Course Description

This seminar is a graduate-level survey of the contemporary cross-national politics of Asia. It centers the perspectives brought to bear on these issues by the state and society of modern India. The course covers four overarching areas of scholarship: (1) statebuilding, civil-military relations, nationalism and its associated practices of national identity construction; (2) intrastate conflict and contentious politics including human rights and the rule of law; (3) the political economy of development and environmental sustainability since liberalization; and (4) regional geopolitical and geoeconomic competition. This survey is offered distinctly from, but as a pre-requisite for, participation in CIR’s March 2020 Asian International Relations Seminar in Mumbai and Delhi. The course emphatically welcomes all students with a substantive interest in the region’s politics, regardless of their ability to join us for this subsequent trip.

Co-Instructor Division of Labor

Since this seminar will be co-taught by two instructors, to keep the line of control here stable and predictable, we will divide leadership of the seminar in two important ways. First, although both instructors will be present at every class session, we will be exchanging seminar “chair” duties week-to-week to facilitate classroom order. Second, each instructor will take the lead on grading duties for half of the enrolled students, and will serve as primary point of contact for office-hour consultations for that portion of the seminar, with the other instructor nevertheless retaining full “advise and consent” power over any scores issued by their counterpart. Your own “lead instructor” will be determined by our second class session.
Readings

There are no required books to buy for this course. All of the required readings for the course can be found online via Chicago’s “Canvas” system. In addition, each student will be asked to tackle an additional recent book on some facet of Indian politics on their own for the purposes of the seminar. See the “Student Responsibilities” section for details.

Determination of Grades

The final course grade will be determined by weighting your performance in the following areas:

1. Class Participation 30%
2. Contemporary Indian Politics Book Project 35%
3. Expository Essay 35%
   FINAL GRADE 100%

We convert numerical percentage scores into letter grades using the following scheme:

- A = 93% and above
- A- = 90%-93%
- B+ = 87%-90%
- B = 83%-87%
- B- = 80%-83%
- C+ = 77%-80%
- C = 73%-77%
- C- = 70%-73%
- D+ = 67%-70%
- D = 60%-67%
- F = Less than 60%

Student Responsibilities

Attendance and Participation

This seminar has been designed to serve as a vehicle for student debate and discussion. It will therefore require everyone’s active participation. As a result, students are expected to attend every class session and to do so prepared to contribute. In order to facilitate this discussion, students digest the readings by submitting and responding to discussion points, via the week’s Canvas discussion prompt. A discussion point is simply a short, developed 2-3 paragraph contribution that synthesizes a key concept, argument, or empirical observation across at least two of the week’s readings. At their best, discussion points open a preparatory dialogue on the assigned readings, which then carries over into our weekly in-person deliberations.

For the first and last sessions, everyone must submit one discussion point through Canvas no later than noon on Tuesday, January 7 and March 10, respectively. For the eight remaining weeks (2-9), students will be assigned to an A-track (post, respond, post, respond, etc.) and a B-track (respond, post, respond, post, etc.), where they will alternate weeks starting the conversation for their classmates, and writing responses to points raised by others. Over this period, initial postings
will be due to appear on Canvas no later than noon on the Sunday before the class session in question, while responses to these posts will be due to appear no later noon on Tuesday, 48 hours later. Responders have full discretion over which discussion points they reply to.

Your participation grade aggregates three things:

1. Your attendance record: Unexcused absences will be heavily penalized. Barring exceptional circumstances, more than one excused absence will depress your participation grade.

2. The quality of the points and replies submitted for discussion: Discussion points and responses must not be clarification questions. In each discussion point, students ought to articulate some identity or contrast across more than one reading and develop how we may want to explore it during class conversation. In their responses, students ought to fill in or extend the argument they choose to engage with and do so in a constructive way.

3. Your facility to contribute to an inclusive and equitable conversation in class: We reward students who are willing to learn and help others improve the conversational moves that together constitute rigorous collective debate about unfamiliar and controversial ideas. We will develop and refine a repertoire of conversational moves together.

**Paper-Free Assignment Policy**

In an effort to reduce needless paper consumption and streamline the exchange process, all written assignments and resulting feedback will be handled 100% electronically. To minimize compatibility and formatting problems, we request that all paper assignments be submitted in the form of a “.pdf” or a “.docx” file uploaded to its respective Canvas assignment prompts no later than the relevant deadline. Most current word processor programs, can easily output your working file to “.pdf” or “.docx formats; if you are unsure about how to accomplish this using your own composing program of choice, feel free to come by and inquire.

**Contemporary Indian Politics Book Project**

The academic study of the international politics of Asia is a vibrant global enterprise whose contours our limited number of readings can only begin to sketch. For this assignment, we ask each student to delve more deeply into one of the four areas of scholarship by selecting one additional book for closer study. Imagine you are an academic advisor to an incoming ambassador to India. You are free to consider any country of origin. The ambassador-designate wants a short list of books to consult as they prepare for their post. Your task is to pitch a peer-reviewed academic monograph for inclusion on this reading list.

The book you pitch may originate in anthropology, economics, history, political science, or sociology and must be published in the last 20 years. Its thesis must provide useful context or have implications for a contemporary policy issue.

Students will present a pitch for such a book over email to their instructors during the first week of class. In their pitch, they will briefly speak to the book’s academic credentials (e.g. status of the publisher and credibility of its author(s)), summarize its thesis, and provide evidence for the current relevance of a policy issue to which the book explicitly or implicitly speaks.
Once pitches have been accepted, students will proceed to write an essay of 1,500-1,800 words (including footnotes) in which they present the book’s thesis, logic, and evidence before discussing how these serve to illuminate the nature and stakes of a policy issue the ambassador-designate is likely to confront during their tenure. This essay is due no later than 3 pm on Sunday, February 9th. On January 15th, the instructors will provide detailed guidance on how to tackle this essay.

These book essays will then be made available (with grades and comments provided privately) to the full group, to fuel our final synthetic discussion of the seminar, where we will work to integrate everyone’s book-oriented contributions with the lessons that emerge from the scholarship and analyses considered over the arc of the quarter.

Expository Essay

Whereas the book assignment allows each student to match the syntax of a single academic argument with the pragmatics of a policy debate, this essay enables students to explore if and how the local and global ecologies of knowledge about Asian politics are linked. The task is to compare and contrast the principled and causal beliefs that inform scholarship aimed primarily at audiences beyond South Asia with the concepts and categories that give meaning to local conversations in the Indian public sphere. Students will ascertain to what degree global categories of analysis resonate with local categories of practice and vice versa. Of particular interest are the knowledge practices among members of the sizable Indian diaspora.

For this assignment, students will isolate an issue of both academic and policy relevance before sampling globally prominent research. We emphasize that the global orientation of relevant research is a function of the work’s intended audience (as indicated by publication venue and citation practices); it is not a matter of the author’s country of origin or professional affiliation.

Students will then assemble a second corpus of Indian and/or Asian hard and soft primary sources for comparative study. These sources can include government documents, newspaper articles, public speeches, think tank reports, and twitter posts.

The project will integrate these materials into an essay of 2,500-3,000 words (including footnotes) that is due no later than 3 pm on Thursday, March 26th. On February 19th, the instructors will provide detailed guidance on how to approach this assignment.

News Sources

For full access to the print sources below, use the Newsbank database, available via https://www.lib.uchicago.edu/

In-country Sources

- The Hindu http://www.thehindu.com/
- The Hindustan Times http://www.hindustantimes.com/
• The Times of India http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/international-home
• Economic & Political Weekly (Peer-reviewed academic journal covering the entire social sciences) https://www.epw.in/
• India Review (Peer-reviewed academic journal covering Indian Politics and IR) https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/find20/current
• Mostly Economics Blog https://mostlyeconomics.wordpress.com/

Global Sources
• Al Jazeera India News https://www.aljazeera.com/topics/country/india.html
• Carnegie Endowment for International Peace South Asia Program https://carnegieendowment.org/programs/southasia/
• Center for the Advanced Study of India (UPenn) Podcast https://soundcloud.com/user-722693669
• The Diplomat https://thediplomat.com/tag/indian-politics/

An Inclusive, Equitable, and Honest Learning Community

Intellectual Inclusion

If research aspires to claim knowledge in inclusive and honest dialogue with ones peers, then teaching ought to simulate and stimulate this process. Our seminar classroom is uniquely suited to this task. The organizing themes of this syllabus amount to our working hypothesis about a contrasting set of ideas on the politics of Asia that purposively juxtaposes work by Western academics, with that of regional analysts and observers. Most of the readings for this course are offered in the spirit of providing a baseline collective canon for the discussion of contemporary Asian politics. By this we mean to say that these readings claim knowledge in ways that have been sanctioned by the status politics of the study of Asia, nevertheless with an effort to provide as balanced a perspective as scholarship written in the English language might permit. Understand that such a canon is a useful reference point facilitating participation in an ongoing intellectual conversation rather than an imposed delimitation on its valid range. Students are therefore encouraged to reflect not merely on the content presented by the chosen canon, but on the complex processes that elevated some knowledge to such a status in the first place.

Open and Equitable Communication

In order to enable each student to meet Chicago’s high standards for graduate training, we are committed to creating equitable access to the spaces in which you are most comfortable to experiment with new ideas. These spaces are not limited to our classroom sessions. They include workshops,
office hours, and on-line platforms. We encourage every student to contact us with any problems, concerns, or questions about the course as soon as they arise. We are easiest to contact via email (mjreese@uchicago.edu or mstaisch@uchicago.edu) which we do check with consistent regularity. We will also make ourselves widely available for in-person meetings (@ 122 Pick Hall, Reese; 124 Pick Hall, Matthias), by appointment. We do ask students to email ahead and schedule a dedicated 30-minute-delimited appointment block with one of us to minimize unnecessary congestion and long waiting times, especially as paper deadlines approach. Office-hour appointment priority is awarded on a first-come, first-serve basis, determined by the time and date your respective request emails are received. At the margins, we also give scheduling priority to students who have not met with us as recently as others in the request queue.

Being human, we forthrightly acknowledge the potential for error on our part in the conduct of this course – whether it be on how a particular subject matter is presented, how a student might find themselves addressed, or other issues related to intellectual and social perspective – and would encourage any student encountering one to reach out and establish a dialogue about it without any fear of vindictive retribution. Any suggestions for how we might further our objectives to facilitate open inquiry both in and outside the classroom are encouraged, appreciated, and will be given the fullest consideration. Please feel free to share your suggestions or concerns not only with us, but also with your respective preceptors. You are also welcome and encouraged to contact CIR Chair Paul Staniland, or Cheryl Richardson (Associate Director for Inclusive Teaching Initiatives at the University of Chicago) to discuss any issues you may not feel comfortable raising with the above.

**Academic Honesty**

It is imperative that we all know how to distinguish between our own ideas and those of others. If you are in any doubt whatsoever about how to appropriately attribute material to its source, or any other question of academic ethics, please ask and do so before the fact. As a ready clarifying reference on most issues of this nature, also consult Charles Lipson’s *Doing Honest Work in College* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008). If you violate any university regulations on proper scholarly conduct, we will do everything in my power to see that you are expelled. For further information, see https://studentmanual.uchicago.edu/academic-policies/

**ADA Compliance**

The University of Chicago is committed to complying with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This course is open to all students who meet the academic requirements for participation. Any student who has a documented need for accommodation should contact Student Disability Services (773-702-6000 or disabilities@uchicago.edu) and the instructors as soon as possible. For further information, see https://disabilities.uchicago.edu/students/
Course Schedule

January 8th  Introduction: The Politics of Foreign Policy in Modern India


State and Nation in Contemporary Asia

January 15th  The Indian State and Civil-Military Relations

January 22\textsuperscript{nd} \textbf{Colonialism, Nationalism, and Identity Politics in Modern India}


January 29\textsuperscript{th} \textbf{Intrastate Conflict and the Rule of Law in Contemporary Asia}


February 5th  The Rule of Law


Sunday, February 9th  Contemporary Indian Politics Book Reviews Due

March 12th  Development and Environmental Sustainability in Contemporary Asia

February 12th  The Route to Liberalization and the Political Economy of Development


The Politics of Environmental Sustainability in India


Geopolitical and Geoeconomic Competition in Contemporary Asia

The Indo-Pakistani Rivalry and Nuclear Politics in South Asia


**March 4th**

**The Myth of Autonomy: Geopolitics Past and Present**


**Synthesis**

**March 11th**

**Contemporary Indian Politics Book Discussion Session**

**Thursday, March 26th**

***Expository Essays due by 3 pm***