RPOS 399: The Politics of South Asia

Professor: Niloufer Siddiqui
Location: BA212
Time: TTh 8:45-10:05am
Office hours: Tuesdays 10:15-12:15pm (Uptown Campus, Humanities B-16 Contact Office)
By appointment (Downtown Campus, Milne 210)
Email address: nasiddiqui@albany.edu

This seminar course explores contemporary politics in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan. While these countries have much in common, including a shared history of British colonial involvement, they have followed divergent political trajectories since independence. Today, India is the world’s largest democracy and has emerged into a global economic powerhouse. Pakistan has oscillated between military rule and democracy, and, over the last decade, has fallen victim to alarming rates of internal violence. After 15 years of U.S. presence, Afghanistan remains war-torn and its population vulnerable. Bangladesh, which appeared to be a democratic success story, has recently seen an increase in politically-motivated killings and brazen attacks against minorities.

We cover such issues as the management of ethnic and religious conflicts, secularism versus Islamism and Hindu nationalism, secessionist movements, the tension between economic growth and equity, and problems of governance. In addition, we explore the place of these countries in the international system: India as a growing world power; Pakistan and Afghanistan as the focal points of foreign aid and foreign intervention; and Bangladesh as the nation most vulnerable to climate change.

Finally, this course encourages students to tackle difficult policy questions pertaining to the region and take an informed stand. Are drone strikes in Pakistan and Afghanistan an ethical and/or effective way of protecting U.S. borders? What should India do to confront rampant poverty within its borders? How can these countries tackle terrorism while simultaneously protecting the rights of political opponents?

Assignments and Grading:

Participation & Weekly Discussion Points: 25%
As a discussion-based course, active participation is a crucial component of the grade. This includes regular attendance in class, contribution to class discussion, and the submission of weekly discussion points. The discussion point must be submitted to me via email on the evening before either the Tuesday class (Monday at 8pm) or the Thursday class (Wednesday at 8pm). It must raise a question about the assigned reading, or analyze an issue or theme that you found to be particularly interesting, and should be a short paragraph (2-3 sentences). Your participation grade will be determined both by classroom contribution and the quality of the discussion points.

Quizzes: 30%
There will be six 15-minute in-class quizzes which will test your understanding of the material covered in class. If you have done the readings and paid attention in class, you will be fine. The quiz with the lowest grade will be dropped, so only 5 quizzes will count towards your final grade.
Research Proposal: 10%
This 1-page proposal should outline the research question you will be answering in your final paper and the resources that you intend to use to do so.

Research Paper: 35%
This 10-15 page research paper can be on any topic related to the politics of South Asia. The papers must include (1) a brief literature review, (2) a clearly stated argument or hypothesis (derived from the readings, another source, or an original argument), (3) a description of how the argument/hypothesis will be evaluated empirically, and (4) an evaluation of the argument using evidence from at least one historical case. Examples of possible research topics are:

- Which factors explain the BJP and Modi’s victory in the 2014 national elections in India?
- What explains the divergent political trajectories of India and Pakistan?
- What factors caused the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan?

Accommodations:
Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with documented physical, sensory, systemic, cognitive, learning, and psychiatric disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring accommodation in this class, please go here [http://www.albany.edu/disability/current.shtml](http://www.albany.edu/disability/current.shtml) and arrange for an academic accommodation letter to be sent to me. If you wish to discuss academic accommodations for this course, please also inform me as soon as possible.

Plagiarism:
Please familiarize yourself with the description in the undergraduate bulletin [http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html](http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html). If you are involved in plagiarism the penalty will be failure in the course and you will be reported to judicial affairs. If you are not sure if something violates standards: ask. If you are not sure whether to cite or not to cite: cite. Every student is expected to go through the following tutorial: [http://library.albany.edu/uscred/plagiarism/index.html](http://library.albany.edu/uscred/plagiarism/index.html)

Late Policy:
For every day that an assignment is late, you will be penalized one letter grade. For example, if you turn in an A- paper 1 day late, you will receive a B+. There will be no extra credit to make up for late or missing assignments.

Class attendance:
You will be expected to attend class. Each student is permitted to miss two days of class per term with no questions asked and no penalties or reductions in his or her class participation grade. Any classes missed beyond those two will be taken into account in determining your class participation grade, regardless of the reason.

Re-grading of materials:
You may request re-grading of materials. If you wish to make such a request, contact the professor for a copy of the re-grading policy. You will be asked to provide a written explanation of why you wish to have the assignment re-graded.
Course Schedule:

Jan 24  Overview of course, readings, assignments, and introductions

No assigned readings

Jan 26  What is South Asia? Why should we care?


Jan 31  Partition


Feb 2  Pakistan’s Early Years: Identity and Nationhood


Feb 7  Pakistan’s Army and Civil-Military Relations


Feb 9  Pakistan’s Ethnicity and Party Politics I


Feb 14  Pakistan’s Ethnicity and Party Politics II


Feb 16  Pakistan’s Islamism & Sectarianism


Feb 21  Pakistan After 9/11

Hassan Abbas, *Pakistan’s Drift into Extremism* (2005), chapter 9, 201-216.


Feb 23  NO CLASS

Feb 28  India: The World’s Largest Democracy


Steven Wilkinson “India” chapter in David Samuels, *Comparative Politics* (Prentice Hall 2013), 194-234.

March 2  Identity in India: Caste, Religion, and Regional Politics


March 7  Party Politics in India

Ramachandra Guha, *India After Gandhi*, “Rulers,” 651-681


March 9  Modi’s India


Spring Break!!
March 21  Secularism and Hindu Nationalism in India


March 23  India: Development, Governance, and Economy


March 28  India-Pakistan: Nuclear Warfare
Guest lecture: Prof. Christopher Clary


March 30  India-Pakistan: the Kashmir Conflict


http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2000/10/19/kashmir-the-unending-war/

April 4  Bangladesh and Democracy


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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>April 6</td>
<td><strong>Islamism, Extremism, and Political Conflict</strong></td>
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<td>April 11</td>
<td><strong>NO CLASS</strong></td>
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<td>April 13</td>
<td><strong>Bangladesh’s Present-Day Challenges</strong></td>
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<td>April 18</td>
<td><strong>Afghanistan: A Brief History</strong></td>
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<td>April 20</td>
<td><strong>The Rise of the Taliban</strong></td>
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<td>April 25</td>
<td><strong>International Involvement in Afghanistan</strong></td>
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<td>Ahmed Rashid, <em>Descent into Chaos: The United States and the Failure of Nation Building in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia</em>, pp 3-44.</td>
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<td>April 27</td>
<td><strong>Explaining Radicalization</strong></td>
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<td>Anand Gopal, <em>No Good Men Among the Living</em>, Chapters 1, 2, and Epilogue</td>
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May 2  
**Policy Towards South Asia I**  
Special Topics: Drones  


May 4  
**Policy Towards South Asia II**  
Special Topics: Development Aid  


May 9  
**Conclusion, wrap-up**

No assigned readings