South Asia is home to the world’s largest democracy and also where most of the world’s poor live. Its rapidly growing economies diverge across and within states and the experiments and experiences of Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka with ‘development’ provide ample irritation to received wisdom across the social sciences. This regional module aims to introduce students to some of the key issues of political and economic transformation in the region. It reconstructs the project of ‘development’, uncovers how it works in practice, analyses how it is embedded in society and history and asks how its dysfunctionalities play out as South Asia rises to global prominence.

The module runs through weekly 2h lectures and 1h seminar groups. Four ‘foundational’ lectures give way to four ‘irritations’ to enable students to think critically about both the South Asian experience and ‘development’ more broadly. Each lecture contains one embedded in-depth case study and is accompanied by an (optional) movie suggestion as well as a short (1-2 pages usually) ‘keyword’ article that introduces relevant ‘desi english’ terms in a fun and accessible way. Inevitably, the reading load will be high, especially for those yet unfamiliar with the region: usually one book as core reading plus one text for the case study per week; ‘additional readings’ are meant as pointers for those who want to write their essays on the topic. To ease the burden, seminar groups before reading week will teach a number of reading skills. Seminar groups after reading week run as ‘writing labs’, emulating a constant formative process towards the final summative essay of 3k words.

**Educational aims**

- Introduce students to the general histories of development, economic and political transformation in the South Asian region
- Familiarise students with the different contexts, experiences and outcomes of the development agenda in modern India, Pakistan and Bangladesh
- Introduce students to contemporary debates in South Asian development, including on majoritarianism, climate emergency and transnational ties
- Enable students to think about critically about economic and political development in developing countries such as South Asia

**Learning outcomes**

- At the end of this module students are expected to:
  - Developed an understanding of key issues in South Asian development
  - Acquired an understanding of the key structural characteristics of South Asian countries and their significance for economic development
  - Consolidated their understanding of key theories that we apply to problems of development in the context of South Asia
• Gained confidence in critically analysing development policies and initiatives, with specific focus on South Asia

**Employability skills**

• The first set of lectures hones critical and interdisciplinary thinking

• The second set of lectures fosters creativity / out-of-the-box thinking

• The first set of seminars focuses teamwork and reading skills

• The second set of seminars improves writing and editing skills

**Core course readings**

• Asher, Meera, Trent Brown, Assa Doron and Craig Jeffrey, 2017: Keywords. South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies 40 (2).


• Dwyer, Rachel, 2014: Bollywood’s India. Hindi cinema as a guide to contemporary India. London: Reaktion.


**Week 1: Rollercoaster overview**

This lecture provides a broad sweep historical overview of South Asian development since colonial times and schematic characteristics of the political system and macro-economic trends of Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. It also introduces the teaching team, module format, assessment pattern, etc.

**Core readings:**


FOUNDATIONS

The aim of this first block of the module is to provide a solid foundational understanding of South Asian development, both substantively and in terms of conceptual tools. It moves from structural political economy via development policy and state-citizen interactions towards electoral politics.

Week 2: Political Economy and social structure

This lecture introduces a general model of thinking about South Asia’s socially embedded political economy. It introduces key intersecting social cleavages (class, caste, religion, gender, urbanity) and discussed how they structure labor relations and patterns of accumulation. The case study demonstrates this general model at the example of the socially determined price of corruption in real estate.

Core reading:


Case study:


Additional readings:


Keyword:


Movie suggestion:

Week 3: Poverty and jholawala economics

This lecture focuses on the subcontinent’s poor and marginalised, on the economics of poverty but also on experiments in applied development policy. The case study looks at the marginalisation of one of the most economically and politically disadvantaged groups on the subcontinent, the Muslims in India.

Core reading:


Case study:


Additional readings:

- Kunnath, George, 2012: Rebels from the mud houses. Dalits and the making of the Maoist revolution in Bihar. Social Science Press

Keyword:


Movie suggestion:

- Matru ki Bijlee ka Mandola by Vishal Bhardwaj, 2013: [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2106537/](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2106537/)

Week 4: States in real life

This lecture unpacks in greater detail the key actor of ‘development’ in South Asia: the state. It asks how the state operates, how citizens engage with it, and why it might seem unresponsive or corrupt. The case study looks at claim making in one of the most unequal parts of rural Pakistan.

Core reading:

Case study:


Additional readings:

- Auerbach, Michael, 2019: Demanding development. The politics of public goods provision in India’s urban slums. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Keyword:


Movie suggestion:


**Week 5: Electoral politics, democracy and majoritarianism**

This lecture extends the discussion of politics to the electoral arena and asks how India, Bangladesh and Pakistan experienced elections under both democratic and authoritarian or military rule. It also asks how majoritarian populism threatens democracy across the region.

Core reading:

- Tudor, Maya, 2013: The promise of power. The origins of democracy in India and autocracy in Pakistan. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Case study:


Additional readings:

IRRITATIONS

The aim of this second block of the module is to trouble and complicate the understanding students developed so far, introducing quite different ways of knowing ‘development’ in South Asia.

**Week 6: Masculinity**

This week asks how all we have learned so far is gendered. It doesn’t take patriarchal assumptions for granted but unpacks South Asian masculinities, asks how they intersect with developmental aspirations, and how then the experience of men contrasts with the experience of women.

**Core reading:**

- Jeffrey, Craig; Jeffery, Patricia & Jeffery, Roger, 2010: Degrees without freedom? Education, masculinities and unemployment in North India. Stanford University Press

**Case study:**


**Additional readings:**


**Keyword:**


**Movie suggestion:**

- Pink by Aniruddha Roy Chowdhury, 2016: [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt5571734/](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt5571734/)
Week 7: Crime

This week’s lecture asks what would happen to our understanding of both economic and political development if we transcend the legal/illegal binary and seriously consider the impact of (organised) crime, muscle politics and violence in South Asia.

Core reading:


Case study:


Additional readings:


Keyword:


Movie suggestion:


Week 8: Climate emergency

Global heating already has a profound impact on development in South Asia and will decidedly shape the coming decades. This week we thus reconsider all the above from the perspective of environmental politics, policy and economics both in terms of mitigation and adaptation.

Core reading:

Case study:


Additional readings:

- Chatterjee, Elizabeth, 2017: Reinventing state capitalism in India. A view from the energy sector. Contemporary South Asia 25 (1), 85-100.

Keyword:


Movie suggestion:

- Katiyabaaz by Deepti Kakkar and Fahad Mustafa, 2013: [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2466678/](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2466678/)

**Week 9: Ruins**

This final irritation considers the material and ideational remains of previous iterations of ‘development’ in South Asia. What are overlooked but potent undercurrents of all we have discussed so far in this module? We particularly look at Empire, Partition and the Emergency in India. The case study considers a ghost in Lucknow and what it tells about changing publics.

Core reading:


Case Study:

- Susewind, Raphael, forthcoming: Rifah-e Aam Club, Lucknow: Public sphere and public space in urban North India. Geoforum.

Additional readings:

CONCLUSION

Week 10: Global South Asia

The final week of the module considers how all we learned about the politics and economics of development its foundations as well as irritations can shed light on the global role of South Asia, with rising material as well as cultural influence of the region on the world stage.

Core readings:


Case study:


Additional readings:


Keyword:


Movie suggestion: