

Department: Political Science

Course number: 3472/W

Course title: South Asia in World Politics

Credits: 3

Contact Person: Jennifer Sterling-Folker, Associate Professor

Content Area: CA 4 International

W/Q : W

Catalog Copy: "POLS279W. South Asia in World Politics. Prerequisite: ENGL 105 or 110 or 111 or 250." It is a W variant of POLS279 whose catalog copy reads: Either semester. Three credits. Relations among countries of South Asia and between this region and the rest of the world. Problems of development and security confronting South Asian countries."

Justification:

a. Briefly describe 2-3 sentences the course, stating goals and objectives

This course introduces students to the countries of South Asia: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Pakistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. This is a course in international relations, and as such, its orientation is toward broader issues of world politics, using South Asia as a case. It analyzes the problems of development and security that confront these countries as part of the developing world. The course focuses considerable attention on the "big questions" that the study of South Asia raises, such as what makes a country democratic, what causes ethnic conflict and how can it be resolved, what is the best approach to reducing poverty, what makes a country a great power, and why do states want nuclear

weapons? Two major objectives are that students 1) develop enough knowledge and expertise in this area of the world that they would be a good candidate for the State Department and 2) Develop a better sense of some of the major global issues, having viewed them through the lens of South Asia.

b. Describe the course requirements (Specify exam formats, nature and scope of weekly reading assignments, problem sets etc.

The course requires substantial weekly readings from three textbooks and a number of supplementary articles posted on Vista. There is also one Case Study. There is an emphasis on class participation with the “big questions” the focus of discussion. The 2 midterm exams and final exam are all essays, usually in class but occasionally take-home when research is involved. There is a requirement for attendance at two outside events related to the region, such as a lecture or film. Another requirement is a summary of an current issue in South Asia that has been followed throughout the semester. This summary and those of the two outside events are included in a portfolio turned in at the end of the semester

c. List major themes, issues, topics to be covered

Part I provides profiles of the individual states, focusing on the variation in experiences establishing democratic institutions and managing ethnic diversity. Part II looks at regional relations, focusing on India-Pakistan relations and the issues of intractable conflicts and regional power relations. Part III looks at South Asia in the global economy, focusing on the problem of poverty, development strategies, and emerging economic power, Part IV looks at South Asia’s relations with the rest of the world, focusing on such issues as nuclear weapons proliferation and international terrorism.

How Meets Goals of Gen Ed .

1. Become articulate: The emphasis on class discussion regarding the “big questions” is designed to encourage students, especially shy ones, to speak before a large class. It is designed to help all students improve their ability to express their views clearly.

2. Acquire intellectual breadth and versatility. The course introduces students to an area of the world which is unfamiliar to most. They are required to consider issues in specific context which are relevant to many parts of the world, including the United States.

3. Acquire critical judgment. Discussions are designed to help students follow the logic of their assertions. Discussions and exams requiring explanations for variations in experiences among the different states is designed to help students in comparative analysis.

5. Awareness of their era and society. Although focused on one particular part of the world, the course is structured around key issues that confront the contemporary world today, as viewed through the lens of that region. These include the difficulty of establishing democratic institutions, ethnic conflict, and the variable effects of globalization. Viewing the role of the United States from a South Asian perspective, students become more aware of the effects of our actions and policies.

6. Acquire consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience. One of the most salient features of South Asia is ethnic diversity. Multiple ethnic groups exist in most of the countries, overlapping in many cases national boundaries. The study of South Asia illustrates the diversity of human culture and experience in these different groups within the region and also in the differences between the region and the United States.

CA4 Criteria:

1. Emphasize that there are varieties of human experiences, perceptions, thoughts, values and/or modes of creativity. The multitude of ethnic and other social groupings in the region of South Asia vividly illustrates these variations. Explaining ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, for example, requires an understanding of the different perspectives and values of the contending groups. The course also explores why some states have been able to benefit from these differences while conflict has dominated the experience of others.

2. Develop an understanding and sensitivity to issues involving human rights and migration. The birth of independent India and Pakistan involved one of the largest and most violent migrations in history. Many contemporary issues in South Asia grow out of this historical experience. South Asia is a mosaic of ethnicities overlapping national boundaries. Extensive migration continues to occur, motivated by ethnic solidarity, economic need, or unjust treatment. Issues of human rights rise out of this flow of people across borders. The need to confront terrorism in the region raises also human rights issues.

3. Develop an awareness of the dynamics of social, political and/economic power in the context of any of the above four items. The course explores both the causes and consequences of differential social, political, and economic power among the various social groups within each state. It also demonstrates

how the dominance of Indian power in the region shapes the relations of the countries in the region with each other and with the rest of the world.

International:

1. The course focuses on issues of diversity and multiculturalism outside the United States. By definition the entire course is focused on a region outside the United States and a major purpose is to acquaint students with the diversity of opinions and perspectives within that region. One of the central purposes is to demonstrate how this diversity presents both the challenges and opportunities.

2. The course focuses on cultural continuities and transformations over time and place. The course is structured around a set of “big questions,” which have persisted over time but which also represent some of the major issues confronting the world today, such as effective governance, poverty, development, ethnic conflict, security. A major goal of the course is for students to get a better grasp of these issue by focusing on a specific region.

W Criteria:

This course focuses on relations among the countries of South Asia and between this region and the rest of the world. It also examines the problems of development and security that confront South Asia countries. The writing assignments in this course are important because they provide the opportunity for students to focus attention upon some aspect of a region of the world that is probably unfamiliar to them. The most important assignment is a 15-20 page research paper, which counts for fifty percent of the final grade, and students who fail the writing component fail the course. In addition, students are required to write four short papers (2 pages each) during the course of the semester. One of these papers is an essay on one particular country, organized around a clear thesis statement. The other three are based on the students' monitoring of the current news coming from South Asia or outside events, such as lectures and exhibits. This set of assignments counts for ten percent of the grade. Finally, the midterm and final exams are all essay formats.

There are four stages in the research paper assignment. The first involves the selection of the topic. I urge students to come to my office to discuss the topic during my office hours at the very beginning of the course. We may also exchange e-mails as a way of suggesting or narrowing down topics. In the fifth week a brief summary, outline and bibliography are due. I provide a written commentary on each of these, which is preserved on my computer. A first draft (which I indicate should be at least the student's second draft) is due in approximately the tenth week. I provide an immediate turn-around with commentary

attached to each draft paper requesting tighter organization, development of themes and other substantive and stylistic suggestions, as well as editorial corrections with explanation. I expect students to follow these suggestions for the final draft, which is due the final week. Again, more commentary is attached. I have a record of the series of commentaries on each student, so that I can ascertain the extent to which they have followed the suggestions.

Role of Grad Students: The department has not relied on graduate students to teach W courses or sections in the past, nor does it intend to do so in the future.