



Course and Examination Fact Sheet: Spring Semester 2025

7,664 | 8,664: Kulturen/Cultures: Democracy and Secularism in South Asia

ECTS credits: 3

Overview examination/s

(binding regulations see below)

decentral - Written work, Digital, Individual work individual grade (65%)

Examination time: Term time

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Examination time: Term time

Attached courses

Timetable -- Language -- Lecturer

[8,664,1.00 Kulturen/Cultures: Democracy and Secularism in South Asia](#) -- English -- [Rollier Paul](#)

Course information

Course prerequisites

None

Learning objectives

Students will be able to

- reflect on competing theories of secularism in the context of postcolonial societies;
- develop a basic familiarity with South Asia's social, religious and political landscape;
- assess the factors that account for the success of religious nationalism, and interrogate its implications for liberal democracy.

Course content

What does the entrenchment of Hindu nationalism entail for India's democracy and its secular fabric? To what extent has Islam become a blueprint for politics in neighbouring Pakistan and Bangladesh? In short, how does religion articulate with politics in contemporary South Asia, a region home to a third of the world's voters, and where the display of religiosity often pervades politics?

Following independence in 1947, India embraced secularism, envisioned as a unifying principle holding its multireligious society together, while Pakistan was conceived as a country in which Muslim identity would guarantee national cohesion. In recent decades however, South Asia has witnessed the rise of national-populism and religious majoritarianism, with the concomitant erosion of pluralism and democratic principles, as evidenced by the marginalization of minority communities and the muzzling of dissenting voices across countries in the region.

To understand these trends, this course retraces colonial-era conceptions of religious coexistence before examining the state management of religious diversity in the postcolonial period. Students are also introduced to competing theories of secularism and secularisation, allowing them to reflect on whether democracy is necessarily premised on the separation of state and religion. Combining anthropological and political perspectives, particular attention will be paid to the ways in which religious identities have been mobilized for nation-building and electoral politics, with examples from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and the South Asian diaspora.



Aside from introducing students to South Asia's diverse religious traditions (Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Buddhism, Christianity), our case studies include, among others: the rise of Hindu nationalism, the political significance of conversions and blasphemy accusations, the vicissitudes of islamism, religious minorities, authoritarianism and the politics of dissent.

Course structure and indications of the learning and teaching design

The course is taught online in weekly sessions and combines formal lectures with interactive seminars, group work and open-ended discussions. Students will have read the assigned texts before each session and be prepared to discuss them. The course is designed to give space for students to address their topics of interest.

Contextual Studies are considered part of **Contact Learning**; thus, taking part properly implies **regular attendance**. It is the students' own responsibility to ensure that there is **no timetable clash** between the courses they have chosen. A detailed course outline and all relevant documents will be made available on **StudyNet**. Only the current timetable as published on **Courses** does apply.

Course literature

A detailed list of scholarly text, visual media, and other resources will be available on StudyNet. In the meantime, students can familiarize themselves with the course by consulting the following:

Bose, S. & A. Jalal. 2022. *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy*. London: Routledge.
Chatterjee, P. 1993. *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Fragments*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Jaffrelot, C. 2021. *Modi's India: Hindu Nationalism and the Rise of Ethnic Democracy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Jalal, A. 2008. *Partisans of Allah. Jihad in South Asia*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Additional course information

Dr. Paul Rollier is social anthropologist and CNRS research fellow at the EHESS in France. His research focuses on the anthropology of religion (Islam and Christianity) and justice in South Asia. He is the co-author of *Mafia Raj: The Rule of Bosses in South Asia* (Stanford University Press, 2018) and co-editor of *Outrage: the rise of religious offence in contemporary South Asia* (University College London Press, 2019).

Examination information

Examination sub part/s

1. Examination sub part (1/2)

Examination modalities

Examination type	Written work
Responsible for organisation	decentral
Examination form	Written work
Examination mode	Digital
Time of examination	Term time
Examination execution	Asynchronous
Examination location	Off Campus
Grading type	Individual work individual grade
Weighting	65%
Duration	--

Examination languages

Question language: English
Answer language: English

Remark

term paper on topic chosen by student



Examination-aid rule

Free aids provision

Basically, students are free to choose aids. Any restrictions are defined by the faculty members in charge of the examination under supplementary aids.

Supplementary aids

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2. Examination sub part (2/2)

Examination modalities

Examination type	Written work
Responsible for organisation	decentral
Examination form	Written work
Examination mode	Digital
Time of examination	Term time
Examination execution	Asynchronous
Examination location	Off Campus
Grading type	Individual work individual grade
Weighting	35%
Duration	--

Examination languages

Question language: English

Answer language: English

Remark

Reading preparation on Perusall

Examination-aid rule

Free aids provision

Basically, students are free to choose aids. Any restrictions are defined by the faculty members in charge of the examination under supplementary aids.

Supplementary aids

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Examination content

The examination consists of two parts:

1. Individual term paper (65%)

The argumentative essay can focus on any course-related theme that you wish to explore. You will have to draw on academic literature beyond the texts studied in class. Length: 2600 words minimum (excluding cover page, abstract, bibliography, annexes etc.).

2. Reading preparation (35%)

Before each session, you will annotate the assigned reading on Perusall (e.g., making a general comment, raising questions and replying to those of others, establishing connections with other texts etc.). This encourages students' active engagement with the text while preparing them for class discussions. Students will be evaluated on the overall quality of their written input on Perusall.

Examination relevant literature



All assigned readings will be made available on StudyNet at the beginning of the semester.

Please note

Please note that only this fact sheet and the examination schedule published at the time of bidding are binding and takes precedence over other information, such as information on StudyNet (Canvas), on lecturers' websites and information in lectures etc.

Any references and links to third-party content within the fact sheet are only of a supplementary, informative nature and lie outside the area of responsibility of the University of St.Gallen.

Documents and materials are only relevant for central examinations if they are available by the end of the lecture period (CW21) at the latest. In the case of centrally organised mid-term examinations, the documents and materials up to CW 13 (Monday, 25 March 2025) are relevant for testing.

Binding nature of the fact sheets:

- Course information as well as examination date (organised centrally/decentrally) and form of examination: from bidding start in CW 04 (Thursday, 23 January 2025);
- Examination information (supplementary aids, examination contents, examination literature) for decentralised examinations: in CW 12 (Monday, 17 March 2025);
- Examination information (supplementary aids, examination contents, examination literature) for centrally organised mid-term examinations: in CW 14 (Monday, 31 March 2025);
- Examination information (regulations on aids, examination contents, examination literature) for centrally organised examinations: two weeks before ending with de-registration period in CW 15 (Monday, 07 April 2025).