

Academic Year	2025-2026	Semester	2
Course Coordinator	Emma Flatt		
Course Code	HH2011		
Course Title	Ancient and Medieval South Asia		
Pre-requisites	HH1001 What is History		
No of AUs	3		
Contact Hours	39 (2-hour weekly lectures; 1-hour tutorials)		
Proposal Date			

Course Aims

This course introduces you to the early history of South Asia: by studying the political, cultural, and religious past. We will also consider the ways in which contemporary concerns and ideologies influence our understanding and representation of that past.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO)

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

1. Investigate and explain the role of a range of historical processes in the formation of major cultural shifts in ancient and medieval South Asia.
2. Analyze and interpret primary source materials across a wide range of South Asian cultural movements.
3. Utilize secondary scholarly materials to develop evidence-based, well-reasoned arguments about the relationship of primary materials to broader historical trends.
4. Develop historical empathy for the highly pluralistic and cosmopolitan cultural frameworks that characterized ancient and medieval South Asia.

Course Content

This course covers the early history of South Asia, from the rise of the Indus Valley Civilization (ca. 2500 BCE) until about 1200. The course examines the major cultural, religious, and social factors that shaped the course of Indian history, introducing students to the major processes, narratives and historical interpretations. We will explore themes such as urbanization, the growth of empires and regional states, the establishment of mercantile and trade networks, and the development and transformation of Indian religions including Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam. In addition to assigned secondary readings students will read select primary sources on the history, religion and culture of the Indian Subcontinent. We will also make use of literary, archaeological and visual sources in class. Prior knowledge of Indian history or culture is not required, but intellectual engagement is expected.

Assessment (includes both continuous and summative assessment)

Assessment Component 1: Participation (10%)

Due: continuous assessment

In class, you will learn from each other and build up your skills in close reading, constructing convincing arguments, articulating these arguments verbally and analyzing primary sources. You are expected to regularly attend both lectures and tutorials and participation in tutorials will be assessed for depth, frequency, and quality of your contributions to classroom discussion.

Assessment Component 2: Weekly Primary Source Response (15%)

Due: weekly from week 2, bring to tutorial class.

Primary source analysis is a key skill that is required for historical research. **Each week, please bring a handwritten 200-word response** to the **primary sources** assigned for that week to class. Questions you might address include: Which themes do you see in the source? Is there anything that surprised you or that you don't understand? When was it written and by whom? Who might have been the target audience for this particular source? In our tutorials you will discuss your responses in small groups, working together to **formulate evidence-based, well-reasoned arguments** for your **interpretations** of the sources of that week.

Assessment Component 3: Essay – In Class Primary Source Analysis (25%)

Due: week 11 in tutorial class

In the tutorial of week 11, I will provide a choice of 5 primary sources (different extracts from sources we have looked at in class). **You will write an analysis of one of these primary sources in an in-class handwritten assessment.** You should closely analyse the source, answering the same kinds of questions we have practiced answering in class **and** draw upon other **primary and secondary sources** (either from the assigned reading or from your own reading) to **conceptualize** and **explain** it more fully.

Assessment Component 4: Thematic Essay (50%)

- 1. ACM visit – before week 7**
- 2. Annotated Bibliography – due week 7**
- 3. Week 13 – in class written assignment**

You will write an essay on one of the broad themes of the course, informed by the assigned course readings and primary sources as well as your own readings on the topic. Producing a thematic essay will allow you to demonstrate your understanding of the broad themes of the course as well as your familiarity with key texts and major historiographical arguments in South Asian history. After completing preliminary research, visiting the Asian Civilisations Museum and submitting the annotated bibliography, the students will write their own paper.

- (a) Visit the ACM in your own time (before week 7). You should look at relevant artefacts in the Ancient Religions gallery and in the special exhibition, "Let's Play! The Art and Design of Asian Games."
- (b) Compile an annotated bibliography of at least one primary source and five to seven secondary sources relevant to your selected topic that you found using print or electronic research tools. In a sentence or two, summarise the main argument of the secondary source. Add images of at least 2 artefacts (and their captions)

from the ACM to your annotated bibliography and explain in a couple of sentences how they are relevant to your theme.
(c) Week 13 in class – write your thematic essay.

Formative feedback

You will receive formative feedback through:

1. Verbal feedback on your participation in class discussions (component 1 and 2) throughout the course of the semester.
2. Written feedback on assessment components 3 and 4.
3. Verbal feedback and peer feedback as you work through assessment component 4 at various points in the class.

Learning and Teaching approaches

Approach	How does this approach support you in achieving the learning outcomes?
Reality Pedagogy in Seminar Discussion	This course employs "reality pedagogy" in in-class discussion where the understanding of the students guides the instructor's facilitation. By requiring students to post on their reactions to the primary sources in a class blog before class (assessment component 2), the instructor acknowledges that students bring their personal realities in their own experiences and interactions with South Asian history. The student's realities are taken into account when the instructor orientates the discussion towards the synthesis, analysis and critique of key content in the course, working towards LO1, LO2 and LO3.
Process Writing	This course employs a process writing approach where the instructor do not simply set a topic and evaluate the output but intervenes at critical points in the writing. The two major writing assignments in this course are designed so that competencies and feedback acquired in assignment 2 (weekly primary source response) and assignment 3 (primary source analysis) would help with assignment 4 (research essay). The writing process will be further scaffolded through in-class exercises, including peer review in week 10. The research essay (assessment component 4) brings together these competencies in evaluating evidence in primary and secondary sources. Students will employ concepts learned about ancient and medieval South Asia to identify and explain the main argument in a scholarly work (LO1), compare scholarly approaches to their chosen topic (LO2 and LO3), analyze what primary sources have served as the scholars' evidence base

	(LO4) and formulate and articulate an historical argument (LO3).
Collaborative Learning in Primary Source Analysis	This course approaches primary source analysis through collaborative learning. A series of in-class exercises in which the students and instructor discuss different types of primary sources over several weeks serve as a scaffold for a larger group assignment (assessment component 3). This works towards LO3. Through group collaboration, students will also develop skills to articulate their views on the source material to their peers, thus achieving LO4. This component also builds key research skills necessary for the essay assignment (assessment component 4) enabling them to apply this knowledge and improve their historical understanding, achieving LO1 and LO2.

Reading and References

Texts are subject to changes.

Course Policies and Student Responsibilities

1. General

- You are expected to complete all assigned pre-class readings and activities, attend all tutorial classes punctually and submit all scheduled assignments by their due dates.
- You are expected to take responsibility to follow up with course notes, assignments and course related announcements for seminar sessions you have missed.
- You are expected to participate in all tutorial discussions and activities.

2. Absenteeism

- Absence from class without a valid reason can affect your overall course grade.
- Valid reasons for absences include falling sick supported by a medical certificate and participation in NTU's approved activities supported by an excuse letter from the relevant bodies.
- If you miss a tutorial, you **must** inform the course instructor via email prior to the start of the class, or you will receive an absent grade.

3. Communication

- If you would like to set up a consultation, please email me to set up a time. Generally, I will be holding **consultations over Zoom**.

- I do not answer student emails on weekends or outside business hours (9 am-5 pm, Monday-Friday, excluding public holidays). You can usually expect a response within two business days to emails sent on weekdays.

Academic Integrity

Good academic work depends on honesty and ethical behaviour. The quality of your work as a student relies on adhering to the principles of academic integrity and to the NTU Honour Code, a set of values shared by the whole university community. Truth, Trust and Justice are at the core of NTU's shared values.

As a student, it is important that you recognize your responsibilities in understanding and applying the principles of academic integrity in all the work you do at NTU. Not knowing what is involved in maintaining academic integrity does not excuse academic dishonesty. You need to actively equip yourself with strategies to avoid all forms of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, academic fraud, collusion and cheating.

If you don't know what plagiarism is or are unclear on the details, review this module: <http://academicintegrity.ntu.edu.sg/for-students/module>.

Plagiarism includes:

1. **Passing off another author's work as your own work.** This includes:
 1. Entirely copying phrases or sentences from an author without quoting or paraphrasing.
 2. Substantially copying phrases or sentences from an author without quoting or paraphrasing, e.g. copying a phrase, changing a few words to synonyms, swapping around phrases within a sentence, or substantially copying a sentence while only changing a phrase or a part of it.
 3. Not referencing ideas, arguments, information, examples or background context that you have derived from other authors in the footnotes.
2. **Self-plagiarism** includes submitting an essay which you have submitted in a different course, or submitting an essay which includes *parts* of an essay from another course (e.g. sentences, paragraphs, arguments). Of course, you can build upon *reading* you have done for another course, but your essay topic and question should not overlap (wholly or partially) with that of *any* assignments you have submitted in other courses.

All forms of plagiarism are serious offences. Assignments that have significant plagiarism will receive a fail mark. Assignments that contain minor incidents of plagiarism (e.g. inadequate paraphrasing or improper citation practices) will be significantly marked down or failed.

Paraphrasing means writing *in your own words*.

The following are general principles for proper citation and paraphrasing:

1. Take good notes from sources so that you do not ‘accidentally’ plagiarise because you have not properly recorded where you read an idea, argument, concept, or empirical detail. Keep detailed notes including the source and page number.
2. **Paraphrase when taking notes**, so that your notes are in your own words
3. Quote sentences or phrases that you feel are particularly important or cannot be matched by paraphrasing. Every direct quote requires a reference in a footnote.
4. Paraphrasing material shows that you understand it and extensive quotes (particularly from secondary sources) are not recommended. Paraphrasing is *not* changing a few words or phrases around. Again, it entails writing *in your own words*.
5. **You need to reference a source in a footnote whenever you borrow an idea, argument or piece of information from another author.** If a paragraph or sentence contains material paraphrased from several different sources, you can cite multiple sources separated by semi-colons in one footnote at the end of the sentence.
6. Don’t choose a topic you have already written on in another course. If you are interested in a similar subject area, take a significantly different angle, ask a substantially different question, or explore a connected but distinct topic. Please email your tutor for advice on self-plagiarism.

For references, please use the Chicago footnotes/bibliography style outlined here: https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-1.html

PLEASE NOTE: Academic Integrity and AI

Use of Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence (AI) must **not be used** in this course, including but not limited to the discussion board posts, essay proposal, major essay or take-home test. AI must not be used **for any purpose**, including but not limited to:

- i. You may **not** use AI to assist in generating key ideas
- ii. You may **not** use AI to assist in generating a first text (including after detailed prompts)
- iii. You may **not** use AI to refine syntax and grammar for correct language submission

Any student found having used AI for any purpose will be subject to the **penalties** that would be incurred for other forms of **academic dishonesty**.

Course Instructors

Instructor	Office Location	Email
Emma Flatt	HSS #05-07	Emmajane.flatt@ntu.edu.sg

Planned Weekly Schedule

We ek	Topic	IL O	Readings/ Activities
1	Sources and historiography	1	<p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thomas R. Trautmann, <i>India: Brief History of a Civilisation</i>, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp.1-15. Romila Thapar, <i>The Penguin History of Early India: From the Origins to AD 1300</i>, pp. 1-29. <p>No Tutorial</p>
2	The Indus Valley or Harappan Civilization	1, 3, 4	<p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trautmann, <i>India</i>, pp. 16- 31. Shereen Ratnagar, A critical view of Marshall's Mother Goddess at Mohenjo-Daro. <i>Studies in People's History</i>, 3(2), (2016) 113–127. Mulk Raj Anand, <i>A Day in the Life of Maya of Mohenjodaro</i> https://www.harappa.com/content/indus-scale <p>Primary Source: watch one of the following and write a response to it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> https://www.harappa.com/video/search-meluhha-story-mohenjodaro https://www.ted.com/talks/rajesh_rao_a_rosetta_stone_for_a_lost_language?language=en Mohenjo Daro (2016) (available online) <p>Tutorial discussion: How does the Indus Valley Civilisation figure in popular discourse (films, children's books, ted talks) in India and Pakistan?</p>
3	The Aryan Controversy	1, 2, 3	<p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trautmann, Thomas R. 2005. <i>The Aryan Debate</i>. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. Introduction Ratnagar, Shereen. 2008. "The Aryan Homeland Debate in India." In <i>Selective Remembrances: Archaeology in the Construction, Commemoration, and Consecration of National Pasts</i>. Michael Witzel and Steve Farmer, 'Horseplay in Harappa,' <i>Frontline</i>, India, 13th October 2000.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shoaib Daniyal https://scroll.in/article/936872/two-new-genetic-studies-upheld-aryan-migration-theory-so-why-did-indian-media-report-the-opposite <p>Primary Sources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The Rig Veda: an Anthology: 108 Hymns</i>, trans. Wendy O’Flaherty, (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1981), extracts: The Horse Sacrifice, requiem for a horse <p>Tutorial Discussion</p> <p>Why are horses relevant to the debate about the Aryan migrations?</p>
4	Vedic Society	1, 2, 4	<p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trautmann, <i>India</i>, pp. 32-49. A.L. Basham, <i>Origins and Development of Classical Hinduism</i> (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 20-35. Stephanie Jamison, tbc <p>Primary Source:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The Rig Veda: an Anthology: 108 Hymns</i>, trans. Wendy O’Flaherty, (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1981), extracts <p>Tutorial discussion:</p> <p>How can the Vedas help us understand ancient India?</p>
5	The Sramanas - New Religious Movements		<p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trautmann, <i>India</i>, pp. 48-56. A.L. Basham, <i>Origins and Development of Classical Hinduism</i> (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 36-67 (chapters 3 and 4). Uma Chakravarty, <i>The Social Philosophy of Buddhism and the Problem of Inequality</i>, Social Compass, XXXIII/2-3, 1986, 199-221 <p>Primary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ‘The Wrong Sacrifice and the Right’ (Kutadanta sutta) <i>Dialogues of the Buddha</i>, trans T.W. Rhys Davids, Oxford, 1987, pp. 173-85. The Therigatha, selections <p>Tutorial discussion:</p>

6	Individual visit to ACM		<p>No lecture or tutorial, in your own time, visit the Ancient Religions Gallery in the Asian Civilisations Museum and the special exhibition, "Let's Play! The Art and Design of Asian Games."</p> <p>Readings: tbc</p>
7	The Mauryan Empire	1, 2, 3	<p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thapar, <i>Early India</i>, 174-209 • Lubin, tbc • <i>Ashoka: The Warrior Who Spoke of Peace</i>, Amar Chitra Katha, 1973 • Optional: Watch Asoka (2001), dir. Santosh Sivan <p>Primary Source:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • D.C. Sircar, <i>Inscriptions of Asoka</i>, Delhi, 1957, selections <p>Tutorial discussion: What did Ashoka mean by dhamma?</p>
8	Trade, Empire and Cosmopolitan Buddhism		<p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thapar, <i>Early India</i>, pp 245-279. • James Heitzman, 'Early Buddhism, Trade, and Empire', in G. Kennedy and G. Possehl, eds, <i>Studies in the Palaeoanthropology of South Asia</i>, 1984, pp. 121-37. • Xinru Liu, <i>Ancient India and Ancient China: Trade and Religious Exchanges AD1-600</i>, chapters II and IV <p>Primary Source:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Lotus of the True Law, in Xinru Liu, <i>The Silk Road: A Brief History with Documents</i>, Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2012, pp.91-93. <p>Tutorial discussion: How did trade help the spread of Buddhism?</p>
9	Brahmanical Reformulations	2, 3, 4	<p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A.L. Basham, <i>Origins and Development of Classical Hinduism</i>. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 98-116. • Wendy Doniger, <i>The Hindus: An Alternative History</i>, pp 304-324. • Chakravarti, <i>Conceptualising Brahmin Patriarchy in Early India</i> • Optional reading: Sukanya Shantha, https://thewire.in/caste/india-prisons-caste-labour-

			<p>segregation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apoorvanand, https://scroll.in/article/1070723/why-process-followed-to-reject-manusmriti-from-inclusion-in-delhi-university-syllabus-is-worrying <p>Primary Source:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The Laws of Manu</i>, tr. W. Doniger, (Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1991), pp. 74-82 and 99-104, 114-115. <p>Tutorial discussion:</p> <p>How did Brahmanism react to the challenge of the Sramana religions?</p>
10	The Gupta Ecumene	2, 3	<p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trautmann, <i>India</i>, pp. 72-84. Daud Ali, 'Courtly Love and the Aristocratic Household in Early Medieval India.' <i>Love in South Asia: A Cultural History</i>, edited by Francesca Orsini. Cambridge UP, 2006. Optional: Watch Utsav (1984, dir Girish Karnad) – based on Sanskrit play <i>Mṛcchakatika</i> (The Little Clay Cart). <p>Primary Source:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Kamasutra</i> trans Doniger and Kakar, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 7-27. <i>Arthasastra – on courtesans</i> <p>Tutorial discussion:</p> <p>How was love a political tool in ancient India?</p>
11	The Rise of Theistic Religions	1, 3	<p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trautmann, <i>India</i>, pp.107-133. A.L. Basham, <i>Origins and Development of Classical Hinduism</i>. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 82-97. A.K. Ramanujan, "Three Hundred Ramayanas: Five Examples and Three Thoughts on Translation." Watch Nina Paley (dir), <i>Sita Sings the Blues</i> <p>Tutorial: In class primary source analysis</p>
12	Political Structures in Early Medieval India	2, 3, 4	<p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thapar, <i>Early India</i>, pp. 326-362. Ronald Inden, "The Temple and the Hindu Chain of Being," in Ronald Inden, <i>Text and Practice: Essays on South Asian History</i>, pp. 192-212.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Padma Kaimal, tbc <p>Primary Source:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Visnupurana <p>Tutorial discussion</p>
13	Thematic essay	1, 2, 3	In-class written assignment: thematic essay

Some other useful readings

Ali, Daud (2002). "Anxieties of Attachment: The Dynamics of Courtship in Medieval India," *Modern Asian Studies* 36(1), 103-139. (NTU Library Site)

Ali, Daud (2007). "Violence, Courtly Manners and Lineage Formation in Early Medieval India," *Social Scientist* 35 (9/10): 3-21. (NTU Library Site)

Doniger, Wendy (2009). *The Hindus: An Alternative History*. New York: Penguin.

Doniger, Wendy (2013). *The Rig Veda*. New York: Penguin. (NTU Library Site)

Haksar, A.N.D. (trans.) (2016). *Raghuvamsam: The Line of Raghu*. New York Penguin. (NTU Library Site)

Jamison, Stephanie (1996). *Sacrificed Wife/Sacrificer's Wife: Women, Ritual and Hospitality in Ancient India*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jay, Nancy (1994). *Throughout Your Generations Forever: Sacrifice, Religion, and Paternity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Knipe, David M. (1977). *Sapiṇḍikaraṇa: The Hindu Rite of Entry into Heaven* In *Religious Encounters with Death: Insights from the History and Anthropology of Religions*, edited by Frank E. Reynolds and Earle H. Waugh. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 109-124.

Lal, Vinay (2005). *The History of History: Politics and Scholarship in Modern India*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (NTU Library Site)

Liu, Xinru (2010). *The Silk Road in World History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Malamoud, Charles (1996). *Cooking the World: Ritual and Thought in Ancient India*, translated by David White. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Olivelle, Patrick (1996). *Upaniṣads*. New York: Penguin. (NTU Library Site)

Olivelle, Patrick (2004). *The Law Code of Manu*. New York: Penguin.

Olivelle, Patrick (2013). *King, Governance, and Law in Ancient India: Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (NTU Library Site)

Pollock, Sheldon (1991). *The Rāmāyana of Vālmīki*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. (NTU Library Site)

Pollock, Sheldon (2006). *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India*. Berkeley: UC Press. (NTU Library Site)

Pollock, Sheldon (2016). *A Rasa Reader: Classical Indian Aesthetics*. Columbia University Press.

Samuel, Geoffrey (2010). *The Origins of Yoga and Tantra: Indic Religions to the Thirteenth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (NTU Library Site)

Siegel, Lee (1983). *Fires of Love, Waters of Peace: Passion and Renunciation in Indian Culture*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Siegel, Lee (1987). *Laughing Matters: Comic Tradition in India*. Honolulu. University of Hawai'i Press.

Singh, Upinder (2017). *Political Violence in Ancient India*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Thapar, Romila (2003). *The Penguin History of Early India: From the Origins to AD 1300*. London: Penguin.

White, David Gordon (ed.) (2000). *Tantra in Practice*. Princeton: Princeton University Practice.

Wilson, Liz (1996). *Charming Cadavers*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press