Government & Politics of Asia

Course prefix: INTA

Course number: 2230

Section: A

CRN (you may add up to five):
33147

Instructor First Name: Franziska

Instructor Last Name: Roscher

Semester: Spring

Academic year: 2026

Course description:

This course introduces students to the politics and government of modern **SOUTH ASIA**. We will **focus on democracy**, exploring commonalities and differences between India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. What explains variation in the existence, nature, and degree of consolidation of democratic regimes across South Asia? In the process, students will learn how topics such as economic development, caste, religion, or gender figure into our evaluation of democracy.

No prior knowledge of South Asia or political science is required – just curiosity and willingness to engage with new ideas.

Course learning outcomes:

This course is designed with student success in mind and aims to impart not just subject-specific knowledge about South Asia, but to equip students with transferrable skills in the process.

Years from now, students will be able to

- **Think critically in the face of complexity and ambiguity:** evaluate competing explanations, recognize when questions have multiple valid answers, identify knowledge gaps, and resist oversimplification
- **Recognize and question their own assumptions and biases:** recognize your own assumptions, question how and when explicitly Western frameworks shape your analysis, actively seek perspectives that challenge your initial assumptions
- **Navigate political complexity without demanding simple answers:** analyze how multiple factors interact to produce political outcomes, recognize how context-

specific differences affect outcomes, make evidence-based judgements while acknowledging limitation and alternative interpretations

These are the **portable skills** that will serve you throughout your life. They're called "portable" because you'll take them with you to other classes, your career, and your civic life. They take time to develop – his one course won't perfect these skills, but it will build a strong foundation.

The following **course-specific objectives** focus on South Asian politics and support your development of the portable skills above. By the end of the semester, students will be able to

- **Construct evidence-based arguments about South Asian politics:** synthesize information from multiple sources, distinguish evidence-supported and -unsupported claims, anticipate counterarguments, acknowledge knowledge/evidence gaps
- **Compare political systems and practices across South Asian countries:** identify meaningful similarities and differences across countries, explain patterns while recognizing context-specific variations, resist overgeneralizations
- **Analyze how historical legacies shape contemporary politics:** trace how specific historical events, structures, and decisions continue to influence current politics, recognize that history constrains but does not determine outcomes
- **Critically apply political science concepts to South Asian cases:** apply key concepts to analyze South Asian politics, question whether Western concepts apply straightforwardly to South Asia
- **Evaluate Democratic Quality and Variation in South Asia:** examine multiple dimensions of democratic quality, explain variation across countries and over time, question whose interests different democratic arrangements serve.

Required course materials:

This course is designed around **active learning** because research consistently shows that you learn more deeply and retain information longer when you actively work with material as opposed to passively listening to lectures. You'll engage course content through reflections, discussions, collaborative analysis, and projects that require you to think critically about complex political issues.

This course requires **substantial reading**. Critical thinking and informed analysis must be grounded in facts – and the only way to gain that foundation is through reading. You cannot analyze what you don't know, and you cannot recognize your own assumptions without first understanding the evidence and arguments scholars have developed. The readings build progressively from foundational concepts to more complex issues, and they are essential preparation for our class discussions and assignments. Where possible, readings will offer choices so you can explore topics that connect to your own interests. All readings will be uploaded to Canvas well in advance.

Grading policy:

To succeed in this course, **regular attendance and active engagement** are essential – not as an arbitrary requirement, but because learning happens through doing the work (that's what active learning is!). Research consistently shows that students learn most effectively when they actively grapple with material rather than passively receiving it. While the readings you complete ahead of class provide the foundational knowledge, class discussions help you examine multiple perspectives and challenge your assumptions, in-class activities build your analytical skills through practice and feedback, and reflections and worksheets allow you to develop your thinking progressively throughout the semester. You cannot develop critical thinking skills by listening alone; you must practice thinking critically, and that requires your consistent presence and engagement.

Your final grade will be based on four interconnected components:

Reading Reflections	20%
Class Participation and Engagement	20%
Worksheets	30%
Final paper	30%

Reading Reflections (20%). You will write reading reflections that critically engage with the course readings by answering analytical questions. After completing the readings for a class, you will answer one of the reflection questions associated with that class. To receive full credit, your reading reflection needs to

- answer *one* (and only one) of the reflection questions for that class directly
- be between 100 and 300 words long
  (Reflections that are fewer than 100 or more than 300 words will not be able to get full credit.)
- cite all required readings and any selected optional readings for that class
  (Be precise when you cite: provide page numbers for where to find the argument in a text, as well as for any direct quotes or numbers you take from a reading. You may cite these readings using either the Harvard or APA citation style; do not cite in footnotes.)
- be submitted *before* the class starts
  (Late submissions will be accepted up to 1 week after the class, but cannot receive more than 70%.)

What does "critically engage" mean? It means going beyond summary. For example:

- Don't just say "Author X argues Y," provide context and/or explanation. For example, you could say: "Author X argues Y, which helps explain why Pakistan's democracy is fragile, but this framework might overlook how..."
- Don't just list what readings say. Instead, put them in dialogue: "While Reading A suggests democracy requires economic development, Reading B shows this isn't always true because..."

- Question assumptions: "This definition of democracy emphasizes elections, but does that capture whether ordinary citizens actually have power?"

While this might sound daunting right now, you will practice this kind of critical engagement with the readings throughout the semester.

You have to submit a total of 20 reading reflections (out of 24 opportunities), making each reflection worth 1% of your total grade.

Class Participation (20%). Class participation and engagement are essential for active learning because critical thinking skills develop through practice, not observation. This includes participating in discussions, completing in-class activities, and working through analytical problems, whether individually, with a partner, or in small groups. Discussions help you articulate complex ideas and consider alternative perspectives; hands-on activities like constructing timelines or comparing definitions help you organize information, identify patterns, and make connections across cases. Completing group assignments exposes you to different interpretations and approaches to the same task, and teaches you to work collaboratively in a team. *You cannot develop these skills by watching others work or listening passively* – you must engage with the material yourself.

To receive full credit for class participation and engagement, you need to show up and show effort. What does quality participation look like?

- In discussions: Listening carefully to others, building on their ideas, asking questions that push everyone's thinking, being willing to change your mind
- In small groups: Contributing equitably (not dominating or disappearing), helping the group make progress, engaging respectfully with different viewpoints
- In activities: Taking tasks seriously even when not graded for "correctness," asking for clarification when confused, trying even when uncertain

What participation is NOT about:

- Talking the most or having the "right" answer
- Performing confidence you don't feel
- Agreeing with everyone to avoid conflict

Class participation and engagement will be largely self-assessed: 4 times during the semester, you will be asked to assess your own participation and engagement based on a rubric that I will provide. Your final participation and engagement grade will be based on these 4 assessments. However, I will review your self-assessment and make adjustments if there are major discrepancies between your self-evaluations and what I observe in class.

Worksheets (30%). Worksheets are short in-class activities – such as constructing timelines, developing definitions, or analyzing pro-and-con arguments – that give you opportunities to apply knowledge from the readings and practice critical thinking skills. These are exercises designed to help you build analytical capacity through practice before being evaluated on similar skills in your final paper.

These worksheets are opportunities for practice and feedback, not high-stakes evaluations. You will complete worksheets either individually or collaboratively (depending on the task), and will have opportunities to get feedback in class before handing in your work. The goal is not perfection but practice: you're developing skills like tracing historical causation or weighing competing evidence – skills that require repeated practice to develop.

Worksheets will be graded on a simple scale based on completion and genuine effort (2 = thoughtful engagement with the task, 1 = minimal effort, 0 = not completed). At least one class every week will include a worksheet. Worksheets count for 30% of your total grade, with each worksheet counting for 2%. Naturally, you have to be present in class to complete worksheets. If you miss class, you can make up worksheets for up to 1 week after the class by coming to office hours and completing the worksheet there. However, late worksheets cannot score more than 70%.

Final paper (30%). The final paper is your opportunity to demonstrate the analytical skills you've developed throughout the semester: constructing evidence-based arguments, engaging with complexity, critically examining concepts, and synthesizing multiple perspectives.

You will choose one motivating question from several options provided. Your paper should:

- Present a **clear thesis** in 1-2 sentences at the start of your essay (no later than the second paragraph), stating your main argument in the form "This paper argues that X" or similar. Underline your thesis statement. The thesis should reflect analytical thinking – not just description, but an argument about why something happens, how things are connected, or what explains a pattern.
- Engage substantively with **at least 10 course readings** to support your argument. Use readings as evidence, not just decoration – explain how they support your claims, where they offer competing interpretations, or when you find their frameworks illuminating or limiting. Cite precisely with page numbers for arguments, quotes, or data (Harvard or APA style; no footnotes). Include a bibliography.
- Be **1,400-1,600 words** (excluding bibliography). This word limit requires you to be selective and focused – choose your strongest evidence and most compelling points rather than including everything.

What distinguishes excellent work:

- A thoughtful, well-supported argument that engages with complexity rather than oversimplifying
- Critical engagement with readings (analyzing their assumptions, evaluating their applicability, synthesizing across sources) rather than just summarizing them
- Anticipation of counterarguments or alternative interpretations and explanation of why your interpretation is more compelling
- Recognition of what you don't know or what evidence would strengthen your argument
- Clear, precise writing that demonstrates your understanding

Final Grade

Your final grade will be assigned as a letter grade according to the following scale:

A   90-100%
B   80-89%
C   70-79%
D   65-69%
F   0-64%

Attendance policy:

Regular attendance is essential to your success in this course. This isn't an arbitrary attendance-for-attendance's-sake policy; rather, key learning activities happen in class and cannot be replicated outside of class time.

- Worksheets are completed during class (30% of your grade)
- Participation and engagement are assessed during class (20% of your grade)
- Discussions and activities help you practice the critical thinking skills you'll need for the final paper

Accordingly, you cannot score a top grade without regular attendance and engagement.

Academic honesty/integrity statement:

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. All work submitted must be original and properly cited. Plagiarism, cheating, or any form of academic dishonesty will result in immediate consequences as outlined in the university's academic integrity policy.

Per the Center for Teaching and Learning, "Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarizing on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, which will

investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations. For more information on the Honor Code, visit the OSI website."

Students can employ AI (e.g., ChatGPT, Claude, etc.) or their peers as a limited tool to support the work they complete at home, but not as a substitute for completing the assignment themselves. Acceptable uses of peer collaboration and/or AI include the following: Preliminary searches for information, which a student will subsequently assess for validity and put in their own words; light copy editing; review for completeness. However, students cannot use AI or peers to produce partial or full drafts or assignments for them. Students must be able to pinpoint and appropriately cite the original source of any statistics, quotations, or claims. AI platforms often fail to accurately document the source of information they provide; in this respect, these platforms do not constitute an acceptable source.

Core IMPACTS statement(s) (if applicable):

This is a **Core IMPACTS** course that is part of the **Social Sciences** area.

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help students master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad **Orienting Question**: How do I understand human experiences and connections?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following **Learning Outcomes**: Students will effectively analyze the complexity of human behavior, and how historical, economic, political, social, or geographic relationships develop, persist, or change.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following **Career-Ready Competencies**: Intercultural Competence, Perspective-Taking, and Persuasion