

HIS 332

Postcolonial South Asia

Tues/Thurs 12:30pm-1:50pm

SBC: ESI, SBS+

Thematic Categories: “Empires, Violence & Global Connections,” “Law, Politics & Social Justice,” “Race, Religion, Gender & Sexualities”

Prof. Eric L Beverley

This course surveys the history of South Asia (contemporary India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, with some consideration of Nepal, Afghanistan, and Myanmar/Burma) from the mid-twentieth century to the present. Central themes include decolonization, legacies of British colonial rule and anti-colonial nationalism, state-building, regionalism, citizenship and rights, changing urban and rural spaces, new political movements, securitization, and economic transitions.

The postcolonial nation-states of South Asia were created as independent entities following World War II, after almost two centuries of British colonial dominance. This course examines political, social, cultural and economic developments in the region from the mid-twentieth century to the present. The focus is on the states carved out of British India in 1947 – India, Pakistan and Bangladesh – but we will also consider Afghanistan, Nepal, Myanmar/Burma and Sri Lanka (plus Tibet, and smaller states such as Bhutan and the Maldives), and South Asian migration to Asia, Africa and the Americas. The course is organized around key themes in the history of the contemporary subcontinent, including the legacies of colonialism and nationalism; ethnic, caste, class, and religious conflict; rural poverty, development, and environmental change; urbanization and the growth of cities; radical right-wing and left-wing movements related to regional autonomy claims, extremist politics, and majoritarian populism; economic globalization and labor migration; media and popular culture; and global security and new forms of imperialism. This structure will allow us to draw thematic connections between different regions and states in South Asia while examining closely a wide range of specific topics. These might include: Cold War international relations, socialist development projects, radical militant Hindu and Muslim politics, democracy and authoritarian populism, dalit social justice movements, conflict over and militarization of Kashmir, labor migration to the Persian Gulf, the U.S. War on Terror, Maoist anti-state resistance, globalization of the Bombay Film Industry (‘Bollywood’), rise of IT and call center industries, and others. The course is not comprehensive, but introduces key themes and developments in postcolonial South Asia in a connected and global framework.