

**POST 117: Politics of India
Pitzer College**

Prof. Mark Schneider
mark_schneider@pitzer.edu
Office Hours: Tuesdays, Thursdays 4-5:30PM

Perhaps nowhere in the world is the survival of democracy more surprising than in India, a poor, ethnically diverse, post-colonial society where one in six people in the world live. Indian democracy is often discussed as an anomaly that defies the conventional wisdom in political science. It was founded following the violent partition of Pakistan in a continent-sized country with massive illiteracy, poverty, economic inequality, and social divisions from language to caste to religion. India's success in consolidating its democracy, however, can be contrasted with its less impressive record on governance, institutional quality, and inequalities along the lines of gender, caste, religion, and class. In this class, we discuss India's society, examine its democratic and state institutions, and assess the how these institutions have responded to the challenges of social conflict, inequality, and governance that have been present throughout its history.

The course addresses three broad questions and the debates that surround them. First, what is the level of capacity of India's state institutions and why does this matter for governance? Second, why did India's electoral democracy survive despite ethnic diversity and extreme levels of ethnic and economic inequality, and how should we assess the quality of India's democracy at present? We will examine the quality of Indian elections and democratic institutions (from the national down to the local level) and the extent to which they are responsive to voters. Third, how has India performed in addressing central challenges including massive urbanization, growth in a context of poverty and weak institutions, and caste and communal violence?

The course has three main goals. First, to strengthen your skills in analyzing complex political issues using the tools of social science. Through discussion and writing, you will grapple with the many puzzles Indian democracy and governance pose. Second, the course aims to help you develop extensive knowledge of Indian politics and the interplay between social divisions, inequality and state and social institutions. We do this through short lectures, discussions of readings, and in-class debates on some of the central challenges facing Indian democracy and society. Third, the course will help students engage in comparative analysis by examining variation across Indian states and by comparison between India and Pakistan.

REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance and Participation (20%): Students are expected to attend all lectures and prepared to discuss the assigned readings. Attendance will be taken and participation will be assessed. Students are also required to participate in any class activities including partner discussions and online discussion boards.

Op-Ed (10%): You will be asked to write an opinion piece on a topic from the course of your choice. I will provide examples and a handout on this assignment. You will be asked to briefly present your argument to the class.

Presentations (15%): I will ask students to complete a presentation on an institution or Indian state as it applies to the course theme of the assigned class session—starting with week 5. The presentation should last 10-12 minutes. The task of the presentation will be to apply a theory related to the class theme that week to a specific case. We will go over guidelines on presentations in the second week of class. You must receive approval for your presentation topics (research question and theory) by me no less than one week before your presentation.

Midterm (25%): Students will be required to write a take-home midterm essay. There will be a short answer section (worth 25 points) and a longer essay (7-8 pages) section (worth 75 points). You will have a choice between two prompts for the essay section. The exam will be handed out in the 8th week of class. The essay will be due at the beginning of the 9th class session.

Final Exam (30%): There will be a take-home final exam (8-10 pages) that focuses on the broad themes of the course. You will be asked to address one of two essay prompts. Final exams will be handed out at final class meeting and due the day at the end of the exam period set by the registrar.

Books

We will read substantial amounts of the following books:

Boo, Katherine. 2012. *Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death, and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity*. New York: Random House, 2012.

Vaishnav, Milan. 2017. *When Crime Pays: Money and muscle in Indian politics*. Yale University Press.

SCHEDULE

Session 1: Course Introduction

Recommended: Mehta, Uday S. 2010. "Indian Constitutionalism: The Social and Political Vision," in Jayal and Mehta (eds.) *The Oxford Companion to Politics in India*.

PART 1: HISTORY, SOCIETY, and THE STATE

Session 2: The Legacy of British Colonialism

Tajane, Shabnum. 2014. "The Colonial Legacy." In Arjun Guneratne and Anita M. Weiss (eds.), *Pathways to Power: The Domestic Politics of South Asia*. New Delhi: Orient Blackswan.

Dalrymple, William. 2015. The East India Company: The original corporate raiders. *The Guardian*.

Recommended:

Chiryankandath, James. 2001. "Democracy Under the Raj: Elections and Separate Representation in British India" *Democracy in India* (Edited by Niraja Gopal Jayal). New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Session 3: Caste

Susan Bayly. 1999. Caste Society and Politics, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Intro, Chapter 8.

Chauchard, Simon. 2017. *Why Representation Matters: The Meaning of Ethnic Quotas in Rural India*. Cambridge University Press, Chapter 2.

Recommended: Padmanabh Samarendra. 2011. "Census in Colonial India and the Birth of Caste," *Economic & Political Weekly*, Vol. XLVI (33): 51-58.

Session 4: Caste and Social Change

Jaffrelot, Christophe. "Caste and the Rise of Marginalized Groups." in *The State of India's Democracy*. Sumit Ganguly, Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (Eds.), Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Varshney, Ashutosh. 2000. "Is India Becoming More Democratic?" *The Journal of Asian Studies* 59.1 (2000): 3-25.

Session 5: The State

Vaishnav, Milan. *When Crime Pays*, Chapter 2.

Skim: Luce, Edward. 2006. "In spite of the Gods" (2006), p 64-106 (The Burra Sahibs: The Long Tentacles of India's State)

Optional: Podcast on Rethinking Public Institutions. Carnegie Endowment:
<http://carnegieendowment.org/2017/05/19/vaishnav-kapur-and-mehta-on-rethinking-indian-public-institutions-pub-70037>

Session 6: The Rule of Law

Watch COURT (documentary)

Arvind Verma, 'Police Agencies and Coercive Power' in *The State of India's Democracy*, edited by Sumit Ganguly, Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007.

PART 2: EXAMINING INDIAN DEMOCRACY

Session 7: Why Did India Consolidate Its Democracy (and Pakistan Did Not) I

Tudor, Maya. 2013. "Explaining Democracy's Origins: Lessons from South Asia." *Comparative Politics* 45 (3): 253-272.

Varshney, Ashutosh. "Why Democracy Survives." *Journal of Democracy* 9.3 (1998): 36-50.

Session 8: Why Did India Consolidate Its Democracy (and Pakistan Did Not) II

Jaffrelot, Christophe. 2002. "India and Pakistan: Interpreting the divergence of two political trajectories." *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 15.2 (2002): 251-267.

Wilkinson, Steven I. 2015. *Army and Nation: The military and Indian democracy since independence*. Harvard University Press. Selection.

Session 9: The Quality of Indian Elections

Sridharan, E. and Vaishnav, Milan. 2017. "The Election Commission of India." *Rethinking Public Institutions in India*. Oxford University Press.

Banerjee, Mukhileka. 2014. *Why India Votes*. London: Routledge Press: Chapter 4.

Session 10: Patronage Politics

Wilkinson, Steven. 2014. "Patronage Politics in Post-Independence India." In Anastasia Piliavsky (Ed), *Patronage as Politics in South Asia*. London: Cambridge Press.

Schneider, Mark. 2014. "Can Benefits be Tied to the Vote?" *The Hindu Business Line*. <Published: 13 January 2014>.

Available at: <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/can-benefits-be-tied-to-the-vote/article5574065.ece>

Session 11: Parties and Candidates

Vaishnav, Milan. 2017. *When Crime Pays*, Chapter 4.

Hasan, Zoya. 2009. "Political Parties" in *Oxford Companion to Politics in India*.

Session 12: The Rise and Fall of the Congress Party

Brass, Chapter 2.

Hansen, Thomas Blom. 1999. *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu nationalism in modern India*. Princeton University Press. Introduction.

Session 13: The Modi Wave and BJP Consolidation

Mehta, Pratap Banu. 2016. A BJP-Dominant System? *Indian Express*.
<available at: <http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/bjp-assam-elections-sarbananda-sonowal-tarun-gogoi-kerala-elections-2809631/>>

Palshikar, Suhas, Sanjay Kumar, and Sanjay Lodha, eds. 2017. *Electoral Politics in India: The Resurgence of the Bharatiya Janata Party*. Taylor & Francis. Selection.

Session 14: Local Democracy and Its Consequences

Bohlken, Anjali Thomas. 2016. *Democratization from above: The logic of local democracy in the developing world*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 4.

Schneider, Mark. “[Do Local Leaders Prioritize the Poor?](#)” *Hindu Business Line* <14 December 2015>.

Part 3: GROWTH, POVERTY, AND DEVELOPMENT

Session 15: Explaining Growth

Corbridge, Stuart, John Harriss, and Craig Jeffrey. 2013. *India Today: Economy, politics and society*. John Wiley & Sons. Chapters 2 and 4.

Session 16: Is India’s Growth Sustainable? The Challenge of Weak Institutions

Mishra, Pankhaj. 2013 “Which India Matters?” *New York Review of Books* (11/21/13). Available at: <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2013/nov/21/which-india-matters/>

Milan Vaishnav, Pratap Bhanu Mehta, and Devesh Kapur. 2017. “Weak Public Institutions Behind India’s Low State Capacity” Available at: <http://carnegieendowment.org/2017/05/15/weak-public-institutions-behind-india-s-low-state-capacity-pub-69971>

Kapur, Devesh, and Pratap Bhanu Mehta, eds. 2017. *Navigating the Labyrinth: Perspectives on India's Higher Education*. Orient Black Swan. Introduction.

Recommended: Roberts, Adam. 2017. *Superfast Primetime Ultimate Nation: The Relentless Invention of Modern India*. Hachette UK. Chapter 4.

Session 17: Does Growth Reduce Poverty?

Deaton, Angus and Valerie Kozel. 2005. "Data and Dogma: The Great Indian Poverty Debate." *World Bank Research Observer*, 20(2) 177-199.

Gaiha, Raghav, and Vani Kulkarni. "Is Growth Central to Poverty Alleviation in India?" *Journal of International Affairs* (1998): 145-180.

Recommended: Varshney, Ashutosh. "Why have poor democracies not eliminated poverty? A suggestion." *Asian Survey* 40.5 (2000): 718-736.

Session 18: What Progress Has India Made in Poverty Reduction?

Philip Keefer and Stuti Khemani. 2005. "Democracy, Public Expenditures, and the Poor: Understanding Political Incentives for Providing Public Services." *World Bank Research Observer* 20(1): 1-27.

Dreze, Jean and Amartya Sen. 2013. *An Uncertain Glory*. Princeton: Princeton University Press: Chapter 7: 'Poverty and Social Support.'

Part 4: CURRENT CHALLENGES

Session 19: Urbanization and India's Slums

Katherine Boo. 2012. *Beyond the Beautiful Forever*, Random House, 1-49, 50-98, 247-256.

Film: *Tomorrow We Disappear* (Excerpts)

Session 20: Democracy and Development in India's Slums

Jha, Sumitra, Vijayendra Rao, and Michael Woolcock. 2007. "Governance in the Gullies: Democratic Responsiveness and Leadership in Delhi's Slums." *World Development*, 35 (2) 230-246.

Auerbach, Adam. "Clients and Communities." 2016. *World Politics*, 68(1) 111-148.

Session 21: Majoritarianism and Hindu-Muslim Violence I

Wilkinson, Steven. 2004. *Votes and Violence: Electoral Competition and Communal Riots in India*. Chapters 1-2.

Film: *In the Name of God* ("Ram Ke Naam")

Session 22: Majoritarianism and Hindu-Muslim Violence II

Jaffrelot, Christophe and Laurent Gayer (Eds). 2013. *Muslims in Indian Cities*. Delhi: Harper Collins Publishers. Chapter 2.

Jaffrelot, Christophe. 2017. "Toward a Hindu State?." *Journal of Democracy* 28 (3) 52-63.

Varshney, Ashutosh. 2017. "Crime and Context." *The Hindu* <Available at: <http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/crime-and-context-4739229/>>

Session 23: Gender Inequality

Corbridge, Harris, and Jeffrey. 2013. "How Much Have Things Changes for Indian Women?" *India Today: Economy, Politics, and Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press).

Session 24: Corruption

Bertrand, Marianne, Simeon Djankov, Rema Hanna and Sendhil Mullainathan. 2008. "Corruption in Driving Licensing Process in Delhi." *Economic and Political Weekly*: 71-76.

Wade, Robert. 1982. "The System of Administrative and Political Corruption: Canal irrigation in South India." *The Journal of Development Studies*, 18 (3) 287-328.

Session 25: What Progress Has India Made in Fighting Corruption?

Bussell, Jennifer. 2012. *Corruption and Reform in India: Public Services in the Digital Age*. Cambridge: Cambridge Press: Chapter 8.

Session 26: Caste Inequality: Policies

Christophe Jaffrelot. 2006. "The Impact of Affirmative Action in India," *India Review* 5(2): 173-189.

Chauchard, Simon. 2014. "Can Descriptive Representation Change Beliefs about a Stigmatized Group? Evidence from Rural India." *American Political Science Review*, 108(02), 403-422.

Recommended: Ramachandra Guha. 2007. "Adivasis, Naxalites and Indian Democracy," *Economic and Political Weekly*, August 11: 3305-12.

FINAL EXAM HANDED OUT IN CLASS.

Session 27: Public Goods Provision

Jeffrey Hammer, Yamini Aiyar and Salimah Samji. 2007. "Understanding Government Failure in Public Health Services", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 42 (40): 4049-4057.

Weiner, Myron. 1991. *The Child and the State in India*, Princeton University Press, 1- 19, 115-26.

Session 28: What Has Changed Under Modi (Discussion and Course Conclusion)

No Required Readings

Reading Skills:

As you manage the reading for this and other courses, you are likely to find, if you have not already, that there is no correlation between effort and outcome. It is entirely possible to spend several hours reading something without “getting it.” And it is equally possible to spend less than a half-hour reading something else and getting to the heart of the argument. You will have to devise for yourselves ways to read efficiently. These are some devices that may help:

1. Figure out what the heart of an argument is before you read deeply: skim, read the abstracts, the jacket blurbs, often short reviews published elsewhere. When you know where the center of gravity is, you read more efficiently.
2. Read actively: do not simply soak up the reading for what the author wants to tell you, but approach it with questions, and try to answer them for yourself as you make your way through.
3. Use other peoples’ skills: you do not have to do all the work yourself. It is not “cheating” if you talk through the argument with someone else before or after you delve in, or look at reviews for explication, or form reading groups where you can discuss the argument with each other.
4. Write in order to read. The response papers for this class and the (non-graded) worksheet attached should help.
5. Use diagrams if necessary: often, the structure of an argument can be most clearly expressed if you “draw” it, using arrows and lines, than by trying to understand it in words.
6. Organize your notes in a way that makes retention and information retrieval possible: you could use index cards, annotated bibliographies, database programs like Filemaker Pro etc. These rules may be obvious to some and not to others. Basically, do whatever works for you. But be self-conscious about the reading process as a skill that has to be learned and not necessarily as an ability that either comes naturally or does not.

Reading Worksheet

For each book, chapter, or article assigned in this course, you should fill out the following (non-graded) worksheet. Many of these points can be addressed in a sentence or two (e.g. Questions 1 and 2; in some cases, answers will not need even to be full sentences (e.g., Question); and in some cases, the answers may overlap. These worksheets should be retained: they will be useful for future reference.

1. State the central question that the reading addresses.
2. State the central argument(s) defended in the paper in response to this question.
3. What type of reasoning or evidence is used to support these arguments? If it is an analytical paper, what is the logic that undergirds the argument? If an empirical paper, what type of data is employed? Are there other data sources that you think might be more appropriate?
4. Do you find the claims of the reading convincing? What do you see as the main gaps that need to be filled?
5. Why (if at all) is the reading interesting?
6. Do you agree with the main claims? What are your hesitations? (This may simply involve restatement of previous points.)
7. Identify one or two implicit premises or background assumptions in the paper that you think are especially controversial or objectionable.
8. Considering your answers to the previous questions, write an abstract for the article of no more than 100 words. (Feel free to repeat formulations given in response to earlier questions.)
9. When you have done this for individual readings, take some time to think about the various readings you have been assigned in relation to each other. See if you can write or imagine a summary table for all the readings taken together which compares and contrasts them.