



Contemporary India

SOCI 360: *Contemporary India*

Course Description

Every nation is unique in its own way. One of the world's oldest civilizations, scholars have often referred to India as a 'marvel and a paradox'. This course on "Contemporary India" seeks to acquaint students to contemporary Indian society, culture and its politics. A nation that is pitted to be a superpower with its scientific and technological advances also grapples with poverty and illiteracy. Add to it its complexities that arise out of religious, linguistic and ethnic diversities.

This course will aid the students' understanding and help contextualize current issues in India as they experience it during their stay, through interactions with local people and personal observations. Classroom participation on current issues will be the key to looking at India in its many dimensions.

Students will be able to explore and appreciate India's diversity and complexities including understanding the societal and economic divides that exist, besides politics and other issues of contemporary relevance.

The media presents all socio-economic and political aspects in its current context. It would be essential for the students to regularly read newspapers, magazines and watch the television channels to understand media perspectives. These regular readings will put issues in its perspective during classroom lectures and discussions.

The course will be both informative and analytical through lectures and discussions. It is mandatory for students to drive discussions in class based on recommended reading on specific topics, additional reading, which will be recommended in the class from time to time based on developing current issues during the semester, as well as their own interpretation and observations.

Students must read newspapers and magazines to be on the same page to drive discussions. There is a flow of topics to give a comprehensive view of issues, yet one would often observe an overlap of topics and discussions as they are inter-related. Although time slots have been allotted to each topic, there may be times when a lecture/session may need more time or less depending on classroom interaction. It is impossible to be an expert on India through one course. However,

this course will enable students to look at India and understand its dynamics.

Learning Objectives

In this course, students will be expected to:

- Acquire working level knowledge about India in terms of her economy, politico-legal structure, her modern history and her future prospects
- Be sensitized about India's nuances in terms of religion, gender, caste and its impacts upon her social, political and economic aspects
- Achieve an understanding of where India stands today in relation to her peers in Asia and across the world in terms of geopolitical relationships, and the reasons for the same
- Know more about India's ecology, and the impact of climate change to this country in the coming years
- Gain an understanding of the potential causes that make India's rise in the 21st century probable, as also an understanding of potential hindrances

Course Schedule

Session 01- 02/24 Introduction to India's Diversity

- Geography- location and neighbors
- Topography & climate
- Linguistic and Regional Diversity

Session 03/24 Introduction to Food

Session 04/24 Introduction to Religion in India

Session 05/24 Entrepreneurship in Emergent India

Session 06/24 Decoding Indian Elections

Session 07/24 Birth of the Indian Nation

The Indian Nationalist Movement and its Impact in Shaping India

Reading:

Guha, Ramchandra. (2007). *India after Gandhi*. Harper Collins. Ch. 2 and 6

Session 08/24 Discussion of newspaper readings

Session 09/24 Pre- Liberalization India

Reading:

Guha, Ramchandra. (2007). *India after Gandhi*. Harper Collins. Ch. 29

Session 10/24 A Break from the Past: The Emergence of the Great Indian Middle Class

Reading:

Bhagwati, Jagadish and Panagariya, Arvind. (2013). *India's Tryst with Destiny*. Harper Collins. Myth 2.4, 2.5 and 3.1.

Session 11/24 Understanding Indian Politics

Reading:

Guha, Ramchandra. (2007). *India after Gandhi*. Harper Collins. Ch. 28.

Session 12/24 Terrorism and India

Reading:

Sethi, Aman. (2011). "The Bloody Crossroads". *The Caravan*.
<http://www.caravanmagazine.in/reportage/bloody-crossroads>

Session 13/24 Caste and Gender in Indian Society

Session 14/24 Introduction to LGBTQ issues in India

Session 15/24 Representation of Indian diversity –Films, literature

Session 16/24 Discussion on newspaper readings

Session 17/24 Community Based Movements in India

Session 18/24 The Indian Economy

A look at the Agrarian Economy, an Overview of Myriad Problems, Services and Predicting the Future

Readings:

Bhagwati, Jagadish and Panagariya, Arvind. (2013). *India's Tryst with Destiny*. Harper Collins. Chapters 8, 10, 15 and Concluding Remarks.

Session 19/24 India and Her Demographic Dividend

Readings:

Weisman, Alan. (2014). "What Started the Biggest Population Boom in History?"
Medium.com <https://medium.com/matter-archive/what-started-the-biggest-population-boom-in-history-1909ce55ada2>

Session 20/24	India's Foreign Relations: SAARC, Asia and Beyond
Session 21/24	India and International Geo-politics in the 21st Century
Session 22/24	India and Climate Change: An Impossible conundrum?
Session 23/24	Presentations
Session 24/24	Presentations

Course Textbook

A set of photocopied material will be provided as basic background reading for each topic at the beginning of the course.

Guha, Ramchandra. (2007). *India after Gandhi*. Harper Collins.

Bhagwati, Jagdish and Panagariya, Arvind. (2013). *India's Tryst with Destiny*. Harper Collins.

Supplemental Course Materials

(2010). *Understanding Contemporary India*. Sumit Ganguly & Neil de Votta, Eds. Lynne Reiner Publications.

Evaluation

Attendance & Class Participation	10%
Assignment 1: Presentation on reading	10%
Assignment 2: Editorial	15 %
Group Presentation	25 %
Research Assignment	40 %

Assessment Criteria

Assignment 1

Each student will be allotted a reading as given in the text for Contemporary India. Each class session will begin with a student-led presentation and discussion followed by faculty insight and inputs. All students are required to come to the class having read the reading prescribed for that class session. In addition, the student should select any news item of the day and comment on it in reference to the reading of the day.

Assignment 2

Each student will have to write a guest editorial, suitable for publication in a mainstream Indian daily, on a topic of the student's choice. The topic must be about a feature relatable to contemporary India. The "editorial" must convey an in-depth understanding of the topic chosen, and must be at least somewhat prescriptive in nature. (Word Limit 750)

Group Presentation

Groups of two students will be formed and allotted one chapter each from the book "*India after Gandhi*" by Ramchandra Guha (Copies are available at the Alliance's library). The group will make a PowerPoint presentation on the chapter allotted. Students will also be required to analyse and contextualize the chapter with current issues discussed in the class. (Analysis, contextualizing and understanding: 15%; Response to questions: 5%; Presentation: 5%)

Research Assignment

A research-based term paper incorporating interviews and observations to be submitted at the end of the course which may be in an area of academic interest to the student. The topic may be finalized with the teacher but should be within the broad framework of contemporary India. (Word Limit 1500 to 2000)

NOTE: All written assignments to be typed with 1.5 line spacing, Times New Roman 12 points and emailed to the teacher. Please avoid hard copies to save paper.

Grading

Alliance programs utilize the follow standard grading policy well accepted by most US institutions.

Excellent	A	93-100%	Good	B+	87-89%	Acceptable	C+	77-79%
	A-	90-92%		B	83-86%		C	73-76%
				B-	80-82%		C-	70-72%
						Unsatisfactory	D+	67-69%
							D	63-66%
							D-	60-62%
						Failing	F	<60%

Course Policies

Exams and Assignments

Students are required to take all regularly scheduled exams in courses for which they are registered, and to submit all assignments on time. Any compelling academic, personal, or medical reason that might justify a rescheduled exam or assignment must be brought up to the Resident Director, not program faculty. Failure to take scheduled exams or submit the requisite assignments for a course will adversely affect your grade as per the stated grading criteria for each course.

Classroom Conduct

Student punctuality is extremely important in China and India. Please do not be late for classes or other activities, as it is considered impolite to do so. It is improper to eat in class, to engage in other activities such as texting, or to slump or nap. Students are expected to be alert and engaged as a sign of respect for their professors.

Attendance

Class attendance is mandatory. It is essential that the students participate fully in the coursework and all required academic activities. Authorized absences may only be approved by the Resident Director, and students are expected to make up any missed work. Unauthorized absences will adversely affect a student's grades.