

POL 328H1S
Politics and Government in South Asia
Winter 2026

Instructor: Professor Kanta Murali
Instructor Email: kanta.murali@utoronto.ca
Grader: Nikhil Goyal
Time: Wednesdays 11am – 1pm
Office hours: Mondays 1.30-3pm, SS 3043 (or by appointment on Zoom)

Land Acknowledgment

We wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years, it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and, most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

Themes

This course is designed to introduce students to politics in South Asia in the period after independence from colonial rule. The themes discussed during the course will be those that are important both to South Asia as well as to a general study of politics in developing countries. The course is divided into two parts. The first part focuses on colonial legacies in South Asia. The second part of the course examines politics in the post-independence era in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Themes examined in the second half include nation-building, state-building, democracy, authoritarianism, populism, and economic development.

Course objectives

The main objectives of this course are to: 1) Develop an understanding of colonial legacies as well as post-independence politics in South Asia; 2) Develop critical thinking skills; 3) Develop critical reading and writing skills.

Format

Class sessions will comprise in-person lectures and discussions. In several weeks, there will also be brief section of the lecture, usually related to terms and concepts in the upcoming lecture, which will be pre-recorded and posted online (approximately 10-15 minutes). This has been done to ensure familiarity with terms/concepts used and to also allow time for questions and discussion in class. Pre-recorded segments are indicated in particular weeks on the syllabus. The link to the pre-recorded segment can be found under Modules for that particular week.

Readings

All assigned readings for a particular week are available electronically under Modules in Quercus (q.utoronto.ca). Readings are available as either PDFs or online through the library's website. For those readings that are available online through the library, you will need your UTORid and password to access the reading (the link is provided under Modules). I reserve the right to remove or substitute a reading with another if necessary during the term. I will give you significant advance notice if I do so.

Course evaluation and requirements

- 1) **In-class quizzes: 30% of final grade (3 quizzes worth 10% each):** You will be required to complete three in-class quizzes on the dates listed below. Each quiz will include multiple choice questions and will be 30 minutes long. Quizzes are closed book and closed notes. Please note that there will be also be a lecture in the class sessions when there is a quiz.
 - **Quiz 1: January 28th, 2026;** Will cover lectures and readings from weeks 1, 2 and 3
 - **Quiz 2: March 4th, 2026;** Will include lectures and readings from weeks 4, 5, and 6
 - **Quiz 3: March 18th, 2026;** Will include lectures and readings from weeks 7, 8 and 9
- 2) **Essay Assignment 1 (30% of final grade): Due by 9am on February 11th, 2026.** Will cover lectures and readings from weeks 1 to 5. Assignment questions will be posted on Quercus by January 21st.
- 3) **Final Essay Assignment (40% of final grade): Due by 9am on April 10th, 2026.** The essay will cover material from the entire course. Assignment questions will be posted on Quercus by March 11th.

Course policies and procedures

Emails: I will attempt to respond to all emails within 48 hours (excluding weekends and holidays). Questions on course material cannot be addressed via email. If you have questions on course lectures and readings, please come to office hours or set up an appointment. I will also include time in class sessions for questions.

Quercus and course information: This course will use Quercus to disseminate all course-related information and assignments. It is your responsibility to log on to Quercus regularly and obtain relevant information.

Lecture slides: Lecture slides will be posted on Quercus under Modules for a particular week.

Academic Integrity: Academic integrity is fundamental to learning and scholarship at the University of Toronto. Please familiarize yourself with the University of Toronto's *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>). It is the rule book for academic behaviour at the U of T, and you are expected to know the rules. Failure to understand what constitutes plagiarism and academic integrity at U of T will not be accepted as an excuse.

The University of Toronto treats cases of academic misconduct very seriously. The consequences for academic misconduct can be severe, including a failure in the course and a notation on your transcript. If you have any questions about what is or is not permitted in this course, please do not hesitate to contact me. For further information on appropriate research and citation methods and plagiarism, please see <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources>. If you are experiencing personal challenges that are having an impact on your academic work in this course, please speak to me and seek the advice of your college registrar.

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools in assignments: Students may use generative AI tools to complete essays in ways specified in the instructions for the assignments on Quercus. If you have any questions about the use of AI applications for the essay assignments, please speak with the instructor.

Plagiarism Detection Tool: Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University's plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool's reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site (<https://uoft.me/pdt-faq>). Should you choose to opt out of using the University's plagiarism detection tool, please speak to me about alternate procedures.

Absences/Extensions/Consideration for Missed Coursework: Students who are absent from academic participation for any reason (e.g., COVID, cold, flu and other illness or injury, family situation) and who require extensions for essays/make-up quizzes/other consideration for missed academic work should contact the instructor as soon as possible, and no later than one week after returning to class. Students requesting extensions/other consideration must provide documentation. The following are recognized forms of documentation: Absence Declaration via ACORN, U of T Verification of Illness Form (VOI), College Registrar's letter, or Letter of Academic Accommodation from Accessibility Services.

Extensions for essays and make-up quizzes/other consideration will only be granted in extenuating circumstances that could not be anticipated ahead of time. Requests for extensions/make-up quizzes/consideration for missed coursework must be supported by documentation and students must inform the instructor (as indicated in the previous paragraph). Extension requests and other consideration for missed coursework are at my discretion.

Late penalty: Essays uploaded any time after the specified deadline will be treated as late. There will be a penalty of 4% of the total mark of the assignment per each late day (including weekends and holidays). The cut off time for the determination of each late day is 11.59pm.

Appealing grades: If you would like to appeal your grades, please submit a written grade appeal to me within 1 week of receiving the grade. To submit a grade appeal, please email me a written statement (no more than 1 page) explaining why you believe your grade should be changed. Your rationale for the appeal must refer to comments given on the assignment. The amount of effort you have put in for an assignment does not constitute grounds for appeal. Please note decisions on appeals are at my discretion. If I accept a grade appeal based on your written statement, I will examine the entire assignment (and not specific questions/parts). Please note that your grade may go down, go up or remain unchanged after this process.

Code of Conduct: The University of Toronto expects all its members to behave responsibly and with courtesy and respect for others at all times. The University of Toronto is committed to equity, human rights and respect for diversity. All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect where all members of our community can express themselves, engage with each other, and respect one another's differences. Students should make sure to read the University's Student Code of Conduct (<https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/code-student-conduct-december-13-2019>) and the University's policy on the Appropriate Use of Information and Communication Technology (<https://www.provost.utoronto.ca/planning-policy/information-communication-technology-appropriate-use/>).

Accessibility: Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please contact Accessibility Services (studentlife.utoronto.ca/as); Phone: 416-978 8060.

Registrar Support: Students are encouraged to contact their registrar promptly if they experience unexpected challenges during the course that may require accommodations.

Health and Wellness: Students can access a wide range of programs and services to support their health and wellbeing. Many of these programs are listed at:

<https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/health-wellness/uoft.me/myssp>

Crisis support: If you feel distressed, please know that you are not alone and please reach out for help. You can find further resources at: <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/task/support-when-you-feel-distressed/>

Reading List

Part I: The colonial inheritance

Week 1 (January 7th): Part 1: Introduction to the course; Part 2: Colonial Legacies : British India

- No readings

Week 2 (January 14th): Colonial legacies : British India

- *Watch pre-recorded section of lecture prior to class
- Bose, Sugata and Jalal, Ayesha. 2004. *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political economy* (2nd edition). New York: Routledge, **Chapter 7, pgs. 53-59; Chapter 8, pgs. 60-69, Chapter 10, pgs. 78-85**}
- Kohli, Atul. 2020. *Imperialism and the Developing World : How Britain and the United States Shaped the Global Periphery*. Oxford University Press. **{Chapter 3, please read introduction and section on India in chapter, pgs. 147-174. You do not need to focus on the details about Nigeria in the first 4 pages but please read the argument and discussion on India in the pages indicated above}**.
- Basu, Shrabani. 2015. *For King and Another Country: Indian Soldiers on the Western Front, 1914-1918*. London: Bloomsbury **{Introduction, pgs. xv-xxvii}**

Week 3 (January 21st): Colonial legacies: British India

- *Watch pre-recorded section of lecture prior to class
- Mehta, Pratap Bhanu. 2003. "The Nationalist Movement." In *Understanding Contemporary India*, ed. S. Ganguly and N. DeVotta. Boulder, Colorado: Lynn Reiner. **{pgs. 41-60}**
- Bose, Sugata and Jalal, Ayesha. 2004. *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political economy* (2nd edition). New York: Routledge, **pgs. 135-156 {Chapter 16}**
- Khan, Yasmin. 2017. *The Great Partition: The making of India and Pakistan*. Yale University Press. **Chapter 7 {"Introduction: The Plan", pgs. 1-10; "Blood on the Tracks, pgs. 128-142}**

Week 4 (January 28th): Part 1: Quiz 1 in class; Part 2: Sri Lanka's colonial inheritance;

- Wickramasinghe, Nira. 2014. *Sri Lanka in the Modern Age: A History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Chapter {"Colonial Encounters", pgs. 1-35}

Part II: Politics in the post-independence era

Week 5 (February 4th): Part 1: India under Nehru; Part 2: Indira Gandhi (also continued in next lecture)

- *Watch pre-recorded section of lecture prior to class
- Talbot, Ian. 2016. *A History of Modern South Asia : Politics, States, Diasporas*. Yale University Press. { Chapter 9, "Nehru and the New India"; pgs. 149-163; Chapter 11, "Challenges to Nehruvian India, pgs. 181-195}
- Guha, Ramachandra. 2007. *India After Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy*. New York: Ecco. {"Ideas of India", pgs.115-134}
- Trantidis, Aris. 2025. *Clientelism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. {Introduction and Selection from Ch. 1, pgs. 1-9}

Week 6 (February 11th): India: From Indira Gandhi to the 2000s; Essay 1 due by 9am

- Corbridge, S, and J Harriss. 2000. *Reinventing India: Liberalisation, Hindu Nationalism and Popular Democracy*. Cambridge: Polity {Chapter 6, pgs.119-139}
- Lamba, R. and Subramanian, A., 2020. Dynamism with incommensurate development: The distinctive Indian model. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 34(1), pp. 3-30.
- Mudde, Cas, and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser. 2017. *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press. {Pgs. 79-86 from Chapter 5 – "Populism and Democracy"; Read only from the start of the Chapter 5 until the end of the section titled "Populism and (liberal) democracy"}

******Reading Week: No Class on February 18th******

Week 7 (February 25th): India under Modi

*Watch pre-recorded lecture session prior to class

- Kohli, Atul and Kanta Murali. 2025. *Democracy and Inequality in India: Political Economy of a Troubled Giant*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. {Chapter 1, Democracy and Governance, pgs. 15-63}.
- Tudor, Maya. 2023. "Why India's Democracy Is Dying." *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 34 no. 3 {pgs. 121-132}.
- Levitsky, S., & Way, L. A. (2002). The rise of competitive authoritarianism. *Journal of Democracy*, 13(2), 51–65.

Week 8 (March 4th): Part 1: Quiz 2 (in class); Part 2: Political Change in Pakistan;

- Talbot, Ian. 2016. *A History of Modern South Asia : Politics, States, Diasporas*. Yale University Press. {Chapter 10, Pakistan's Failure in Democratic Consolidation; pgs. 164-177; Chapter 14, Pakistan Since 1971; pgs. 226-241}
- Baxter, Craig. 1997. *Bangladesh: from a nation to a state*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press {Chapter 7, "A Province of Pakistan", pgs. 61-79}

Week 9 (March 11th): Political Change in Pakistan

- *Watch pre-recorded lecture session prior to class
- Haqqani, Husain. 2005. *Pakistan: between mosque and military*. Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace: Distributor, Brookings Institution Press {Chapter 4, "From Islamic Republic to Islamic State, pgs. 131-157}
- Siddiqa, Ayesha. 2020. "The Kingmaker: Pakistan's Military and Political Parties" in *Pakistan's Political Parties : Surviving Between Dictatorship and Democracy*, edited by Mariam Mufti, et al., Georgetown University Press, 2020. {pgs. 215-234}
- Malik, A., & Tudor, M. 2024. Pakistan's Coming Crisis. *Journal of Democracy*, 35(3), 69–83.

Week 10 (March 18th):Part 1: In-class Quiz 3; Part 2: Political Change in Bangladesh

- Lewis, David. 2011. *Bangladesh: politics, economy, and civil society*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press. {Chapter 4, "State, Politics and Institutions", pgs. 75-108}

Week 11 (March 25th): Part 1: Political Change in Bangladesh; Part 2: Political Change in Sri Lanka

- *Watch pre-recorded lecture session prior to class
- Blair, Harry. 2020. The Bangladesh Paradox. *Journal of Democracy* 31(4): 138-150
- Riaz, Ali. 2021. "The Pathway of Democratic Backsliding in Bangladesh." *Democratization* 28: 1, 179-197.
- Riaz, Ali. 2016. *Bangladesh : a political history since independence* (First edition.). I.B. Tauris. {Chapter 7, "Unpacking The Paradox of Development, pgs. 219-230}

Week 12 (April 1st): Political Change in Sri Lanka

- *Watch pre-recorded lecture session prior to class
- DeVotta, Neil. 2010. "Politics and Governance in Post-Independence Sri Lanka." In *Routledge Handbook of South Asian Politics*, ed. P. R. Brass. New York: Routledge. {pgs.118-130}
- Wilson, A. Jeyaratnam. 2011. "The Militarisation of Tamil Youth" in Holt, John Clifford (ed.), *The Sri Lanka Reader: History, Culture, Politics*. Durham: Duke University Press {pgs. 503-522}

- Devotta, Neil. 2010. "Sri Lanka's Civil War" in Ganguly, A, Liow, J. C., & Scobell, A. *The Routledge Handbook of Asian Security Studies*. Routledge. {Chapter 12, pgs. 158-171}
- DeVotta, N. 2025. Sri Lanka's Peaceful Revolution. *Journal of Democracy* 36(1), 79-92