DESCRIPTION OF COURSE

This course offers an overview of the early history and culture of South Asia, from its earliest urban civilization in the Indus Valley (2500-1800 BCE) up to the classical period of the Gupta dynasty in northern India (300-550 CE). Within this three-millennium time span, we will look at archeological reconstructions of the Indus Valley civilization and textual reconstructions of early Indo-Aryan or Vedic culture, the period of second urbanization in the Indo-Gangetic plain and the transition from tribal organization to kingdoms, the rise of the Mauryan imperial formation, the emergence and growth of heterodox orders of Buddhists and Jains and responses to their challenge from orthodox Hindus, the cosmopolitan post-Mauryan period, and the articulation of a classical Indian culture during the Gupta period. We will explore primary sources in translation, in order to gain access to the ways of thinking of Indians of these historical periods.

While tracing this chronological history, the course will pay attention to key topics and debates within Indian history: social hierarchy and the development of caste society, social life and renunciation, the lifestyles of city-dwellers and villagers, the status of women, the roles of religious specialists in the political order, and the ideology and practice of kingship. Throughout, we will focus on influential Indian visions of the good life: how the human individual, society and the state ought best to be ordered.

READINGS

The following required books will be available at the bookstore:
- A. L. Basham, Origins and Development of Classical Hinduism
- Richard Gombrich, Theravada Buddhism
- G. Hart & H. Heifetz, Four Hundred Songs of War and Wisdom
- Hermann Hesse, Siddhartha
- R. McKeon & N. Nikam, Edicts of Asoka
- C. V. Narasimhan, Mahabharata
- Patrick Olivelle, Dharmasutras
- Burton Stein, History of India

These books will also be available on reserve at Stevenson Library.

Other readings will be available through ReserveWeb, or distributed in class.

Additional suggested readings will also be on reserve, and a full bibliography will be handed out later in the semester.

An image archive will be available through the Bard Slide Library (details to come)

REQUIREMENTS

- Two papers (5 pages)
- Regular response papers (10 papers, 1-2 pages each)
- Brief class presentation and discussion leading
- Regular attendance and participation in class
# OUTLINE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

| Week 1 | Jan 30 | **Orientations**  
Read: Stein, *History of India*, pp. 5-36 |
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**Topic 1: Foundations of Indian History**

| Feb 1 | **Geography of the Indian Subcontinent**  
Read: Davis, “Living Landscape of India” (ReserveWeb) |
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| Week 2 | Feb 6 | **India’s Earliest Rock Painters**  
Map quiz |
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| Feb 8 | **The Rise of Urban Civilization in the Indus Valley**  
Reading: Davis, “India’s Earliest Urban Civilization” (ReserveWeb) |
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| Week 3 | Feb 13 | **The Civilization of the Indus Valley**  
Read: Kenoyer, “Indus Cities, Towns, and Villages” (ReserveWeb)  
Look at: [www.harappa.com](http://www.harappa.com) |
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| Feb 15 | **The Indo-Aryans and the Vedas**  
Read: Davis, “The Indo-Aryans and the Vision of the Rg-Veda” (ReserveWeb) |
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| Week 4 | Feb 20 | **The World of the Rg Veda**  
Read: Maurer, Selections from *Pinnacles of India’s Past* (ReserveWeb)  
Presentations: Agni, Indra, Soma (gods of the Rg Veda) |
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**Topic 2: India in the Axial Age**

| Feb 22 | **The Rise of Urban Civilization (again) in the Ganges Valley**  
Stein, *History of India*, pp. 45-73  
Suggested: Erdosy, “City States of North India and Pakistan” (ReserveWeb) |
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| Week 5 | Feb 27 | **Renunciation and the Beginnings of Indian Philosophy**  
Read: Jaspers, “The Axial Age” (ReserveWeb)  
Olivelle, “Taittiriya Upanisad” (ReserveWeb)  
Goodall, “Yajnavalkya’s Teachings from Brhadaranyaka Upanisad” (ReserveWeb)  
Suggested reading: Brereton, “Upanisads” (ReserveWeb)  
Presentations: Taittiriya Upanisad, Yajnavalkya’s Philosophy |
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| Mar 1 | **Sramana Movements: The Jains**  
Read: Dundas, “The Fordmakers” (ReserveWeb)  
Jacobi, selections from *Jaina Suttas* (ReserveWeb)  
Suggested reading: Jainti, *Jain Path of Purification* (ReserveWeb) |
Week 6  Mar 6  **Sramana Movements: The Buddhists**  
Read: Saddhatissa, Selections from *Sutta-Nipata*  
Presentations

Mar 7  **Guest lecture: Kurt Behrendt, “Early Buddhist Art”**

Mar 8  **Sramana Movements and the Orthodox Traditions**  
Read: Gombrich, *Theravada Buddhism*, pp. 32-88  
Basham, *Origins and Development*, pp. 36-67

Week 7  Mar 13  **Romantic Recreations of the Indian Axial Age**  
Read: Hesse, *Siddhartha*

**Topic 3: The First Indian Empire: The Mauryas**

Mar 15  **Persians, Greeks, and the Rise of the Mauryas**  
Read: Stein, *History of India*, pp. 73-79  
McCrindle, “Megasthenes” (ReserveWeb)

Week 8  Mar 20  **Asoka and the Rule of Dharma**  
Suggested readings: Huntington, “Mauryan Art” (ReserveWeb)  
Allchin, “Mauryan Architecture and Art” (ReserveWeb)  
Strong, “Introduction” to *Legend of King Asoka* (ReserveWeb)  
Presentations

Mar 22  **The International Spread of Buddhism**  
Read: Geiger, *Mahavamsa*, pp. 1-18, 77-96 (ReserveWeb)  
**First paper due**

Week 9  Mar 27  **The Hindu Response to Buddhist Imperium: The Epics**  
Read: Narasimhan, *Mahabharata*, pp. 1-120  
Basham, *Origins and Development*,  

Mar 29  **The Mahabharata and Hindu Kingship**  
Read: Narasimhan, *Mahabharata*, pp. 121-216  
Suggested reading: Fitzgerald, “Great Epic as Religious Rhetoric” (ReserveWeb)

**March 31-April 8**  **Spring Break**

**Topic 4: Disciplinary Orders in Post-Maurya India**

Week 10  Apr 10  **Vedic Brahmins of the Agrahara**  
Read: Olivelle, Dharmasutra of Apastamba,” *Dharmasutras*, pp. 7-73  
Presentations
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apr 12</td>
<td><strong>Rules for Jain and Buddhist Monks</strong></td>
<td>Read: Gombrich, <em>Theravada Buddhism</em>, pp. 89-118</td>
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<td>Week 11</td>
<td>Apr 17 <strong>Women Renouncers in the Buddhist Order</strong></td>
<td>Read: Murcott, <em>First Buddhist Women</em>, pp. 13-38, 119-138 (ReserveWeb)</td>
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<td><strong>Presentations</strong></td>
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<td>Apr 19 <strong>Stupas and Buddhist Lay Worship</strong></td>
<td>Read: Gombrich, <em>Theravada Buddhism</em>, pp. 119-136</td>
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<td><strong>Suggested Reading:</strong></td>
<td>Read: Mitra, <em>Buddhist Monuments</em>, pp. 21-41 (ReserveWeb)</td>
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<td>Week 12</td>
<td>Apr 24 <strong>Yaksas, Nagas, and Other Spirit-Beings</strong></td>
<td>Read: DeCaroli, “Coming to Terms” (ReserveWeb)</td>
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<td><strong>Tolerance Conference:</strong> No Class</td>
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<td>Topic 5:</td>
<td><strong>Indic Cultures Beyond the Vindhyas: South India in the Sangam Age</strong></td>
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<td>Week 13</td>
<td>May 1 <strong>Background to the Tamil Poetry of the Sangam</strong></td>
<td>Read: Stein, <em>History of India</em>, pp. 79-104</td>
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<td>May 3 <strong>Poems of Chieftains and War</strong></td>
<td>Read: Hart &amp; Heifetz, <em>Four Hundred Songs of Love and War</em>, pp. 3-43</td>
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<td>Week 14</td>
<td>May 8 <strong>Social Studies Board Week: No Class</strong></td>
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<td>May 10 <strong>Social Studies Board Week: No Class</strong></td>
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<td>Week 15</td>
<td>May 15 <strong>Poems of the Interior Landscape</strong></td>
<td>Read: Hart &amp; Heifetz, <em>Four Hundred Songs of Love and War</em>, pp. 44-84</td>
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<td><strong>Presentations:</strong></td>
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<td>Week 16</td>
<td>May 22 <strong>Reconsiderations</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Second paper due</strong></td>
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