HIST331: Early Modern South Asian Cultures: Themes and Issues

This course aims to familiarize the non-history students to the rich and variegated understanding of medieval South Asian cultural traditions often termed as ‘dark age’ as a result of communalized common sense. The course intends to blur the artificial boundary between indology, Islamic jurisprudence, religious sociology and art history. It invites the undergraduate students to engage with medieval past in interesting ways.

The exact course content may change from semester to semester, depending on the availability and academic interest of the course instructor(s).

1. Interpretations of Late Medieval and Early Modern Indian History

Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, On History and Historians of Medieval India, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers (Introduction) pp. 1-52
Romila Thapar, Harbans Mukhia and Bipan Chandra, Communalism and the Writing of Indian History. PPH, Delhi, 1969.

2. Legitimacy and Authority: Religious and Political Interface

Peter Hardy, "Growth of Authority Over a Conquered Political Elite: Early Delhi Sultanate as a Possible Case Study", in John F. Richards, Kingship and Authority in South Asia, South Asian Studies, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1978, pp. 216-241
John F. Richard, "The formulation of Imperial Authority under Akbar and Jahangir", in John F. Richards, Kingship and Authority in South Asia, South Asian Studies, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1978, pp. 285-326
Simon Digby, "The Sufi Shaykh and the Sultan: A Conflict of Claims to Authority in Medieval India," Iran, Vol. 28, 1990, pp. 71-81

3. Exploring Religious Traditions

Varieties of Islam: Sufis, Ulama and the Shi’is


**The Sant Traditions**

R. Champaklakshmi, “From Devotion and Dissent to Dominance: The Bhakti of Tamil Alvars and Nayanars” in S. Gopal and R. Champaklakshmi, eds., *Tradition, Dissent and Ideology*, Delhi: OUP 1996, pp. 135-63


Joseph T. O’Connell, "Chaitanya Vaishnava Devotion (bhakti) and Ethics as Socially Integrative in Sultanate Bengal", *Bangladesh e-Journal of Sociology*, 2011, Vol. 8 Issue 1, pp. 51-63


**4. Narrative Traditions**


Kumkum Chatterjee, The Cultures of History in Early Modern India: Persianization and Mughal Culture in Bengal. OUP, 2009 (Chapter 3-Performance Narratives and the Mughal Factor, pp. 90-122)

5. Visual and Material Cultures

Sunil Kumar, “Qutub and Modern Memory” The Present in Delhi’s Past. Delhi, Three Essays Press, pp. 1-61.
Catherine B. Asher, Architecture of Mughal India, Cambridge University Press, 1992 (Selections)

Ebba Koch, “The hierarchical Principles of Sahjahan Paintings” in Ebba Koch, Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology, Delhi, OUP, pp. 130-162
Moynihan, Elizabeth B. Paradise as a Garden in Persia and Mughal India, New York, 1979

6. Conflict and Synthesis: Syncretism and Beyond


Peter Hardy, ‘Modern European and Muslim Explanations of Conversion to Islam in South Asia’ in N. Levtzion (ed) *Conversion to Islam*, pp. 68-99


**Method of Evaluation:**

There will be a mid-term assessment (term paper) worth 20 marks, and an end semester sit-in examination worth 30 marks.