

Politics and Governance in South Asia

Prof. Mark Schneider
mas2215@columbia.edu <http://markaschneider.com>
Office Hours: TH TBA or by appt

In this class we evaluate the puzzles and challenges that have and continue to face government and society in South Asia— with a strong emphasis on India— drawing on the analytical tools of political science. The course is divided into four parts. First, we discuss India’s historical and social context. Second, we discuss India’s state and political institutions, including the state bureaucracy, political parties and the institution of elections. Third, we address major challenges for democracy and governance including pervasive corruption, ethnic conflict, democratic backsliding, and poverty alleviation. Fourth, we discuss India’s neighbors’ experiences with democracy and governance with attention to the Indian comparison laid out throughout the course.

The course has three main goals. First, to strengthen your skills in analyzing complicated political issues using the analytic tools of political science. Through discussion and writing, you will grapple with the many puzzles Indian democracy and governance in South Asia more broadly pose. Second, to help you to develop an extensive knowledge of Indian (and South Asian) politics and policy. We do this through lectures and readings that draw on a range of analytic approaches. Third, to place these issues in comparative context through engagement with theory and evidence from the region.

REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance and Participation (15%): Students are expected to attend all lectures and recitation sessions prepared to discuss the assigned readings. Attendance will be taken in discussion sections and lecture and your TA will assess your participation.

Post Reflections Weekly (5%): Students will be asked to post three bullet points you think are important from required readings and a question that engages the required readings each week on CourseWorks. Posts can focus on either of the two classes or engage readings across two classes. Posts are due before the start of class on the day’s readings you aim to engage starting the second week.

South Asia in the news (5%). You will be asked to follow a South Asian country or a region (state) within a South Asia country in the news. You’ll be asked to post news on CourseWorks once every two weeks. At the end of the semester, you’ll write a 1-2 page reflection on the news trends you observed and how it related to class concepts.

Partner Comparative Case Study Presentations (10%): I will ask pairs of student to complete one presentation on an institution, policy area at the federal or state level in India (or in another South Asian Country if interested) as it applies to the course theme of that particular week—starting on week 4. The presentation should last 10 minutes with a

couple minutes for questions. Examples of presentations may include: Welfare programs in India (housing programs, nutrition programs, welfare programs), civil-military relations in India vs. Pakistan; public health in India, the election system in India; minority rights in India; etc. Confirm your topic with your TA by week 3.

Midterms 1 (20%) Students will be required to write two midterms. The first exam will include multiple choice, short answers, and a longer essay. You'll be given early notice on the essay topic so you can prepare in advance. Midterm 1 will cover material from Part 1 of the syllabus. It will cover political history and democratic institutions such as political parties.

Midterm 2 (20%). Students will be required to write two midterms. The second midterm exam will cover material from Part 2 of the syllabus. Midterm 2 will include multiple choice, short answers, and a longer essay. You'll be given early notice on the essay topic so you can prepare in advance.

Take-Home Final (25%) The final exam will be a 5-7 page essay on India in comparative perspective. You will receive the prompt on the last day of class and it will be due during the exam period.

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

To make sure that we have a hospitable learning environment, I ask students to follow three simple rules:

- 1) Arrive on time
- 2) Turn your cell phones off when you enter the classroom.
- 3) Unless you are speaking in groups about readings, close your laptops in class. This will help everyone focus on class discussion and will help you focus on the discussion. Exception may apply but this will be limited to note-taking on the class. I will make slides available in advance so you will not need to take notes on the slides for the most part.
- 4) If you need your laptop, only use it for class purposes. That is respectful to the class and will help you learn.
- 5) Respect your classmates. Debate is welcome but disagree respectfully by engaging ideas rather getting personal. This also means paying attention during student presentation and thinking about questions to ask.
- 6) Coffee/beverages are acceptable but food is not permitted in class since it can distract your classmates.

*****Warning on Plagiarism and Cheating*****

As goes without saying, it will not be possible to pass this course if I find any evidence of plagiarism/cheating of any kind for any assignment. At minimum, this will result in a zero for that assignment and will be referred to the Dean without exceptions. If you do the work each week, and think a lot about the material, you'll do fine.

ACADEIC INTEGRITY

By joining this class, students agree to adhere to Columbia’s Standards of Intellectual Integrity, reproduced below: “The intellectual venture in which we are all engaged requires of faculty and students alike the highest level of personal and academic integrity. As members of an academic community, each one of us bears the responsibility to participate in scholarly discourse and research in a manner characterized by intellectual honesty and scholarly integrity.

Scholarship, by its very nature, is an iterative process, with ideas and insights building one upon the other. Collaborative scholarship requires the study of other scholars' work, the free discussion of such work, and the explicit acknowledgement of those ideas in any work that inform our own. This exchange of ideas relies upon a mutual trust that sources, opinions, facts, and insights will be properly noted and carefully credited.

In practical terms, this means that, as students, you must be responsible for the full citations of others' ideas in all of your research papers and projects; you must be scrupulously honest when taking your examinations; you must always submit your own work and not that of another student, scholar, or internet agent.

Any breach of this intellectual responsibility is a breach of faith with the rest of our academic community. It undermines our shared intellectual culture, and it cannot be tolerated. Students failing to meet these responsibilities should anticipate being asked to leave Columbia.”<https://www.college.columbia.edu/facultyadmin/academicintegrity>

ACADEMIC ACCOMDATIONS

If you are a student with a disability and have a DS-certified ‘Accommodation Letter’ please come to my office hours to confirm your accommodation needs. If you believe that you might have a disability that requires accommodation, you should contact Disability Services at 212-854-2388 and disability@columbia.edu.

READINGS

Books

We will read substantial amounts of the following book:

Bose, Sugata, and Ayesha Jalal. 2023. *Modern South Asia : History, Culture, Political Economy*. 5th ed. London: Routledge.

SCHEDULE

9/8: Introduction

No Readings

9/10: Challenges of Democracy and Governance in South Asia

Learning Goals: Understand the diversity of India in caste, regional, religious, political, and institutional terms and some of the key issues that this impacts. Understand how this differs from other countries in the region.

Kohli, Atul. 2002. "Introduction." in Kohli (Ed), *The Success of India's Democracy*.

PART 1: HISTORY AND INSTITUTIONS

9/15: The Legacies of British Colonialism on the State and Economy

Learning Goal: Understand how British colonial rule shaped state institutions and economic structures across South Asia.

Bose and Jalal. Ch. 7,8.

Naoroji, Dadabhai. 1901. Poverty and un-British rule in India. S. Sonnenschein, Introduction and 31-8.

9/17: The Legacies of British Colonialism on Political Institutions

Learning Goal: Understand how British colonial rule shaped political competition across South Asia.

Tudor, Maya. 2013. *The Promise of Power: The Origins of Democracy in India and Autocracy in Pakistan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Ch 1,2.

9/22: The Transformation of Caste in India

Learning Goal: Understand how caste was reshaped during the colonial period through colonial policies and the census, and how it continued to structure social and political life afterward.

Dirks, Nicholas B. 2001. *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 1.

Srinivas, M. N. 1962. "The Dominant Caste." In *Caste in Modern India and Other Essays*. Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 43–62.

Recommended: Samarendra, Padmanabh. 2011. "Census in Colonial India and the Birth of Caste." *Economic and Political Weekly*.

9/24: The Independence Movement and Partition

Learning Goal: Understand the impact of the mass movement that led to Indian independence and legacies of partition that shaped politics throughout the region.

Bose and Jalal. Ch. 14, 17.

Watch Excerpt: *Gandhi*

9/29: Problems for New Democracies: Managing Ethnic Diversity I

Learning Goal: Understand how India's accommodation of linguistic diversity and national identity helped manage linguistic conflict while the opposite is the case for Sri Lanka.

Stepan, Alfred, Juan Linz, and Yogendra Yadav. *Crafting State-Nations: India and Other Multi-National Democracies*. Chapters 1-2.

DeVotta, Neil. 2004. "Ethnic Outbidding and Institutional Decay in Sri Lanka." In *Blowback: Linguistic Nationalism, Institutional Decay, and Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. (Ch. 2)

Recommended: Jalal, Ayesha. 1995. "State and Nation-Making in Pakistan." In *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

10/1: Problems for New Democracies: Managing Ethnic Diversity II

Learning Goal: Understand why India held together amid diversity while Pakistan experience partition and insurgency.

Jalal, Ayesha. 1995. "State and Nation-Making in Pakistan." In *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kohli, Atul. 1997. "Can Democracies Accommodate Ethnic Nationalism? Rise and Decline of Self-Determination Movements in India." *Journal of Asian Studies*.

10/6: Problems for New Democracies: Civil-Military Relations in Comparative Perspective

Learning Goal: Understand the relationship between elected leaders and unelected military and civil service institutions in India and Pakistan.

Wilkinson, Steven I. 2015. *Army and Nation*. Harvard University Press, 1-27.

Staniland, Paul. 2015. "The Pakistani Military and Civil-Military Relations." *Journal of Strategic Studies*

Recommended: Shah, Aqil. 2014. *The Army and Democracy: Military Politics in Pakistan*. Chapter 1.

10/8: Midterm 1

PART 2: POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

10/13: Congress Dominance After Independence

Learning Goal: Understand the dominant Congress-led party system in India after independence.

Kothari, Rajni. 1964. "The Congress' System' in India." *Asian Survey*, 4 (12) 1161-1173.

Brass, Paul R. 1994. "The Congress System." In *The Politics of India Since Independence*, 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 98–136.

10/15: The Decline of the Congress Party and Lower Caste Politics

Learning Goal: Understand the rise of middle caste (OBC) parties that displaced Congress at the state level since the late 1960s.

Guest Lecture: Prof. Jeff Witsoe, Union College

Christophe Jaffrelot, 2000. "The Rise of the Other Backward Castes in the Hindi Belt," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 59 (1) 86-108.

Chandra, Kanchan. 2000. "The Transformation of Ethnic Politics in India: The Decline of the Congress Party and the Rise of the Bahujan Samaj Party."

Recommended: Witsoe, Jeffrey. 2013. *Democracy Against Development: Lower-Caste Politics and Political Modernity in Postcolonial India*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Ch 2.

10/20: Religious Nationalism in India and Pakistan

Learning Goal: Understand the rise of the Hindu nationalist BJP (a mass party) in India and the the role of miliary leaders in promoting Islamic nationalism in Pakistan.

Jaffrelot, Christophe. 1996. *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics: 1925 to the 1990s*. New York: Columbia University Press. Chapter 12, “The BJP and the Ram Janmabhoomi Movement.”

Riaz, Ali. 2010. “Religion and Politics in Bangladesh.” *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 33 (3) 349–368.

Recommended: Haqqani, Husain. 2005. *Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

10/22: The BJP Under Modi

Learning Goal: Understand how the BJP became India’s dominant national party under Narendra Modi and how scholars interpret its implications for Indian democracy.

Jha, Prashant. 2017. *How the BJP Wins: Inside India’s Greatest Election Machine*. New Delhi: Juggernaut. Chapter 1.

Vaishnav, Milan. 2019. “The BJP in Power: Indian Democracy and Religious Nationalism.” *Journal of Democracy*.

10/27: Democratic Backsliding in South Asia in Comparative Perspective

Learning Goal: Understand the ways that India and its neighbors have experienced democratic erosion.

Guha, Ramachandra. 2007. *India After Gandhi*. Chapter on the Emergency.

Varshney, Ashutosh. 2022. “How India’s Ruling Party Erodes Democracy.” *Journal of Democracy*, 33 (4) 104–118.

Riaz, Ali. 2016. “Bangladesh: Authoritarianism and Democratic Backsliding.” *Journal of Democracy*, 27 (3) 142–156.

10/29: Indian Bureaucracy

Learning Goal: Understand the capacities and weaknesses of the Indian bureaucracy.

Kapur, Devesh. 2020. “The State of the Indian State.” In *Rethinking Public Institutions in India*.

Dasgupta, Aditya, and Devesh Kapur. 2020. "The Political Economy of Bureaucratic Overload: Evidence from Rural Development Officials in India." *American Political Science Review* 114 (4) 1316-1334.

Bertrand, M., S. Djankov, R. Hanna and S. Mullainathan. 2007. “Obtaining a Driver’s License in India: An Experimental Approach to Studying Corruption,” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 122:4, 1639-1648, 1661-1675 [partial]

11/3: Consequences of Weak State Capacity

Learning Goal: Understand how weak or uneven state capacity shapes political outcomes in India, including citizens' reliance on intermediaries to access welfare benefits and the role of patronage networks in enabling political violence.

Berenschot, Ward. 2011. "The Spatial Distribution of Riots: Patronage and the Instigation of Communal Violence in Gujarat, India." *World Development*, 39(2) 221–230.

Kruks-Wisner, Gabrielle. 2018. "The Pursuit of Social Welfare: Citizen Claim-Making in Rural India." *World Politics*, 70(1): 122–163.

Recommended: Auerbach, Adam Michael, and Tariq Thachil. 2023. *Migrants and Machine Politics: How India's urban poor seek representation and responsiveness.* Cambridge Press, Ch 3.

11/5: Patronage Politics I

Learning Goal: Understand how clientelism and patronage politics work in practice in India.

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

Schneider, Mark. 2019. "Do Local Leaders Know Their Voters? A Test of Guessability in India." *Electoral Studies*.

Recommended: Witsoe, Jeffrey. 2013. *Democracy Against Development*. Chapter 2

11/10: Electoral Behavior

Learning Goal: Understand different logics for voting in South Asia. Contrast patronage-based and more programmatic explanations.

Chhibber, Pradeep K., and Rahul Verma. 2018. "The BJP's New Social Coalition." In *Ideology and Identity: The Changing Party Systems of India*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 83–118.

Chandra, Kanchan. 2004. *Why Ethnic Parties Succeed*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 4.

Andrew Wilder. 1999. *The Pakistani Voter: Electoral Politics and Voting Behaviour in the Punjab*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Ch 1.

11/12: Police in India [Tentative]

Learning Goal: Understand the role of the police in India.

Guest Lecture: Prof. Alex Lee, University of Rochester

Lee, Alexander. *Democracy and Impunity: The Politics of Policing in Modern India*. Oxford University Press, Forthcoming, Chapters 3 and 4.

Banerjee, Abhijit, et al. 2021. "Improving police performance in Rajasthan, India: Experimental evidence on incentives, managerial autonomy, and training." *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy* 13 (1) 36-66.

*Alternative: Human Rights in Comparative Perspective with Raza Rumi.

11/17: Public Service Delivery

Learning Goal: Understand the nature of welfare and other public services in India.

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

Chaudhury, Nazmul; Hammer, Jeffrey; Kremer, Michael; Muralidharan, Karthik; Rogers, F. Halsey. 2006. "Missing in Action: Teacher and Health Worker Absence in Developing Countries." *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 20(1) 91-116.

11/19: Midterm 2

11/24: Gender (Zoom)

Learning Goals: Understand gender inequality, discrimination, and representation in South Asia.

Karekurve-Ramachandra, Varun, and Alexander Lee. Forthcoming. "Gender Quotas and Constituency Service in Indian Local Government." *Comparative Political Studies*.

Jalalzai, Farida. 2013. "Gender and Representation in Muslim-Majority Countries: Female Political Leadership in Bangladesh and Pakistan." *Politics & Gender*, 9(3) 283–308.

Corbridge, Stuart, John Harriss, and Craig Jeffrey. 2013. "How Much Have Things Changed for Indian Women?" In *India Today: Economy, Politics and Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

11/26: Thanksgiving

12/1: Kashmir

Learning Goal: Understand the history and evolution of the Kashmir conflict and political crisis.

Ganguly, Sumit. 1996. "Explaining the Kashmir Insurgency: Political Mobilization and Institutional Decay." *International Security*, 21(2): 76–107.

Chowdhury, Debasree. 2021. "India's Kashmir Policy and the Abrogation of Article 370." *Asian Survey*, 61(3): 395–418.

Recommended: "The Politics of Internet Shutdowns in Jammu and Kashmir." 2025. *Communication, Culture & Critique*.

12/3: Pakistan-India Relations

Learning Goal: Understand the relationship between India and Pakistan and how it shapes domestic policy and foreign relations.

Shah, Aqil. 2014. *The Army and Democracy: Military Politics in Pakistan*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Chapter 1.

Fair, C. Christine. 2014. "Pakistan's 'Strategic Depth' Doctrine and the India–Pakistan Conflict." *Asian Security*, 10(3): 235–258.

12/8: Conclusion

No Readings

Final will be scheduled by the registrar