

International Affairs 2230: Government & Politics of Asia

Syllabus Spring 2026

(Updated version: 01/16/2026)

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Course Timings:	Mondays and Wednesdays, 3:30 – 4:45 Skiles, Room 202
Office Hours:	Mondays, 12:00 – 2:00, or by appointment Habersham 110

Course Description

This course introduces students to the politics and government of modern **SOUTH ASIA**. We will **focus on democracy**, exploring commonalities and differences between India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. What explains variation in the existence, nature, and degree of consolidation of democratic regimes across South Asia? In the process, students will learn how topics such as economic development, caste, religion, or gender figure into our evaluation of democracy.

No prior knowledge of South Asia or political science is required – just curiosity and willingness to engage with new ideas.

My Vision for this Course

This course is designed to transform how you think about politics, not just what you know about South Asia. I want you to leave this course more comfortable with complexity, more aware of your own assumptions, and better equipped to think critically about any political issue you'll encounter in your life – whether in the news, in your career, or as a citizen. Years from now, you may forget specific facts about South Asian democracy, but I hope you'll remember how to question frameworks, engage multiple perspectives, and resist oversimplified explanations. Every element of this course – from the readings to the

discussions to the worksheets – is intentionally designed to help you develop these enduring skills. My goal is for every student to succeed, and I've built in support structures to help you get there.

Course Objectives

This course is designed with student success in mind and aims to impart not just subject-specific knowledge about South Asia, but to equip students with transferrable skills in the process.

Years from now, students will be able to

- **Think critically in the face of complexity and ambiguity:** evaluate competing explanations, recognize when questions have multiple valid answers, identify knowledge gaps, and resist oversimplification
- **Recognize and question their own assumptions and biases:** recognize your own assumptions, question how and when explicitly Western frameworks shape your analysis, actively seek perspectives that challenge your initial assumptions
- **Navigate political complexity without demanding simple answers:** analyze how multiple factors interact to produce political outcomes, recognize how context-specific differences affect outcomes, make evidence-based judgements while acknowledging limitation and alternative interpretations

These are the **portable skills** that will serve you throughout your life. They're called "portable" because you'll take them with you to other classes, your career, and your civic life. They take time to develop – this one course won't perfect these skills, but it will build a strong foundation.

The following **course-specific objectives** focus on South Asian politics and support your development of the portable skills above. By the end of the semester, students will be able to

- **Construct evidence-based arguments about South Asian politics:** synthesize information from multiple sources, distinguish evidence-supported and - unsupported claims, anticipate counterarguments, acknowledge knowledge/evidence gaps
- **Compare political systems and practices across South Asian countries:** identify meaningful similarities and differences across countries, explain patterns while recognizing context-specific variations, resist overgeneralizations

- **Analyze how historical legacies shape contemporary politics:** trace how specific historical events, structures, and decisions continue to influence current politics, recognize that history constrains but does not determine outcomes
- **Critically apply political science concepts to South Asian cases:** apply key concepts to analyze South Asian politics, question whether Western concepts apply straightforwardly to South Asia
- **Evaluate Democratic Quality and Variation in South Asia:** examine multiple dimensions of democratic quality, explain variation across countries and over time, question whose interests different democratic arrangements serve.

Core IMPACTS

This is a **Core IMPACTS** course that is part of the **Social Sciences** area.

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help students master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad **Orienting Question:** How do I understand human experiences and connections?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following **Learning Outcomes:** Students will effectively analyze the complexity of human behavior, and how historical, economic, political, social, or geographic relationships develop, persist, or change.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following **Career-Ready Competencies:** Intercultural Competence, Perspective-Taking, and Persuasion

Course Requirements

This course is designed around **active learning** because research consistently shows that you learn more deeply and retain information longer when you actively work with material as opposed to passively listening to lectures. You'll engage course content through reflections, discussions, collaborative analysis, and projects that require you to think critically about complex political issues.

This course requires **substantial reading**. Critical thinking and informed analysis must be grounded in facts – and the only way to gain that foundation is through reading. You cannot analyze what you don't know, and you cannot recognize your own assumptions without first understanding the evidence and arguments scholars have developed. The readings build progressively from foundational concepts to more complex issues, and they are essential preparation for our class discussions and assignments. Where possible, readings will offer choices so you can explore topics that connect to your own interests. All readings will be uploaded to Canvas well in advance.

Assessments & Grading

To succeed in this course, **regular attendance and active engagement** are essential – not as an arbitrary requirement, but because learning happens through doing the work (that's what active learning is!). Research consistently shows that students learn most effectively when they actively grapple with material rather than passively receiving it. While the readings you complete ahead of class provide the foundational knowledge, class discussions help you examine multiple perspectives and challenge your assumptions, in-class activities build your analytical skills through practice and feedback, and reflections and worksheets allow you to develop your thinking progressively throughout the semester. You cannot develop critical thinking skills by listening alone; you must practice thinking critically, and that requires your consistent presence and engagement.

Your final grade will be based on four interconnected components:

Reading Reflections	20%
Class Participation and Engagement	20%
Worksheets	30%
Final paper	30%

Reading Reflections (20%). You will write reading reflections that critically engage with the course readings by answering analytical questions. After completing the readings for a class, you will answer one of the reflection questions associated with that class. To receive full credit, your reading reflection needs to

- answer **one** (and only one) of the reflection questions for that class directly
- be between 100 and 300 words long
(Reflections that are fewer than 100 or more than 300 words will not be able to get full credit.)

- cite all required readings and any selected optional readings for that class
(Be precise when you cite: provide page numbers for where to find the argument in a text, as well as for any direct quotes or numbers you take from a reading. You may cite these readings using either the [Harvard](#) or [APA](#) citation style; do not cite in footnotes.)
- be submitted *before* the class starts through Canvas
(Late submissions will be accepted up to 1 week after the class, but cannot receive more than 70%).)

What does "critically engage" mean? It means going beyond summary. For example:

- Don't just say "Author X argues Y," provide context and/or explanation. For example, you could say: "Author X argues Y, which helps explain why Pakistan's democracy is fragile, but this framework might overlook how..."
- Don't just list what readings say. Instead, put them in dialogue: "While Reading A suggests democracy requires economic development, Reading B shows this isn't always true because..."
- Question assumptions: "This definition of democracy emphasizes elections, but does that capture whether ordinary citizens actually have power?"

While this might sound daunting right now, you will practice this kind of critical engagement with the readings throughout the semester.

You have to submit a total of 20 reading reflections (out of 24 opportunities), making each reflection worth 1% of your total grade.

Class Participation (20%). Class participation and engagement are essential for active learning because critical thinking skills develop through practice, not observation. This includes participating in discussions, completing in-class activities, and working through analytical problems, whether individually, with a partner, or in small groups. Discussions help you articulate complex ideas and consider alternative perspectives; hands-on activities like constructing timelines or comparing definitions help you organize information, identify patterns, and make connections across cases. Completing group assignments exposes you to different interpretations and approaches to the same task, and teaches you to work collaboratively in a team. *You cannot develop these skills by watching others work or listening passively* – you must engage with the material yourself.

To receive full credit for class participation and engagement, you need to show up and show effort. What does quality participation look like?

- In discussions: Listening carefully to others, building on their ideas, asking questions that push everyone's thinking, being willing to change your mind
- In small groups: Contributing equitably (not dominating or disappearing), helping the group make progress, engaging respectfully with different viewpoints
- In activities: Taking tasks seriously even when not graded for "correctness," asking for clarification when confused, trying even when uncertain

What participation is NOT about:

- Talking the most or having the "right" answer
- Performing confidence you don't feel
- Agreeing with everyone to avoid conflict

Class participation and engagement will be largely self-assessed: 4 times during the semester, you will be asked to assess your own participation and engagement based on a rubric that I will provide. Your final participation and engagement grade will be based on these 4 assessments. However, I will review your self-assessment and make adjustments if there are major discrepancies between your self-evaluations and what I observe in class.

Worksheets (30%). Worksheets are short in-class activities – such as constructing timelines, developing definitions, or analyzing pro-and-con arguments – that give you opportunities to apply knowledge from the readings and practice critical thinking skills. These are exercises designed to help you build analytical capacity through practice before being evaluated on similar skills in your final paper.

These worksheets are opportunities for practice and feedback, not high-stakes evaluations. You will complete worksheets either individually or collaboratively (depending on the task), and will have opportunities to get feedback in class before handing in your work. The goal is not perfection but practice: you're developing skills like tracing historical causation or weighing competing evidence – skills that require repeated practice to develop.

Worksheets will be graded on a simple scale based on completion and genuine effort (2 = thoughtful engagement with the task, 1 = minimal effort, 0 = not completed). At least one class every week will include a worksheet. Worksheets count for 30% of your total grade,

with each worksheet counting for 2%. Naturally, you have to be present in class to complete worksheets. If you miss class, you can make up worksheets for up to 1 week after the class by coming to office hours and completing the worksheet there. However, late worksheets cannot score more than 70%.

Final paper (30%). The final paper is your opportunity to demonstrate the analytical skills you've developed throughout the semester: constructing evidence-based arguments, engaging with complexity, critically examining concepts, and synthesizing multiple perspectives.

You will choose one motivating question from several options provided. Your paper should:

- Present a **clear thesis** in 1-2 sentences at the start of your essay (no later than the second paragraph), stating your main argument in the form "This paper argues that X" or similar. Underline your thesis statement. The thesis should reflect analytical thinking – not just description, but an argument about why something happens, how things are connected, or what explains a pattern.
- Engage substantively with **at least 10 course readings** to support your argument. Use readings as evidence, not just decoration – explain how they support your claims, where they offer competing interpretations, or when you find their frameworks illuminating or limiting. Cite precisely with page numbers for arguments, quotes, or data (Harvard or APA style; no footnotes). Include a bibliography.
- Be **1,400-1,600 words** (excluding bibliography). This word limit requires you to be selective and focused – choose your strongest evidence and most compelling points rather than including everything.

What distinguishes excellent work:

- A thoughtful, well-supported argument that engages with complexity rather than oversimplifying
- Critical engagement with readings (analyzing their assumptions, evaluating their applicability, synthesizing across sources) rather than just summarizing them
- Anticipation of counterarguments or alternative interpretations and explanation of why your interpretation is more compelling
- Recognition of what you don't know or what evidence would strengthen your argument
- Clear, precise writing that demonstrates your understanding

Final Grade

Your final grade will be assigned as a letter grade according to the following scale:

A	90-100%
B	80-89%
C	70-79%
D	65-69%
F	0-64%

Getting Support & Succeeding in This Course

I want every student to succeed, and I've designed this course with support structures to help you. Here are resources available to you:

Office Hours: This is YOUR time – use it! Come to:

- Talk through readings you found confusing
- Ask questions about assignments or concepts
- Discuss ideas for the final paper before you start writing
- Get feedback on drafts
- Just chat about course topics

You don't need a "good reason" to come, curiosity is enough. I'm here to help.

Writing Support: The [Naugle Writing and Communication Center](#) offers free consultations. Bring this syllabus and any assignment sheets when you go.

Reading Strategies: If you find the academic reading challenging, that's normal! Many students find the scholarly readings challenging, especially if you're used to textbooks or haven't taken many social science courses. Academic articles are written for experts, not students, so they require different reading strategies.

There are tons of resources out there on how to read in the social sciences generally, and in political science more specifically, including these from [UNC](#) and [Harvard](#), or this step-by-step guide by [Amelia Hoover Green](#).

As a general rule: Don't try to understand every word. Focus on identifying the main argument and key evidence. You can skim background sections and technical details unless they're directly relevant to the reflection question. A 25-page article should take 60-

90 minutes, not 3+ hours. If you're spending much longer, come talk to me about reading strategies.

Falling Behind: If you're struggling—whether because of the material, personal issues, or time management—please talk to me EARLY. I can't help if I don't know, and I can't make accommodations after deadlines have passed. The earlier you communicate, the more options we have.

Accommodations for Individuals with Disabilities. If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, contact the Office of Disability Services (often referred to as ADAPTS) at (404)89-2563 or <http://disabilityservices.gatech.edu/>, as soon as possible, to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. If you would like to discuss your learning needs, please email me as soon as possible to set up a time to do so.

Course Policies

Academic Integrity. Per the Center for Teaching and Learning, “Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarizing on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, which will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations. For more information on the Honor Code, visit the OSI website.”

Students can employ AI (e.g., ChatGPT, Claude, etc.) or their peers as a limited tool to support the work they complete at home, but not as a substitute for completing the assignment themselves. Acceptable uses of peer collaboration and/or AI include the following: Preliminary searches for information, which a student will subsequently assess for validity and put in their own words; light copy editing; review for completeness. However, students cannot use AI or peers to produce partial or full drafts or assignments for them. Students must be able to pinpoint and appropriately cite the original source of any statistics, quotations, or claims. AI platforms often fail to accurately document the source of information they provide; in this respect, these platforms do not constitute an acceptable source.

Student-Faculty Expectations. At Georgia Tech we believe that it is important to continually strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. See <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/22/> for an articulation of some basic expectations. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build

the environment we seek. Therefore, I encourage you to remain committed to the ideals of Georgia Tech while in this class.

As an instructor, I strive to support you and be flexible, where possible; in return, I expect you to be engaged and communicative. I am willing to work with you through problems you face, from scheduling conflicts to difficulties with the materials and beyond. But in order to do so, you need to talk to me *ahead of time*. I cannot fix problems that I don't know about; and I cannot make accommodations *after* deadlines have passed or grades have been given. If you tell me about problems, I am happy to consider options to address them (as long as these options do not interfere with the integrity and equity of learning experiences within the course). You can always send me an email or stop by office hours to discuss any issues you might face.

Please note that students never need to disclose physical health status, mental health status, and/or experiences of sexual harassment or sexual assault in order to receive accommodations. If you are experiencing hardship and you choose to tell me, I can help connect you with appropriate university resources. Students should be aware that, in my capacity as a responsible employee, I must alert the Title IX Offices of any instances of sexual harassment or assault that I learn about from students. If you are a survivor of sexual harassment or sexual assault and prefer to discuss your experiences using confidential resources, please contact the Center for Mental Health Care & Resources (404-894-2575 or visit at Smithgall Student Services Building, Suite 238).

Attendance Policy. Regular attendance is essential to your success in this course. This isn't an arbitrary attendance-for-attendance's-sake policy; rather, key learning activities happen in class and cannot be replicated outside of class time.

- Worksheets are completed during class (30% of your grade)
- Participation and engagement are assessed during class (20% of your grade)
- Discussions and activities help you practice the critical thinking skills you'll need for the final paper

Accordingly, you cannot score a top grade without regular attendance and engagement.

Policy for Late Assignments. Deadlines matter. Managing your time and meeting deadlines are important skills to learn that will serve you well all your life. However, I also recognize that life happens and rigid policies can penalize students facing circumstances beyond their control.

- *Reading Reflections:* Late submissions will be accepted up to **1 week** after the class, but cannot score more than 70%.

- *Worksheets*: If you miss a class with a worksheet, you can make up worksheets for up to **1 week** after the class by coming to office hours and completing the worksheet there. However, late worksheets cannot score more than 70%.
- *Final paper*: If you need an extension on the written assignment (the final paper), you may request an extension in advance of the submission deadline. No justification is required for an extension, but students must propose an alternative submission deadline within **1 week** of the original deadline. If a student either fails to request an extension in advance or fails to meet their proposed alternative deadline, they will incur a penalty of 20% off the assignment grade within the first 24 hours after the deadline. No assignments turned in more than 24 hours past the deadline will be accepted.

Date		Topic
Jan 12	M	<p>Introduction</p> <p><u>Required Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Syllabus - A brief introduction to South Asia: https://www.britannica.com/place/South-Asia
Jan 14	W	<p>Democracy: What is democracy?</p> <p><u>Required Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adam Przeworski (1999), “Minimalist Democracy: a Defense”, in Ian Shapiro and Casiano Hacker-Cordón (eds.), <i>Democracy’s Value</i> - Amartya Sen (1999), “Democracy as a Universal Value”, <i>Journal of Democracy</i> <p><u>Reflection Questions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is there a “right” way to define democracy? Why or why not? - What is the relationship between elections and democracy? Can you have democracy without elections? Elections without democracy? - Why do we value democracy as a preferred form of government?
Jan 19	M	<i>Institute Holiday – no class</i>
Jan 21	W	<p>Democracy: How do we measure democracy?</p> <p><u>Required Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland (2010), “Democracy and Dictatorship Revisited”, <i>Public Choice</i> 143(1–2), p. 67–79 - Lindberg et al. (2014), “V-Dem: A New Way to Measure Democracy”, <i>Journal of Democracy</i> <p><u>In addition:</u> familiarize yourself with the V-Dem Variable Graph online! Link: https://v-dem.net/data_analysis/VariableGraph/</p> <p><u>Reflection Questions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are the trade-offs between measuring democracy as binary (yes/no) versus measuring it on a scale? - Why is it so difficult to measure democracy? - Why might reasonable scholars disagree about whether a country is democratic?

Jan 26	M	<p>Democracy: Political Systems</p> <p><u>Required Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland (2010), “Democracy and Dictatorship Revisited”, <i>Public Choice</i> 143(1–2), p. 79-90 (“Types of Democracies and Dictatorships”) - Scott Mainwaring and Matthew S. Shugart (1997), “Juan Linz, Presidentialism, and Democracy: A Critical Appraisal”, <i>Comparative Politics</i> <p><u>Reflection Questions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are presidential or parliamentary systems more democratic? Why? - What are the strengths and weaknesses of parliamentary vs presidential systems? - How much does institutional design matter for democracy?
Jan 28	W	<p>Historical Legacies: Colonialism</p> <p><u>Required Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shashi Tharoor (2017), <i>Inglorious Empire</i>, "The Looting of India" (Chapter 1) - Ian Talbot (2010), “India and Pakistan” (Chapter 2) in Paul Brass (ed.), <i>Routledge Handbook of South Asian Politics</i>, p. 27-31 <p><u>Reflection Questions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How might colonial legacies continue to shape politics today? - Does colonialism affect a country’s ability to develop democracy later? Why or why not? - To what extent were colonial legacies different for India and Pakistan, and how did that affect their prospects for democracy?
Feb 2	M	<p>Historical Legacies: Partition</p> <p><u>Required Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ian Talbot (2010), “India and Pakistan” (Chapter 2) in Paul Brass (ed.), <i>Routledge Handbook of South Asian Politics</i>, p. 31-38 - Check out: How were India-Pakistan partition borders drawn: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/8/12/infographic-how-were-the-india-pakistan-partition-borders-drawn - Watch: “The Day India Burned” https://youtu.be/0ZS40U5yFpc?si=0cyVc4lcg8SfqnNh&t=100 <p><u>Choose ONE of the following:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nehru's "Tryst with Destiny" speech (August 14, 1947), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Cudc5Mhlcc

		<p>(or read it here, if you prefer: https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/125396/1154_trystnehr.pdf)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Secunder Kermani, BBC, “How Jinnah’s ideology shapes Pakistan’s identity” – on the “Two-Nation Theory” https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-40961603 <p>Reflection Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Was partition avoidable? Why or why not? - How might the experience of Partition shape a new state’s ability to build democratic institutions? - To what extent did Partition create similar or different political challenges for India and Pakistan?
Feb 4	W	<p>India: Introduction</p> <p>Required Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - John Harris (2010), “Political change, political structure, and the Indian state since Independence” (chapter 4) in Paul Brass (ed.), <i>Routledge Handbook of South Asian Politics</i>, p. 57-64 - Vaishnav & Mallory (2024), “The Resilience of India’s Fourth Party System”, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, p. 3-9, p. 26-28 <p>Reflection Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Why/how has India remained democratic for most of its post-Independence history despite conditions that often undermine democracy (such as poverty, illiteracy, diversity, the violence of partition)? - Can a one-party-dominant-system ever be democratic? Why or why not? - Why did Congress dominance break down?
Feb 9	M	<p>India: Mandal, Mandir, Markets</p> <p>Required Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stuart Corbridge (2010), “The political economy of development in India since Independence” (chapter 21) in Paul Brass (ed.), <i>Routledge Handbook of South Asian Politics</i>, p. 310-314 - Hardgrave & Kochanek (2007), <i>India: Government and Politics in a Developing Nation</i>, “Hindu Nationalism”, p. 203-211 - Hardgrave & Kochanek (2007), <i>India: Government and Politics in a Developing Nation</i>, “Other Backward Classes (OBCs)”, p. 220-222

		<p><u>Additionally, watch ONE of the following videos:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Caste reservations/Mandal: https://x.com/i/status/2002621516081737800 - Hindu-Muslim Violence/Mandir: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WpvRdPFQN5k - Economic Liberalization/ Markets: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VHaf8xQFUoM <p><u>Reflection Questions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To what extent did these three factors – Mandal (caste mobilization), Mandir (religious nationalism), and Markets (economic liberalization) – interact and/or beget each other? - How/to what extent did these three factors – Mandal (caste mobilization), Mandir (religious nationalism), and Markets (economic liberalization) – reshape democratic politics in India? - Did these three factors – Mandal (caste mobilization), Mandir (religious nationalism), and Markets (economic liberalization) – expand or constrain political participation?
Feb 11	W	<p>India: Hindu Nationalism</p> <p><u>Required Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Varshney & Staggs (2025), “Hindu Nationalism and the New Jim Crow”, <i>Journal of Democracy</i> <p><u>Reflection Questions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can a country remain democratic if it systematically disadvantages a minority? Why or why not? - How does majoritarianism differ from authoritarianism, and why does that distinction matter for evaluating India today? - In what ways does Hindu nationalism reshape how democracy functions without formally ending democratic institutions?
Feb 16	M	<p>Pakistan: Introduction</p> <p><u>Required Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shahid Javed Burki (2010), “Pakistan’s politics and its economy” (Chapter 6) in Paul Brass (ed.), <i>Routledge Handbook of South Asian Politics</i> - Ayesha Jalal (2024), “Does Democracy Have a Future in Pakistan?”, <i>Journal of Democracy</i>

		<p>Reflection Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is democracy in Pakistan best understood as fragile, incomplete, or resilient? Why? - To what extent can institutional design explain democratic weakness in Pakistan? - What does Pakistan's experience suggest about the significance of elections for democracy?
Feb 18	W	<p>Pakistan: Different Legacy, Divergent Path?</p> <p>Required Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Philip Oldenburg (2010), <i>India, Pakistan, and Democracy: Solving the Puzzle of Divergent Paths</i>, Chapter 1 - Sumit Ganguly (2008), "Pakistan After Musharraf: The burden of history", <i>Journal of Democracy</i> <p>Reflection Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To what extent can Pakistan's path (and its difference from India's) be explained by historical constraints vs. political choices? - Which early constraints on democracy seem hardest to overcome? - What role does constitutional uncertainty play in weakening democracy?
Feb 23	M	<p>Pakistan: The Military</p> <p>Required Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aqil Shah (2023), "Pakistan's Military Still Runs the Show: Why Imran Khan's Revolt Sputtered", <i>Foreign Affairs</i> - Sania Muneer and Saroj Aryal (2024), "Cause and Effect: The Factors that Make Pakistan's Military a Political Force", <i>ORF Issue Brief</i>, No 694, February 2024 <p>Reflection Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To what extent can a country be democratic when the military is involved in politics? - Why has the military become (and remained) so powerful in Pakistan? - Why do civilian politicians keep turning to the military for support, even when it undermines democracy?

Feb 25	W	<p>Interlude: The Kashmir Conflict</p> <p><u>Required Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pahalgam attack: A simple guide to the Kashmir conflict (Al Jazeera) https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/5/2/pahalgam-attack-a-simple-guide-to-the-kashmir-conflict <p><u>Reflection Questions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who is responsible for the conflict in Kashmir? Why? - Could the Kashmir conflict have been avoided? If yes, how? If no, why not? - What opportunities do you see for peace in Kashmir in the future?
Mar 2	M	<p>Bangladesh: Introduction</p> <p><u>Required Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ali Riaz, “Bangladesh” (Chapter 4) in Neil DeVotta (ed.), <i>An Introduction to South Asian Politics</i>, p. 72-89 - Paul Staniland (October 15, 2024), “Bangladesh is Well-Positioned to Build a New Political Area. Can it Seize the Moment?”, <i>Carnegie Endowment for International Peace</i> https://carnegieendowment.org/emissary/2024/10/bangladesh-hasina-government-politics-what-next?lang=en <p><u>Reflection Questions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What role have Bangladesh’s main political parties played in the erosion of democracy? - Was the Caretaker Government (CTG) a good solution to Bangladesh’s problems? Why or why not? - What does the shift from competitive elections to one-sided elections in Bangladesh reveal about how democracies can break down?
Mar 4	W	<p>Bangladesh: Bengali vs. Bangladeshi Identity</p> <p><u>Choose ONE:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Habibul Haque Khondker, “Nationalism and the ‘Politics of National Identity’ (Chapter 2) in Ali Riaz and Mohammad Sajjadu Rahman (eds), <i>Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Bangladesh</i> - Shantanu Majumder, “Secularism and Anti-Secularism” (Chapter 3) in Ali Riaz and Mohammad Sajjadu Rahman (eds), <i>Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Bangladesh</i>

		<p><u>Reflection Questions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To what extent are identities stable or malleable? - To what extent are anti-secularism and democracy compatible? - Why do political parties promote certain identities, even if it is counterproductive for democracy?
Mar 9	M	<p>Sri Lanka: Introduction</p> <p><u>Required Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neil DeVotta, “Politics and Governance in Post-Independence Sri Lanka” (Chapter 8) in Paul Brass (ed.), <i>Routledge Handbook of South Asian Politics</i> • Neil DeVotta (2025), “Sri Lanka’s Peaceful Revolution”, <i>Journal of Democracy</i> <p><u>Reflection Questions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What best explains Sri Lanka's decline from "promising democracy" to civil war: historical legacies or political choices? Explain. • Why did political parties in engage in “ethnic outbidding” in Sri Lanka, even when it is detrimental to democracy? • India and Sri Lanka both are ethnically diverse countries. Why did Sri Lanka resort to “ethnic outbidding” early on, while India did not?
Mar 11	W	<p>Sri Lanka: Civil War</p> <p><u>Required Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Neil DeVotta (2010), "Sri Lanka's Civil War" (chapter 12) in <i>Routledge Handbook of Asian Security Studies</i> <p><u>Watch ONE of the following:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are the ‘Black July’ massacres that triggered Sri Lanka’s 26-year civil war? https://youtu.be/c5axEyhd-k - Sri Lanka’s killing fields: here shoes still lie on the ground (TRIGGER WARNING!) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5_twRbOlkdw&rco=1 <p><u>Reflection Questions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who was responsible for the Sri Lankan Civil War? Why? • Could the Sri Lankan Civil War have been avoided? If yes, how? If not, why not? • Why are civil wars often particularly brutal and violent?

Mar 16	M	<p>Nepal: Introduction</p> <p><u>Required Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prakash Adhikari & Mahendra Lawoti, “Nepal” (Chapter 6) in Neil DeVotta (ed.), <i>An Introduction to South Asian Politics</i>, p. 149-162 - Amish Raj Mulmi (2025), “From Streets to Discord: How Nepal’s Gen Z Toppled a Government”, <i>Carnegie Endowment for International Peace</i> https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2025/09/nepal-gen-z-topple-government?lang=en <p><u>Reflection Questions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How do the monarchy, the Maoist insurgency, and transition to democracy relate to each other? - How have exclusion (political, social, economic) and democratic expectations shaped Nepal’s experience with democracy? - What does Nepal’s history of popular uprisings suggest about democracy in the country?
Mar 18	W	<p>Nepal: Maoist Insurgency</p> <p><u>Choose ONE of the following:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Madhav Joshi & David Mason (2008), “Between Democracy and Revolution: Peasant Support for Insurgency versus Democracy in Nepal”, <i>Journal of Peace Research</i> - Prakash Adhikari & Wend Hansen (2022), “The Continuation of Civil War by Other Means? Post-Conflict Peacebuilding in Nepal”, <i>Journal of Peacebuilding & Development</i> - Mahendra Lawoti (2010), “Bullets, Ballots, and Bounty: Maoist Electoral Victory in Nepal” (Chapter 14) in Mahendra Lawoti and Anup K. Pahari (eds), <i>The Maoist Insurgency in Nepal: Revolution in the Twenty-first Century</i> <p><u>Reflection Questions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can a country move beyond civil war without holding perpetrators accountable? Why or why not - Why would ordinary people join/support a violent insurgency? - To what extent can violent insurgents transform into true democratic actors, based on Nepal’s experience?
Mar 23	M	<i>Spring Break</i>
Mar 25	W	<i>Spring Break</i>

Mar 30	M	<p>Rule of Law</p> <p>Required Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Guillermo O'Donnell (2004), “The Quality of Democracy: Why the Rule of Law Matters”, <i>Journal of Democracy</i> <p><u>In addition, choose ONE of the following:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - India: Christophe Jaffrelot and Pratinav Anil, <i>India's First Dictatorship: The Emergency, 1975-1977</i>, Chapter 1 ('Introduction') - Pakistan: James Schwemlein (2023), “The Military Disrupts Pakistan’s Democracy Once Again”, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace https://carnegieendowment.org/posts/2023/05/the-military-disrupts-pakistans-democracy-once-again?lang=en AND Saad Sayeed (2018), “ousted Pakistani PM Nawaz Sharif gets seven years’ jail for graft”, <i>Reuters</i> https://www.reuters.com/article/world/ousted-pakistani-pm-nawaz-sharif-gets-seven-years-jail-for-graft-idUSKCN1ON0H2/?utm_source=chatgpt.com - Bangladesh: Aqil Shah (2015), “Democracy Deadlocked in Bangladesh”, <i>Current History</i> <p><u>Reflection Questions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can a country be democratic without rule of law? Why or why not? - To what extent does your chosen country (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh) illustrate O'Donnell's argument about why rule of law matters for democracy? - Why might elected leaders undermine rule of law even when it weakens democracy?
Apr 1	W	No Class
Apr 6	M	<p>Economic Development: Introduction</p> <p><u>Required Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Przeworski, A & Limongi, F (1997). “Modernization: Theories and Facts.” <i>World Politics</i>, Vol 49, No 2, 155-183 <p><u>Reflection Questions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How does economic development affect democracy? - To what extent can poor countries sustain democracy? - To what extent does economic growth stabilize or destabilize democratic regimes?

Apr 8	W	<p>Economic Development: Economic Development and Democracy in South Asia</p> <p><u>Choose ONE of the following:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jean Dreze & Amartya Sen (2013), <i>An Uncertain Glory: India and Its Contradictions</i>, Chapter 2 ('Integrating Growth and Development') - Naomi Hossain (2017), <i>The Aid Lab: Understanding Bangladesh's Unexpected Success</i>, Chapter 1 ('Bangladesh's Surprising Success') - Neil DeVotta (2022), "Sri Lanka's Road to Ruin Was Political, Not Economic", <i>Foreign Policy</i> <p><u>Reflection Questions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is surprising about the relationship between economic development and democracy in the country you chose (India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka)? - What is the “best”/ “right” way to capture economic development? - What role should the state play in development?
Apr 13	M	<p>Caste</p> <p><u>Required Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Surinder S. Jodhka (2014), <i>Caste in Contemporary India</i>, Chapter 1 ('Introduction: The Idea of Caste') <p><u>In addition, choose ONE of the following:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - B. R. Ambedkar, "The Annihilation of Caste" ('2 Why Social Reform is Necessary for Political Reform') - Suhas Palshikar (2014), "Caste and Politics: Limits of Democratization" (Chapter 18) in Sumit Ganguly and Eswaran Sridharan (eds.), <i>The Oxford Handbook of Indian Politics</i> ('Vote Banks??') - Ashwini Deshpande, "Reservations and Affirmative Action" (Chapter 12) in Surinder S. Jodhka and Jules Naudet (eds.), <i>The Oxford Handbook of Caste</i> ('Post Independence', 'Reservations in Employment', 'Reservations in Education') <p><u>Reflection Questions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To what extent are caste and democracy compatible? - Is caste discrimination a social or a political problem? - How has caste shaped Indian politics?

Apr 15	W	<p>Religion</p> <p><u>Required Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ali Riaz (2010), “Introduction: Three Arguments about the Religion-Politics Nexus” in Ali Riaz (ed), <i>Religion and Politics in South Asia</i> <p><u>In addition, choose ONE of the following:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Neil DeVotta (2002), “Buddhist Majoritarianism and Ethnocracy in Sri Lanka”, <i>Sociological Bulletin</i>, 70(4) - Ali Riaz (2010), “The Politics of Islamization in Bangladesh” (Chapter 2) in Ali Riaz (ed), <i>Religion and Politics in South Asia</i>, p. 56-66 - Matthew J. Nelson, “Regime Types, Regime Transitions, and Religion in Pakistan” (Chapter 6) in Melani Cammett and Pauline Jones (eds), <i>The Oxford Handbook of Politics in Muslim Societies</i>, p. 115-127 <p><u>Reflection Questions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How compatible are religion and democracy? - Why/when do political elites mobilize religious identities? - How can secular and religious politics co-exist?
Apr 20	M	<p>Gender</p> <p><u>Required Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mala Htun (2004), “Is Gender like Ethnicity? The Political Representation of Identity Groups”, <i>Perspectives on Politics</i>, Vol 2, No 3, p. 439-446 <p><u>In addition, choose ONE of the following:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Leela Dube (1997), “Women and Kinship: Comparative Perspectives on Gender in South and South-East Asia”, <i>United Nations University Press</i> (‘Introduction’) - Amrita Basu (2016), “Women, dynasties, and democracy in India” (Chapter 5), in Kanchan Chandra (ed.), <i>Democratic Dynasties: State, Party and Family in Contemporary Indian Politics</i>, p. 149-157 (‘3 Explaining low representation and high dynasticism’) - Brian Turnbull (2021), “Quotas as Opportunities and Obstacles: Revisiting Gender Quotas in India”, <i>Politics & Gender</i>, p. 324-334 <p><u>Reflection Questions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To what extent is gender different from other political identity categories? - Why are women underrepresented in democratic politics? - To what extent can formal political equality overcome social inequality?

Apr 22	W	<p>Rethinking Democracy in South Asia</p> <p><u>Reflection Questions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is the state of democracy in South Asia today? - Which South Asian countries are more/less democratic, and why? - Which challenges to democracy that you have seen in South Asia do you see apply in other contexts as well?
Apr 27	M	No Class – Extra Office Hours Instead!
<i>Final Paper Deadline: May 1</i>		