

Politics of India
Winter Quarter, 2014

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 9.30am-12pm

1. Description

The course is a general mid-level course on contemporary Indian politics. As such we will review most of the basic questions usually addressed by such a course: how do Indian political institutions function? What is the nature of party competition in the country? How do we make sense of the various social and ethnic conflicts in the country? What role does the state play in the economy and to which extent is this changing?

While answering these specific questions about India, our main objective will however be to think analytically about the idea of *democracy*. India is often celebrated as the largest democracy in the world, and roughly half of the world's population living under a democratic regime now lives in India. But what does that mean concretely? How is democracy practiced in India and what does this concretely mean on the ground? How does this compare to the way democracy is practiced elsewhere? What does the Indian experience tell us about the transformative power of democracy? Studying Indian politics provides us with a prime opportunity to answer these more analytical and comparative questions. Although you will pick up a vast number of facts about the post-independence history and politics of India, the primary purpose of the course is thus to help you use those facts to think about the state and the performance of India's democracy.

The course is divided in two sections of unequal length. The first – and shorter – section is descriptive and somewhat historical; during this section, you will learn basic facts about independent India's society and political institutions, as well as get a sense of political and economic change in the country since 1947. This should allow you to acquire the bases for the more advanced discussions we'll be having during the second part of the course. That second section is analytical and thematic. Each session will analyze an important dimension of Indian politics. These sessions will cumulatively allow you to learn about the form, the state and the performance of democracy in the country.

2. Required readings

All readings will be available on blackboard under “course documents”.

3. Requirements

Participation: 30%

Quizz on first part of the course: 20 %
Midterm 20%
Final 30%.

Participation: While I will provide some notes, discussions of the readings will occupy most of our time. Students are expected to do the assigned readings before class and to actively participate in class discussions (Along with the final exam, participation is the single most important component of your grade).
How do I assess who is a good participant?

- Good participation does not necessarily mean having understood every aspect of the assigned material first time through. The best participation often comes in the form of questions about concepts, arguments, or factual claims from the readings that warrant further explanation.
- Good participation is constant and informed though. Participating a few times in the term will not ensure that you get the best possible participation grade. Good participation also requires that you are well acquainted with the reading prior to class, even if you have not understood everything. Participation *about the readings* is valued, and not merely your ability to speak in front of others.
- Although this may be obvious to some, presence in class plays a role in determining what your grade will be. I do not monitor presence, but if I rarely see you in class there is a major chance that you will get a lower participation grade.
- Finally, your attitude in class - even while you do not participate - plays a role. I simply ask that you be focused on the discussion taking place in class even when you do not actively speak. Napping is excellent, but napping in class does not count as presence, let even participation. Please also see my point about laptops below.

Quiz on first part of the course: before we discuss the nature of Indian Democracy in the second part of the course, we will have an in-class quiz about what you learn during the first part of the course. The test will last an hour and test your knowledge of basic facts about the country, its population, its modern history and its institutions. I will ask you to answer a number of short factual questions. Ex: Who were the three members of the Gandhi family that served as prime ministers? What is "the emergency"? How are members of parliament elected? Etc...

Midterm and final: both in-class exams will test the knowledge of the readings that you will have developed thanks to your notes, class discussions, and the notes that I will provide. They will generally include multiple-choice questions, short questions asking you to define some of the concepts explored in the readings or to relate/compare the arguments made by different authors, as well as a broader essay.

Missing Classes & Exams

I do not explicitly take attendance in this class. Hence I do not require you to email me if you are going to miss a class. This being said, I have a good memory and a large share of your grade is participation (35%). So missing too many classes is not encouraged.

Other than to accommodate specific needs for additional exam time, I will be unable to give you options as to the date on which you will take the midterm and the final. Put them down in your calendars on day one: these will not change.

If you need additional exam time, please come talk to me on day one.

Turning off devices

I ask that for three and a half hours a week we all refrain from staring at our various screens and that we delay gratification related to exciting status updates or other news. Print your discussion notes if need be. Unless you have specific needs, no laptops in class please.

4. Course Outline

Jan 7: Introduction

- Organization and focus of the course
- India in 1947

-Wyatt and Adeney: "Contemporary India", Palgrave (2010). Chapter 1.

Part 1: The Fundamentals: timeline, social structure and institutions. (5)

Jan 9 - The People: Social and Ethnic diversity in India

-Wyatt and Adeney: "Contemporary India", Palgrave (2010). Chapter 2 (43-69) and 4.

- Siddharta Deb, "The Factory: The Permanent World of Temporary Workers", in The Beautiful and the Damned, a Portrait of New India. Faber and Faber, 2011.

Jan 14 – The Political Institutions of the Indian Republic

-Wyatt and Adeney: "Contemporary India", Palgrave (2010). Chapter 3.

Jan 16- Political Change in post-independence India: a timeline

- Paul Brass: "The Politics of India Since Independence", Chapter 2.

-Wyatt and Adeney: "Contemporary India", Palgrave (2010). Chapter 5 (126-140)

- John Hariss: "Political Change, Political Structure, and the Indian State since Independence", in Paul Brass (ed.) Handbook of South Asian Politics, Routledge, 2010.

Jan 21- Economic Change in post-independence India

-Atul Kolhi, "Poverty Amid Plenty in the New India", Chapter 1. Cambridge, 2012.

- Luce, Edward "In spite of the Gods" (2006), chapter 1.

Jan 23 – Review Part 1

- Romila Thapar, "Imagined Religious Communities? Ancient History and the Modern Search for a Hindu Identity." Modern Asian Studies, Vol. 23, No. 2 (1989), pp. 209-231.

Jan 28 - Quiz part 1 and Movie

Part 2: Evaluating Indian Democracy (13)

Jan 30 and Feb 4- Elections

What does the electoral process look like in India? To what extent are elections free, fair and meaningful?

- Robert Hardgrave and Stanley Kochanek, "Elections and Electoral Behavior", in India: Government and Politics in a Developing Nation. (2008)
- Christophe Jaffrelot, "Voting in India: Electoral Symbols, the Party System and the Collective Citizen" in *Religion, Caste and Politics in India*, Columbia University Press, 2011.
- Shivam Vij: "An Election in Matsura", The Caravan, August 2010.
<http://www.caravanmagazine.in/Story/416/An-Election-in-Matsura.html>

Feb 6 – Political Parties and Political Competition

Has the political offer (parties) enlarged and improved? Have these changes improved the quality of democracy in India?

- Zoya Hasan, "Political Parties" in Oxford Companion to Politics in India (2009)
- Virginia Van Dyke, "State-level Politics, Coalitions, and Rapid System Change in India", in Paul Brass (ed.) *Handbook of South Asian Politics*, Routledge, 2010.
- Luce, Edward "In spite of the Gods" (2006), chapter 3 & 4.

Feb 11 - Political Representation and Political Representatives

*Does the Indian system offer substantive and/or descriptive representation?
Are some people more likely to win office than others? Is representation open to all?
Do representatives resemble their constituents?*

- Christophe Jaffrelot, "Indian Democracy: the Rule of Law on trial", in *Religion, Caste and Politics in India*.(2010)
- Kanchan Chandra, "India's Democratic Dynasties", Seminar, June 2011
- Christophe Jaffrelot, 'Caste and the Rise of Marginalized Groups' (pp. 67-88) in The State of India's Democracy, edited by Sumit Ganguly, Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007.

Feb 13 - State-citizens relations

What role does the State and the administration play in the democratic process? Can Civil Society counterbalance the State?

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

- Chandra, Kanchan. "India as a Patronage Democracy." In *Why Ethnic Parties Succeed: Patronage and Ethnic Headcounts in India*. Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Feb 18 – Civil Society

- Niraja Gopal Jayal, 'The Role of Civil Society' in *The State of India's Democracy*, edited by Sumit Ganguly, Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007.

- Rob Jenkins "NGOs" in Oxford Companion to Politics in India (2009)

Feb 20 - Rule of Law and Security Forces

Is the rule of law respected? What role do military and security forces play in the Indian Democracy?

-Stephen P. Cohen, "The Military and Indian Democracy", from India's Democracy, Ed. Atul Kohli. (1990)

- 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.

-Sanjib Baruah, "AFSPA: legacy of colonial constitutionalism", Seminar Magazine, November 2010

Feb 25 – In-class Midterm

Feb 27 - Democracy and violence

Was democracy able to contain violence?

- "Why is India so bad for women?", The Guardian August 2012.

- Akash Kapur, excerpts from "India Becoming", TBA. (2011)

- Steven Wilkinson Chapter 1 (pp.1-16): The Electoral Incentives for Ethnic Violence in Votes and Violence: Electoral Competition and Communal Riots in India (2004).

March 4 - Federalism and Separatism

How has the country dealt with separatist/secessionist aspirations?

- Paul Brass. *The Politics of India Since Independence* (1994), pp 151-228
- “Crises of National Unity in India: Punjab, Kashmir and the Northeast”, by Gurharpal Singh in *Routledge handbook of South Asian Politics* (2010)
- Basharat Peer (2010), “Curfewed Night”, excerpts TBA

March 6 - The Maoist Conflict

- Gautam Navlakha “Days and Nights in the Maoist heartland” *EPW*, 04/17/10
http://epw.in/epw/user/loginArticleError.jsp?hid_artid=14662
- Apal Shah’s chapter on Maoism from “In the shadows of the state”
- Arundhati Roy: “Wlaking with the Comrades” Outlook.

March 11– Democracy, poverty and development.

Was democracy successful at improving basic standards, reducing poverty and increasing social justice? What groups benefited from democracy? What groups did not?

- P. Sainath “Everybody Loves a good drought”, p21-69, and 133-19 (1995)
- Pranab Bardhan, Chapter 7 on “Poverty and Inequality” and Chapter 8 on “The Social Sector” in *Awakening Giants, Feet of Clay: Assessing the Economic Rise of China and India*. Oxford University Press, 2010, pp. 90-116
- Akash Kapur, excerpts from “India Becoming”, TBA. (2011)

March 13– Democracy, poverty and development (2)

- Atul Kohli, “Poverty Amid Plenty in the New India”, Chapter 2.
- Kanchan Chandra, “Elections as Auctions” Seminar 539 (2004) <http://www.india-seminar.com/2004/539/539%20kanchan%20chandra.htm>
- Pranab Bardhan, “Sharing the Spoils: Group Equity, development, and Democracy” in Kohli (ed.), *The Success of India’s Democracy*. pp. 193-225. (2001)