South Asian Studies

Director of Undergraduate Studies
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South Asian Studies is an interdisciplinary concentration in which students work across the humanities and social sciences, geographical locations, and time periods. The concentration emphasizes both the diversity of South Asia as a region, as well as the long-term historical connections among people and places in Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. The concentration takes a comparative approach, bringing attention to history, politics, and culture within the region, as well as in the equally vital global South Asian diaspora.

For additional information, please visit the department's website: https://www.brown.edu/academics/south-asia/

South Asian Studies Concentration Requirements

The diversity and shared histories of South Asia's cultures, religions, languages, and nations are an important area of engagement in the world today. While India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal and neighboring nation-states constitute a recognizable geographic region, the equally vital diasporic communities from South Asia and their globally dispersed networks extend our understanding of an old and yet changing South Asia. South Asian Studies is an interdisciplinary concentration in which students work in a specified chronological period (e.g. ancient, medieval, early modern, or contemporary), in a geographical area (e.g. Bangladesh, Bengal, Maharashtra, North India, Pakistan, South India), or in a particular discipline (e.g. anthropology, Hindi/Urdu, history, religion, or Sanskrit) but also take courses outside of their chosen area of emphasis in disciplines such as economics, literature, philosophy, political science, or theatre arts.

Course Requirements

All South Asian Studies concentrators must take and pass 10 courses as approved by their concentration advisor. Students who wish to earn additional courses in the humanities or social sciences with a focus on South Asia, such as:

- Two courses in the Humanities with a majority focus in South Asia, such as:
  - CLAS 0995: India's Classical Performing Arts
  - CLAS 1140: Classical Philosophy of India
  - COST 0034: Dharma: A History of Classical Indian Civilization
  - RELS 1510: Islam in South Asia

- Two courses in the Social Sciences with a majority focus on South Asia, such as:
  - ANTH 0100: Introduction to Cultural Anthropology
  - ANTH 0110: Anthropology and Global Social Problems: Environment, Development, and Governance
  - HIST 1978D: Ruined History: Visual and Material Culture in South Asia
  - POLS 1280: Politics, Economy and Society in India

At least five additional elective courses. Students can take additional courses in the humanities or social sciences with a focus on South Asia, such as:

- At least three of the five electives must be drawn from the CCSA pre-approved course listings (or be approved by the DUS/Concentration advisor). The courses on this pre-approved list have significant (at least 25%) South Asia content.

No more than two of the remaining electives can be courses with less empirical South Asia content, but these courses must have theoretical relevance to the study of South Asia (with the approval from the DUS).

ANTH 0100: Introduction to Cultural Anthropology
ANTH 2320: Ideology of Development
COST 0100: Introduction to Contemplative Studies
ECON 0510: Development and the International Economy
ECON 2510: Economic Development I
HIAA 0081: Architecture of the House Through Space and Time
HIST 1440: The Ottomans: Faith, Law, Empire
HNDI 0200: Beginning Hindi or Urdu
HNDI 0400: Intermediate Hindi-Urdu
HNDI 1080: Advanced Hindi-Urdu
MCM 1505O: Does Utopia Still Exist? Media, politics and the hope of something else
POIS 0200: Introduction to Comparative Politics
POIS 1380: Ethnic Politics and Conflict
RELS 0100: Buddhist Thought, Practice, and Society
SANS 0200: Elementary Sanskrit II
SANS 0400: Classical Sanskrit Story Literature
SANS 1100: Vedic Sanskrit

Total Credits: 10

Language Requirements

Proficiency in a South Asian language is required for the concentration. Demonstrating proficiency can entail passing a written and oral examination, 4 semesters of formal language study at Brown or another institution, or a high school transcript indicating that the language of instruction for all courses was a South Asian language. Native Hindi/Urdu speakers are encouraged to fulfill the language requirement by taking another South Asian language for four semester, such as Sanskrit at Brown or a relevant language at another institution. Up to two language courses can count toward fulfilling the student's elective requirements.

Senior-Year Project

Students must complete either a senior capstone project OR an honors thesis.

Capstone projects or honors theses are opportunities for students to creatively synthesize the thinking on South Asia that they have developed during the concentration. The project should exhibit an empirically and theoretically driven research question or argument about some aspect of South Asian Studies. The senior-year project should involve some theoretically driven research question or argument about some aspect of South Asian Studies. The senior-year project should involve some research in at least one South Asian language.

All students are encouraged to start thinking about their capstones in their junior year.

Capstones can take two primary forms:

1. A research paper of approximately 30 pages on a topic related to South Asia for an existing concentration-eligible course, undertaken with the permission of the instructor.

2. An independent study-based project. The produce and/or process that constitutes this can be artistic, primary or secondary research-based, internship-related, or something else. The project must be supervised by at least one CCSA faculty member* for at least one semester under SAST 1970. This course can count towards the five elective requirement.

At the end of the junior year, each student should meet with the Director of Undergraduate Study (DUS) to review their plan for completing their capstone. If pursuing a capstone project, students will be required to submit, by the end of the shopping period of the fall of their senior year, a short proposal (300 words) that describes how they are going to complete this requirement.

*Note: In rare cases, a faculty member may not be available to supervise a student; if this occurs, the student must consult with the DUS.
An Honors Thesis is a two-semester independent study supervised by a thesis advisor (SAST 1970). These two courses constitute the additional courses needed for honors in the concentration.

An honors thesis can be textual, or it can take other forms (multi-media, visual, artistic, or musical, for example). The form and substance of a non-textual honors thesis must conform to the rigorous regulations set out by the relevant department(s) and the Dean of the College.

Additional Honors Requirements
To be eligible for Honors, students will have earned an "A" in the majority of courses for the concentration.

Students may graduate with Honors in South Asian Studies by completing an undergraduate Honors thesis under the supervision of at least one reader drawn from the CCSA faculty* and one additional reader from the Brown (or RISD, in the case of Brown-RISD students) faculty community.

In order to pursue Honors, students must submit the following materials to the CCSA DUS by April 25:

1. A prospectus (3-5 pages, describing the major research questions and methods to be used, complete with bibliography) that has been read and vetted by the student's intended primary reader.

2. An email from the faculty member who will serve as primary reader to the CCSA DUS noting their willingness to advise on the thesis.

In addition, students must:

1. Enroll in a two-semester sequence of Independent Study, SAST 1970 or under a relevant department course code

2. Designate a second reader by September 30 of the senior year. Second readers should also confirm their willingness to serve as a reader by sending an email to the CCSA DUS.

3. Be in regular contact with the thesis advisor about the progress of the project.

4. Present their research to the CCSA community during their final semester.

For mid-year graduating students, the topic and primary reader must be identified and confirmed by mid-November of the junior year, and a second reader must be arranged and confirmed by January 30 of the senior year.

A complete penultimate draft of the thesis is due to both readers on April 1. A final draft that incorporates readers' comments is due back to the readers on April 15 of the student's senior year.

* This includes all people listed under the Faculty, Postdoctoral Associate, and Visiting Scholars (limited to those in residence at Brown) tabs on the CCSA website.

**Courses**

**SAST 0034. Dharma: A History of Classical Indian Civilization.**

Dharma—a Sanskrit word encompassing duty, ethics, law, and religion—is a common thread running through the cultures of premodern India. This course offers a history of Indian civilization from its origins up through the end of the classical period. Drawing on a rich array of textual, material, and expressive cultures, we trace the arc of human history on the subcontinent, paying special attention to the intersections of religion and politics. The sources at hand reveal the dynamic interplay between tradition and innovation, and attest to human efforts to redefine what it means to live a life according to dharma.

**SAST 0140. Food, Religion and Politics in South Asia.**

Why study food? What can food tell us about religion, politics, and culture? Food in South Asia often shapes identity, social status, ritual purity, religious belonging, and political activism—the notion that you are what you eat has wide currency. Whatever form it takes, food embodies histories of migration, trade, empire, colonialism, and ethics. Through reading primary texts and ethnographic articles, watching films, and (of course) eating delicious food, we will explore the rich foodways of South Asia and their social, religious, and political ramifications.

**SAST 0525. The History and Practice of Yoga in India and Beyond.**

From its roots in premodern India to its current popularity worldwide, yoga has a rich and complex history. As a practice of the mind, body, and spirit, yoga has taken many forms—meditation, chanting, breath control, postures—in order to achieve a range of goals: liberation from rebirth, supernatural powers, strength, pleasure, peace, wellness. As its reputation and commodification have increased, yoga has attracted deep interest, debate, and even controversy. In this course we will study yoga from its earliest texts to its status in the modern world, addressing its historical, religious, social, and political ramifications in many different contexts.

**SAST 0526. This Whole World is OM: Mantras in Indian Religions.**

A mantra is a syllable or formula used in ritual and meditation. Mantras are central to Indian religions—not only Hinduism, but also Jainism, Buddhism, Sufism, and Sikhism. Some mantras are made up of words and language—usually in Sanskrit—while others are sound fragments with no semantic meaning. The sacred syllable OM, now a global symbol of Eastern spirituality, exemplifies the power and authority of mantra. What are mantras? What do they accomplish? How do they shape identities, beliefs, and practices? Engaging with sacred utterance in various media, this course explores the world of mantras in India and beyond.

**SAST 0700. Introduction to Modern South Asia.**

The seminar aims to introduce South Asia in terms of a plurality in ways of being. It shall study themes beginning with colonialism and ranging from the colonial mapping of tradition; anticolonial ethics; partition and the creation of a separate state; communalism; democracy; secularism; nationalism; welfare; and the global war on terror. The seminar will be an intensive reading and writing experience that transgresses academic disciplines. Readings include important tracts and speeches of intellectuals and thinkers of South Asia; writings of scholars and activists; and literary and artistic works. There are no prerequisites for taking this course.

**SAST 1970. Independent Study.**

Section numbers vary by term. Please check CAB for the correct section number and CRN to use when registering for this course.

**SAST XLIST. Courses of Interest to Concentrators.**
Font Notice

This document should contain certain fonts with restrictive licenses. For this draft, substitutions were made using less legally restrictive fonts. Specifically:

Helvetica was used instead of Arial.

The editor may contact Leepfrog for a draft with the correct fonts in place.