Govt 739: Politics and Security in South Asia

R 4:30 – 7:10 p.m. Robinson Hall B 102
Professor Ahsan Butt
Email: abutt4@gmu.edu
Office hours: R 10:30 a.m. – noon
and by appointment

Course description

This course is a graduate seminar on South Asian politics and security. Our geographic focus will be circumscribed to India and Pakistan. Our thematic focus will be organized by four questions. First, what happened in 1947 and why does it matter? Second, how do India and Pakistan “work” internally? Third, what explains conflict within India and Pakistan? Fourth, what explains conflict between India and Pakistan? We will attempt to proffer both theoretical and empirical answers to these questions.

Course materials

There are eight books required for this course. You can purchase them from the campus bookstore or online marketplaces such as Amazon.com. The required books are:

- Laurent Gayer, Karachi: Ordered Disorder and the Struggle for the City (New York: Oxford University Press)
- Ayesha Jalal, The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan (New York: Cambridge University Press)
- Tariq Thachil, Elite Parties, Poor Voters: How Social Services Win Votes in India (New York: Cambridge University Press)

The readings for the course also consist of a number of journal articles, all of which are available online. Assigned book chapters will be made available on the course’s Blackboard site.

Course requirements

Students’ final grades will be determined by their performance in three areas:
4 response papers (40%). Students can choose which week’s readings they respond to (though, in general, it is advisable to space these out, such that you’re writing a response paper every 2-3 weeks). These papers must not summarize the readings but critically respond to them. This exercise can include grappling with a theoretical, empirical, or methodological issue that plagues one or more of the readings, putting a number of the assigned readings in conversation with one another, or building upon and extending the insights and arguments contained therein. They must be 3-4 pages in length, and have 1-inch margins, size 12 font, and be double-spaced. Response papers are due at noon the day of the class, either as an email attachment or a hard copy delivered to my office (Robinson A 241).

1 research paper (40%). An original research paper on a question or topic that relates to South Asian politics and security, broadly defined. On April 6, students will write and circulate a 4-5 page proposal outlining their plans for the research paper, and discuss the project in class with the professor and their colleagues. The final paper is due at the end of the semester and must be 15-20 pages (20-25 if you are a PhD student), not including citations and/or footnotes, and have 1-inch margins, size 12 font, and be double-spaced. Only hard copies will be accepted.

Class participation (20%). This is a seminar course and, as such, depends critically upon students’ active participation in class. Students must come to class prepared, having completed all the required readings, and be ready to discuss and debate issues raised in the readings and lectures. Students will also be required to do 1-2 oral presentations of the day’s readings. These presentations should, as with the response papers, not summarize the readings but critically assess them and should serve as the departure point for class discussions.

Late assignments

Assignments must be turned in at the time and place designated on the syllabus. Failure to turn in an assignment on time is unacceptable except with the prior agreement of the instructor (which will be given only in exceptional circumstances, such as a documented illness or family emergency). Except in documented cases of illness or emergency, a penalty of up to a full letter grade may be assessed for each day the assignment is late.

Academic integrity

GMU is an Honor Code university; please see the Office for Academic Integrity for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else’s work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas,
perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt (of any kind) please ask for guidance and clarification.

**Students with disabilities or special needs**

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474, http://ods.gmu.edu. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS.

**Email policy**

In general, it is best to discuss any issues or concerns with me in person, either in class or in office hours. This is especially true for issues that require elaboration or a back-and-forth exchange. I will be happy to respond to emails in normal business hours (M-F, 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m.) that require a short, concise response and aim to do so in a timely manner. However, there will be occasions when it takes me 24 hours or more to respond.

**Course schedule**

Jan 26: Introduction

Feb 2: Prelude to decolonization

- Srinath Raghavan, *India’s War: World War II and the Making of Modern South Asia*, chapters 1, 3, 10-11, 18.

Feb 9: Partition

- Nisid Hajari, *Midnight’s Furies: The Deadly Legacy of India’s Partition*, chapters 2, 5.
Feb 16: Building nations and states


Feb 23: Democracy and military authoritarianism

- C. Christine Fair, *Fighting to the End: The Pakistan Army’s Way of War*, chapter 4.

Mar 2: Caste, class, and political economy

- Susan Bayly, *Caste, Society, and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age*, chapters 1, 8.

Mar 9: Party politics


Mar 16: NO CLASS – Spring break
Mar 23: Urban violence


Mar 30: Religious and ideological violence

- Andreas Rieck, *The Shias of Pakistan: An Assertive and Beleaguered Minority*, chapters 6, 8.

Apr 6: Workshop for final papers

Apr 13: Nationalist and separatist violence


Apr 20: Nuclear weapons

- Christopher Clary, “Deterrence Stability and the Conventional Balance of Forces in South Asia,” in Michael Krepon and Julia Thompson, eds., *Deterrence Stability and...*


Apr 27: Regional and global superpowers

- John Garver, Protracted Contest: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Twentieth Century, chapters 1, 8.

May 4: Human security

- Satyajit Singh, Taming the Waters: The Political Economy of Large Dams in India, chapter 6.

May 12: Finals papers due at 5 p.m. in my mailbox (Robinson A 201).