

**Old Dominion University: Department of History**  
**Making Modern India—The Mughals and the British**  
**Spring 2018: M, 7-10 PM**

**Instructor:** Nicholas Abbott

**Office:** BAL 8010

**Office Hours:** M,W 2-3 PM, or by appointment

**Office Phone:** (757) 683-3953

**Email:** [nabbott@odu.edu](mailto:nabbott@odu.edu)

**Course Description:**

When does the history of “modern” India begin? Although the issue remains a contentions one, many historians locate the origins of modern India in either the Mughal empire of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries or in the emergence of the British East India Company as a territorial power in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This course surveys the history of this period (c.1500-1850), paying special attention to the formation and development of these two empires and their complex relationships with South Asian society and with one another. In so doing, the course will familiarize students with seminal and recent scholarship, significant historiographic debates, and theoretical approaches to the study of modernity.

**Course Objectives:**

- To familiarize students with the history of South Asia between 1500 and 1850 and with the particular histories the Mughal empire and the East India Company in India
- To survey significant scholarly literature and related historical debates
- To introduce theoretical paradigms for the study of modernity
- To build critical reading and writing skills through assessment of historical scholarship

**Required Texts for Purchase:**

- Michael Fisher, *A Short History of the Mughal Empire* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2015).
- André Wink, *Akbar* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2009).

Additional required readings are either available electronically through the library website (indicated with an “\*” in the course schedule) or will be posted on Blackboard.

**Additional Texts for Reference:**

- C. Asher and C. Talbot, *India Before Europe* (Cambridge: CUP, 2006)
- \*J.F. Richards, *The Mughal Empire* (Cambridge: CUP, 1993)

**Course Requirements:**

Successful completion of this course requires regularly attending weekly class sessions, participating actively in discussions, submitting weekly reading responses, giving presentations and leading discussion on assigned weeks, meeting semi-weekly deadlines for completion of the final paper, and earning a passing grade on the final paper.

**Grade Distribution:**

Attendance	15%
Participation	35%
Weekly Response Papers	15%
Final Paper	35%

**Attendance and Participation**

To receive full credit for attendance and participation, students must attend all weekly sessions, having read all assigned readings carefully and completely, and participate actively in class discussion. Active participation is especially critical for seminars like this that are driven by collective engagement with texts and ideas. Active participation, however, does not mean having the “right answers” or making insightful comments about each and every work. Rather, it means being attentive and engaged in classroom conversation, responsive to instructor and peer comments, and generally willing to ask and answer questions, seek clarification, share ideas, etc.

Students will be permitted ONE unexcused absence. Any additional absences will result in substantial deductions from the final grade.

**Oral Presentations and Leading Discussion**

As part of his/her attendance and participation grade, every student is also responsible for giving presentations on assigned books and articles and for leading weekly discussion sections (not on the same weeks). Oral presentations should be well organized overviews of the reading(s) lasting roughly ten to fifteen minutes.

Presentations should discuss what the reading is about, what its main arguments are, how it is organized, what its primary sources are, what historiographic contributions it makes and what the presenter considers its principal strengths and weaknesses.

Leading discussion entails facilitating conversation about the week’s book. To that end, student discussion leaders are required to prepare a list of at least ten discussion questions and email them to the instructor by noon on the day which they are to lead. Discussion leaders are also encouraged to formulate additional questions in response to points raised during student presentations.

**Weekly Response Papers**

Students are responsible for writing weekly response papers of 2-3 pages that briefly summarize the week’s reading(s) and their main arguments. The response papers should also discuss aspects of the work that were unclear or confusing and/or areas where the author(s) assumed prior, specific knowledge on the part of the reader. Response papers should be emailed to the instructor by noon of that week’s session. Students need not write response papers for weeks they are presenting or leading discussion.

### **Historiographic Essays (Final Paper)**

Each student is responsible for selecting a topic related to the class theme, identifying 10-20 relevant scholarly books and articles about that topic, and writing a 5000-6000 word (15-20 page) essay that uses those works to illustrate how historical analysis of that topic has changed over time. Among other issues, essays might consider 1.) how questions about the topic have changed; 2.) what new sources historians are consulting; 3.) what new theoretical paradigms (if any) are being deployed by scholars working on the topic; 4.) what assumptions have changed, etc. The essay should not be a sequential summation of the selected works but should instead use those works to demonstrate changes in scholarly inquiry about the topic.

Essays should be footnoted and citations should be formatted according to the Chicago Manual of Style (available electronically through the library website). **Essays are due in class, in hardcopy, on Monday, April 23.** In addition to the strength of their historiographic analysis, essays will be evaluated for organization, clarity, and an absence of spelling, grammatical, and typographic errors. **Please proofread accordingly.**

Prior to the essay's due date, students will also complete a series of small benchmark assignments, for which see the class schedule below. **All students will present their work in an end of semester symposium on Monday, April 23.**

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism in any form will not be tolerated and will result in an automatic failure of the course. The ODU catalogue defines plagiarism as follows: "A student will have committed plagiarism if he or she produces someone else's work without acknowledging its source; or if a source is cited which the student has not cited or used. Examples of plagiarism include: submitting a research paper obtained from a commercial research service, the Internet, or from another student as if it were original work; making simple changes to borrowed materials while leaving the organization, content, or phraseology intact; or copying material from a source, supplying proper documentation, but leaving out quotation marks. Plagiarism also occurs in a group project if one or more of the members of the group does none of the group's work and participates in none of the group's activities, but attempts to take credit for the work group." If you have questions or concerns about plagiarism, please see me BEFORE submitting dubious work. **When in doubt, indicate language that is not your own with quotation marks and cite ALL sources used in your work.**

**Accessibility:** If you have a disability that will affect your access to and/or participation in any aspect of this class, please provide me with an accommodation letter from the Office of Educational Accessibility (OEA) so that any and all necessary arrangements can be made. The OEA is located at 1021 Student Success Center and can be contacted at (757) 683-4655 and <http://www.odu.edu/educationalaccessibility/>. Additionally, if you have any other concerns about your participation or performance in the class, please feel free to discuss them with me.

## Class Schedule

### **Week 1 (1/8): Course Introduction, the Mughals and the East India Company**

### **Week 2 (1/15): NO CLASS [Martin Luther King, Jr., Holiday]**

### **Week 3 (1/22): Modernity and the Mughals**

- John F. Richards, "Early Modern India and World History," *Journal of World History*, Vol. 8, no. 2 (Fall 1997): 197-209
- Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Connected Histories: Notes on a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia," *Modern Asian Studies*, 31, no. 3 (Jul. 1997): 735-62
- S.N. Eisenstadt, "Multiple Modernities," *Daedalus*, 129, no. 1 (2000): 1-29
- Jerry H. Bentley, "The New World History," in Lloyd Kramer and Sarah Maza, eds., *A Companion to Western Historical Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 393-416
- Sudipta Kaviraj, "An Outline of a Revisionist Theory of Modernity," *European Journal of Sociology*, 46, no. 3 (Dec. 2005): 497-526
- Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Muddle of Modernity," *American Historical Review*, 116, no. 3 (2011): 663-675
  
- Fisher, *A Short History of the Mughals*

### **Week 4 (1/29): The Mughals and Sacred Kingship**

- \*A. Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012)

### **Week 5 (2/5): The Mughals and Rational Kingship**

- André Wink, *Akbar*

**\*\*\*Paper topics due\*\*\***

### **Week 6 (2/12): Patrimonial Governance in the Mughal Empire**

- \*Munis Faruqui, *Princes of the Mughal Empire, 1504-1719* (Cambridge: CUP, 2012)

**\*\*\*Revised paper topics due (if necessary)\*\*\***

### **Week 7 (2/19): Bureaucratic Governance in the Mughal Empire**

- \*Rajeev Kinra, *Writing Self, Writing Empire: Chandar Bhan Brahman and the Cultural World of the Indo-Persian State Secretary* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015)

### **Week 8 (2/26): The Eighteenth Century: Controversies and Debates**

- P.J. Marshall, "Introduction," in *The Eighteenth Century in Indian History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003): 1-49
- Seema Alavi, "Introduction," in *The Eighteenth Century in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press): 1-56
- Frank Perlin, "The Problem of the Eighteenth Century," in Marshall, ed., *The Eighteenth Century in Indian History*, 53-61
- Burton Stein, "Eighteenth-Century India: Another View," in Marshall, ed., *The Eighteenth Century in Indian History*, 62-89
- Muzaffar Alam, "Aspects of Agrarian Uprisings in North India in the Early Eighteenth Century," in Alavi, ed., *The Eighteenth Century in India*, 84-112
- Kate Brittlebank, "Assertion," in Marshall, ed., *The Eighteenth Century in Indian History*, 268-92

**\*\*\*Bibliography due\*\*\***

### **Week 9 (3/5): NO CLASS [Spring Break]**

### **Week 10 (3/12): The Company State in Bengal**

- \*P.J. Marshall, *Bengal: The British Bridgehead: Eastern India, 1740-1828* (Cambridge: CUP, 2008)

**\*\*\*2-3 page outlines w/thesis statement due\*\*\***

### **Week 11 (3/19): Imagining Empire**

- Robert Travers, *Ideology and Empire in Eighteenth Century India: The British in Bengal* (Cambridge: CUP, 2007)

### **Week 12 (3/26): War and Society in Early Colonial India**

- \*Kaushik Roy, *War, Culture, and Society in Early Modern South Asia, 1740-1849* (Hoboken, NJ: Taylor & Francis, 2011)

**\*\*\*Revised outlines due (if necessary)\*\*\***

### **Week 13 (4/2): Paper and Power in Early Colonial India**

- \*Bhavani Raman, *Document Raj: Writing and Scribes in Early Colonial South India* (Chicago: University of Chicago, Press 2012)

**Week 14 (4/9): NO CLASS**

**Week 15 (4/16): Continuity and Change: Assessing the Company's Impact**

- \*C.A. Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire* (Cambridge: CUP, 2008)

**Week 16 (4/23): End of Class Symposium**

**\*\*\*Papers due and in-class presentations\*\*\***