.

Do not saunter in late or leave early without speaking/e-mailing me beforehand.

**ATTENDANCE and EXTENSION POLICY**
You will be expected to attend class regularly. If you are absent for three or more class days in a row without a reasonable explanation presented before your absences, your class dean will be contacted before appropriate action is taken. In the event of illness or family emergency, please let me know via e-mail. If you need an extension, you must e-mail me at least 36 hours prior to the due-date of the paper. Students will not be granted more than two extensions per semester. If an extension is granted and the paper is not handed in by the agreed upon deadline, the paper will receive an F. Barring extensions, all assignments must be handed in on the date they are due by 5pm that day. Assignments turned in after class will be considered late. The grades for all assignments turned in late will be reduced by a 1/3 of a letter grade (ie. an A to an A-) for each day that they are late.

I only accept paper copies (NO electronic submissions) of your work unless otherwise stated. Please bring a printed, stapled copy of your paper to class to turn in. I will not read papers that are not stapled, or that do not have a name. Drop off your papers in class or in the box next to my office door in the History Department (room 314) by 5:00pm. There will be a penalty for papers handed in via e-mail unless otherwise stated.

**RE-DOING ASSIGNMENTS / REVISIONS**
I have a no revisions policy. If you wish to discuss a draft of the paper, you are welcome to discuss it with me in my office hours prior to submission. In the rare event that I do allow re-writes, do note that I have higher expectations the second time around: so, you may wind up with a lower grade if the re-written paper is not up to par.

**INSTRUCTOR AVAILABILITY**
In addition to my office hours, I am available via e-mail. If you cannot make my office hours, please e-mail me to schedule an appointment. Please note: I do not respond to e-mails sent after 6pm M-F, until the middle of the next day, and do not respond over the weekend.

**OFFICE OF DISABILITY SERVICES**
Appropriate accommodations will always be granted to students with documented disabilities. If you have a documented disability please see me early in the semesters. Any additional questions should be addressed to Jane Boomer, Coordinator of Disability Services:
http://new.oberlin.edu/office/disability-services/
HONOR CODE AND PLAGIARISM
The Honor Code applies to all assignments in this course. This means that any student found cheating, plagiarizing, turning in another person’s work as his/her own or otherwise violating the instructor’s instructions will be subject to a hearing before the Student Honor Committee. See the Rules and Regulations Section VI A and B in the Student Handbook. If you have any doubt about citations, see the guidelines here: http://new.oberlin.edu/arts-and-sciences/departments/gender/writing-research/citations.dot

GRADE APPEALS
You are always welcome to discuss a paper, but if you want the grade reconsidered, you must first submit a four-paragraph written appeal in which you evaluate your paper in each of the four criteria: thesis, organization, evidence, and style. Remember that a grade does not reflect process (it does not measure whether you worked hard) and it certainly does not reflect a value judgment about you as a person. A grade is an evaluation of the quality and analytical rigor of the thesis, organization, evidence, and style of a single piece of work, so ensure that your written appeal addresses your finished paper in terms of those criteria rather than time and effort expended on it. Appeals must be submitted in hard copy no later than one week after graded papers are returned in class.

Syllabus / Readings Subject to Change
*denotes optional / recommended reading

READINGS AVAILABLE ON BLACKBOARD
Unless otherwise indicated, all the readings for this course will be from the books or from Blackboard. Blackboard readings will be available under the subheading, Course Documents, on the left-hand bar of the screen. Make sure you register for the course.

WEEK 1: Orientations: The Present in the Past

Tues, 9/3:

Introductions / Syllabus Review
Who Cares About South Asian history?
Our Limitations, Our Texts

Thurs, 9/5:

Romila Thapar, “Ideology and the Interpretation of Early Indian History,” (p. 1-22)

“The Historian in the World”: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NOJUkKPN-CE (5min clip)

Typed Reading Q’s Due Today: 9/5/2013 –Be prepared for discussion
WEEK 2: South Asia Over Time and Space

Tues, 9/10:

Doniger, Preface (p. 1-16) and Chapter 1, “Working with Available Light” (p. 17-49)

WATCH 15 minute speech by Romila Thapar (29:52 – 45:10)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=39IZiXEPWg8

Typed Reading Q’s Due Today: 9/10/2013 – Be prepared for discussion

Thurs, 9/12

Asher & Talbot, Chapter 1, “Introduction: Situating India” (p. 1-25)

Keay, “Introduction” (p. xvii-xxvii) = 12 pages


Assignments:
1: Take your blank map; find the following places using the library, the internet, textbooks.]1
2. Typed Reading Question due today 9/12/2013

WEEK 3

MAP QUIZ on SEPTEMBER 17, 2013

Tues, 9/17: The First Cities: Indus River Valley Civilization

Doniger, Chapter 3, “Civilization in the Indus Valley, 50,000 – 1500 BCE” p. 65-85


Thurs, 9/19: Ancient Ruins & Contemporary Debates: Indus River Valley to Vedic Age

Doniger, Chapter 4, “Between the Ruins and the Text” p. 85-103

Michael Witzel and Steve Farmer “Horseplay in Harappa: The Indus Valley Decipherment Hoax”  http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~witzel/RAJARAM/Har1.pdf  p. 4-14

Start Reading Play of Your Choice
Prepare Your Own Reading Questions on Witzel / Farmer and/or Doniger

1 A) Vijayanagara; B) Balochistan; C) Hyderabad (Deccan); D) Bengal; E) Punjab; F) Ayodhya; G) Surat; F) Delhi; G)Godavari River H) Harappa; I) Indus River; J) Khyber Pass; K) Sindh; L) Mumbai/Bombay; M) Ganges River; N) Rajasthan; O)Karachi; P)Vindhya Range; Q) Malabar Coast; R)Gujarat; S)Himalayas;
Week 4: Vedic Age to Epic Age

Tues, 9/24:

Doniger, Chapter 5, “Humans, Animals, and Gods in the Rig Veda” p. 103-132

Keay, Chapter 2, “Vedic Values, c 1700-900 BC” (p. 29-36)

PRIMARY SOURCE: Excerpts from Rig Veda, O'Flaherty, pp. 139-207 (choose 4 hymns from the following: 4.18, 1.32, 3.31, 10.108, 2.12, 1.85, 1.165, 1.170, 1.171, 5.83, 5.40, 10.127, 1.160)

REMINDER: Come to class prepared with your own questions from the texts.

Thurs, 9/26:

Keay, Chapter 3, “The Epic Age, 900-520 BC” (p. 37-56)

Watch: animated film (1hr/20min) by Nina Paley, Sita Sings the Blues http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RzTg7YXuy34


READING QUESTIONS DUE TODAY 9/26/2013

Week 5: Historical Sources and the Age of Epics, Kingdoms, and Republics

Tues 10/1:

Doniger, Chapter 10, “Violence in the Mahabharata,” (p.252-277)

Thurs 10/3:

PRIMARY SOURCE: “The Toy Cart (Mrichakathika)” by King Shudraka, in Lal, (p. 75 – 189)

Watch film, “Utsav” on reserve OR attend screening on Wed 10/2/13 at 7pm: Room TBA

READING QUESTIONS DUE TODAY 10/3/2013

Be prepared to discuss the play AND film in class 10/3/2013.

WEEK 6: The Emergence of Empire and Introducing Buddhism

Tues 10/8:

John Keay, Chapter 5, “Gloria Maurya” (p. 78-101)
Romila Thapar, “Emperor Ashoka and Buddhism” [6 minute excerpt of Thapar interview]  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fme7Bg8xAoU

Watch Part I PBS Documentary: The Buddha: http://www.pbs.org/thebuddha/ (1 hr/52 min)

*Read the play, “The Signet Ring of Vikshasa (Mudra Rakshasa) by Vishakadatta, in P. Lal, Great Sanskrit Plays in Modern Translation (p. 189-253)

**Thurs 10/10: Class will meet in Allen Art Museum at 3pm**

Watch Part II PBS Documentary: The Buddha: http://www.pbs.org/thebuddha/ (1 hr/52 min)

Schopen, “Burial Ad Sanctos and the Physical Presence of the Buddha in Early Indian Buddhism” (p. 115-135)

**READING QUESTIONS DUE TODAY 10/10/2013**

**WEEK 7: Political and Economic Transitions**

**Tues 10/15:**


**Thurs 10/17:**

Keay, Chapter 8, “Lords of the Universe c 500-700” (p. 155-180)

**Open book take-home exam due DATE: 10/17/2013**

***************FALL BREAK NO CLASSES ON 10/22 and 10/24***************

**WEEK 8: Emerging Regional Kingdoms and Early Medieval India**

**Tues 10/29:**

Thapar, Early India, Chapter 10, “The Peninsula: Emerging Regional Kingdoms” (p. 326-363)

**Thurs 10/31:**

Thapar, Early India, Chapter 11, “The Peninsula: Establishing Authorities and Structures, c. AD 900-1300” Early India from the Origins to A.D. 1300 (p. 363-405)
WEEK 9: Devotionalism & the Rise of Vernaculars: The Case of the Bhakti Movement

Tues 11/5:

Doniger, Chapter 13, “Bhakti in South India, 100-900 CE” (p. 338-370)

*Ramaswamy, “Rebels—Conformists? Women Saints in Medieval South India” (p. 133-146)

Thurs 11/7:

PRIMARY SOURCE: Meera Bai (poetry); Kabir (poetry); Guru Nanak (poetry)

In Class: Watch samples of modern Bhajan/Bhakti music in film: “Aaj sajan mohe ang laga lo”

Guru Nanak, by Vinay Lal
http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/southasia/Religions/gurus/GNanak.html

SANSKRIT PLAY – RESPONSE PAPERS DUE 11/7

WEEK 10: The Rise of Islam: Conquest and Indo-Islamic Cultures, North and South

Tues 11/12:

Barbara Metcalf, “An Historical Overview of Islam in South Asia” (p. 1-9)
http://press.princeton.edu/chapters/i9061.pdf

Asher / Talbot, Chapter 2, “The Expansion of Turkic Power, 1180-1350” (p. 25-52)

*PRIMARY SOURCE: Al-Beruni’s India [excerpts]

Thurs 11/14:

Asher / Talbot, Chapter 3, “Southern India in the Age of Vijayanagra, 1350-1550” (p. 53-83)

PRIMARY SOURCE: “Saving Tamil Muslims from the Torments of Hell: Vannapparimalappulavar's Book of One Thousand Questions / Ranit Ricci (p. 190-201) [pdf]

WEEK 11: Spread of Islam: From Sufism to Indian Ocean Connections

Tues 11/19:

Sunil Sharma, Amir Khusraw: The Poet of Sultans and Sufis, Chapter 2, (p. 7-35)

Richard Eaton, “Sufi Folk Literature and the Spread of Indian Islam” (p. 117-127)

In Class: Amir Khusrau poem: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3c6iudJBpcA
Thurs 11/21:

Richard Eaton, “The Rise and Fall of Military Slavery in the Deccan, 1450-1560” (p. 115 – 135)

PRIMARY SOURCE: Zayn al Din al Malabari, Custom and Conversion in the Malabar Coast, Some Accounts of the Portugese, (trans. and ed.) by Enseng Ho (p. 301-307)

Reading Q’s for this week due TODAY 11/12

WEEK 12: Mughals Part I: Early Formations

Tues 11/26:

Asher / Talbot, Chapter 4, “North India Between Empires: History, Society, and Culture, 1350-1550” (p. 84 – 115)

PRIMARY SOURCE: Baburnama, Excerpts [Introduction by Wheeler Thackston] [make PDF]

Hand Out Final Paper Assignment

************************THANSGIVING BREAK NO CLASSES 11/28*******************************

WEEK 13: The Mughals: Courtly Life and Emperor Akbar

Tues 12/3:

Asher / Talbot: Chapter 5, “Sixteenth Century North India: Empire Reformulated” (p. 115-152)

*Ruby Lal, “Rethinking Mughal India: The Challenge of a Princess’s Memoir” (p. 53-65)

Thurs 12/5:

Asher / Talbot: Chapter 6: Expanding Political and Economic Spheres, 1550-1650” (p. 152-186)

PRIMARY SOURCE: Letters of the Emperor Akbar in English Translation: “A Circular Enumerating the Duties of Officers” (p. 78-87)

Watch in Class: Clip from Mughal-e-Azam

WEEK 14: Mughals in the Seventeenth Century

Tues 12/10:

Katherine Butler Brown, “Did Aurangzeb Ban Music? Questions for the Historiography of His Reign” (p. 77-120)
*Asher / Talbot: Chapter 7: “Seventeenth Century”

**Thurs 12/12: FINAL CLASS Wrap-Up**

Summary of course themes

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**FINAL EXAM (TAKE-HOME PAPER)**
**DUE WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2013 by 5pm**