

Geography 267 SOUTH ASIA

Political and cultural geographies

Spring 2019 | Carolina Hall 220 | TTh 11:00-12:15 | Instructor: Dr. Sara Smith



Invitation to the course

A fifth of the world's population, nearly a thousand languages spoken, cultural diversity, and political challenges: South Asia escapes simplistic definitions and is impossible to ignore. This course is an introduction to the political and cultural geographies of Pakistan, India, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal. We'll approach South Asia not as an isolated region but as an integral part of a rapidly changing global context. South Asia will also provide case studies that allow us to engage with some of the most exciting theoretical questions in political and cultural geography. Finally, to bring the region to life we will explore popular representations of South Asia in literature and film.

Objectives and Expectations

My hope is that you come to this course with enthusiasm and curiosity about South Asia, and that you complete the course with greater knowledge about the region and a theoretical set of tools to help make sense of life and politics in South Asia and elsewhere. We will encounter questions with relevance both for the South Asian case studies, and for our day-to-day lives: How do our cultural practices shape the places we inhabit? How is difference mapped onto space at scales from global (the "clash of civilizations,") to micro (what we do with our bodies)? Why, after decades of "development," are resources so unevenly distributed? How is it that members of the middle class in cities like Bangalore, Dhaka, and Kathmandu have often have more in common with the middle class in Chapel Hill than with the rural migrants flocking to those cities for work? Why do poor people suffer more in environmental crises?

The key objectives for the course are the following:

1. Obtain a basic knowledge of South Asia's political geography and the historical events that produced that geography
2. Create a research proposal and learn how to apply a theoretical approach or concept to better understand a case study, event, or problem
3. Develop a critical approach to topics in other area studies scholarship or in current media
4. Learn how to effectively communicate ideas and stimulate discussion among your colleagues
5. Develop an interest in the region and challenge some of your ideas about global difference.

If you have questions about the course, you can contact the instructor: shsmith1@email.unc.edu