South Asian Studies

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 honors must take 12 courses total (see Senior-Year Project below).

SAST 0700  Introduction to Modern South Asia  1
or HIST 1620  Resisting Empire; Gandhi and the Making of Modern South Asia  

Two courses in the Humanities with a majority focus in South Asia, such as:

CLAS 0995  India's Classical Performing Arts  2
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  2
ANTH 0110  Anthropology and Global Social Problems: Environment, Development, and Governance  
HIST 1979D  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

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 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.

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.
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.