

South Asian Art, Culture & Politics

Empire, Colony, Nation, 2400 BCE - present.

This course explores the visual culture and politics of South Asia (India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka) from early archaeological settlements to the present day. We will address questions of patronage, power, text and image, architecture and ritual, nationalism, modernity, and postcoloniality. Along the way we'll encounter the diverse religious and philosophical traditions of the subcontinent, including various aspects of Buddhism, Jainism, Vedic and Brahmanic traditions (aka Hinduism), Sikhism, Islam, Christianity and secularism.

Covering four millennia of time and a subcontinent the size of Europe in one semester will prove difficult, so we will be tracing a path through the material that allows us to anchor ourselves along the way.

Our guiding theme will be the question of authority and power. We will examine the ways in which obvious sources of authority (kings, empires, religions, colonizers) shaped South Asian art, how India itself is a sort of "authority" in the context of South Asia, how various groups work against authority or call it into question, and how our view from the 21st century represents a particular kind of authority that distorts as much as it gives clarity.

We will read important scholarly works on South Asia's visual culture and politics from a wide range of periods, treating them in rough chronological order. Primary sources will include emperors' official memoirs, statements by artists, and translations of ancient Sanskrit narratives.



RESPONSIBILITIES

Your primary responsibility is to arrive in class having read the day's reading closely and thoughtfully. Bring questions to class and be prepared to discuss the text. The Dehejia text serves as our foundation reading, and each day we will also examine a text from e-reserves or *Asian Art*. See the list of resources at the end of the syllabus for supplemental texts.

WEBSITE

<http://southasianart147.wordpress.com>
email professor for an invitation to the site

WRITING & EXAMS

Hemingway Paragraphs (2) - 10%
Aniconism debate - 10%
Midterm - 20%
Pre-Paper - 20%
Final Exam - 25%
Participation - 15%

Due dates are listed on the schedule; work is due via e-mail in MS Word.

All components must be completed.

Required Texts

In the bookstore

Brown, Rebecca M. and
Deborah S. Hutton, eds.
Asian Art. Malden, MA:
Blackwell, 2006.
9781405122412

Dehejia, Vidya. *Indian Art*.
London: Phaidon, 1997.
9780714834962

Narayan, R. K. *The Ramayana*.
New York: Penguin, 1972.
9780140187007

Plus e-reserves in library

PROFESSOR

Rebecca M. Brown
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<http://rebeccambrown.com>
Office Hours, in Gilman 163
12-1 pm T & Th and by appt.

TEACHING ASSISTANT

Shana O'Connell
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Office Hours, in Gilman Atrium
12-2 Wednesdays and by appt.

HEMINGWAY PARAGRAPHS

In addition to novels and short stories, Hemingway wrote many wonderful one-paragraph prose compositions that, in a few sentences, captured the scent, sight and feeling of a particular moment, scene, or character. Drawing from his example, you will write two one-paragraph essays (max. 250 words), one before and one after the midterm. These are to be emailed to **Professor Brown** by midnight **before** the day on which we discuss the reading.

Hemis are an extension of your reading and are intended to do two things: increase your comprehension of the author's argument and make your writing super-efficient. Ideally, you will have one sentence on each of the following topics, in this order:

- what the author is arguing against (sometimes the introductions in AA help with this)
- the author's thesis
- how the author backs up that thesis (type of proof, path of argumentation)

• one issue, problem, or loose end in the argument
Use simple page-number citations to the text for any idea/element from the text (23).

Do **not** include quotes from the article.

Remember, the point of the Hemi is to be as tight with your writing as possible. Your paragraph should give the reader a mini-version of the author's thesis and argument, along with a brief statement of one issue with the piece. While short, these Hemis are difficult. You will receive feedback on your writing that is geared to help you improve future assignments for this course and develop your writing and argumentation in general.



ANICONISM DEBATE

Early in the semester we'll encounter one of the most energetic controversies in Indian art history: the question of an "aniconic period" in Buddhist art. We will stage this debate in class. You will be defending one side in the form of a group presentation and informal discussion. Full details to be circulated.

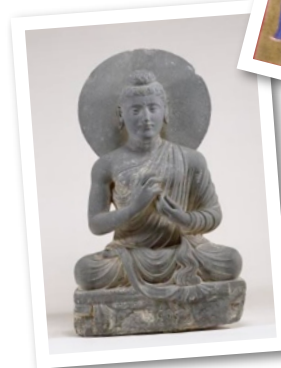
PRE-PAPER

On **28 October**, we will be visiting the Walters Art Museum, where they have an outstanding collection of South and Southeast Asian art in a variety of media (sculpture, metalwork, painting, textile). While at the museum you will choose an object to focus on for your paper, and study it visually using guidelines I will hand out beforehand. From this first-hand examination of a work of art, you will write a 4-page visual analysis of your object, at the end of which you will append a research proposal of 3 pages in length that will present a research question, possible thesis, and the path you would take to research that question and defend that thesis. More details on this will be distributed prior to the museum visit.

MIDTERM & FINAL

The **midterm** will be an in-class, closed-book exam. It will consist of two essays in which you will demonstrate your comprehension of the material we've covered, and your ability to synthesize authors and sites together to create a new conclusion. In addition, you will be asked short-answer questions about images, terms, and authors' arguments.

The **final** will be a take-home exam. It will ask you to consolidate the material of the course into an essay, primarily focused on the second half of the semester. Detailed instructions will be circulated after the midterm.



POLICIES

Disabilities

Any student who may need accommodations must obtain an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services.

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism is a serious offense and a breach of academic honesty of the highest order. It will not be tolerated in this course. If you are unsure of the definition of plagiarism, or other forms of academic misconduct, please consult the handbook.

Late PenaltiesHemis

Late papers receive automatic 50% grade (F). One of purposes of these paragraphs is to enhance discussion in class, thus it makes little sense to turn them in after the fact. Please note: you must turn them in in order to receive credit for the course.

Other Papers

I penalize lateness heavily because I wish to reward those who plan ahead and get their work in on time. Each day the assignment is late: full grade penalty (B becomes C).

Midterm and Final Exam

Medical excuses require official documentation via the dean's office. There is no time to reschedule, so please plan ahead, and give yourself the time and space to succeed. A late Final Exam will receive an automatic 50% (F).

In all cases above, if there is an emergency please work with the Dean of Students to notify your professors and plan a course of action. *I will not consider emergency requests that do not come via the Dean's office.*

RESERVE LIST

- Ajadania, N. 2007. "New Media Overtures before New Media Practice in India." In G. Sinha, ed. *Art and Visual Culture in India, 1857-2007*. Mumbai: Marg Publications, , pp. 266-81.
- Allchin, B. and R.. 1982. *The Rise of Civilization in India and Pakistan*.. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Pr., pp. 166-18.
- Asher, F. 2011. "On Maurya Art." In R.M. Brown and D.H. Hutton, eds. *A Companion to Asian Art*.. Malden, MA: Wiley, pp. 421-44.
- Begley, E., and Z. A. Desai, eds. and trans. 1989. *Taj Mahal*. Seattle: Univ. of Washington Pr., pp. 195; 199; 207.
- Brown, R. M. 2009. *Art for a Modern India, 1947-80*. Durham: Duke Univ. Pr., pp. 1-22, 163-4 (notes).
- Brown, R. M. 2012a. "Subtle Transformations: Art and Politics in the 1990s." Forthcoming in P. Mitter and P. Dave Mukherji, eds. *Twentieth Century Indian Art*. New Delhi: Arts Alive Gallery.
- Cort, J.E. 1995. "Following the Jina, Worshipping the Jina." In P. Pal, ed. *The Peaceful Liberators*. London: Thames and Hudson, pp. 39-54.
- DeCaroli, R. 2008. "From the Living Rock: Understanding Figural Representation in Early South Asia." In J. Mrazek and M. Pitelka, eds. *What's the Use of Art?* Honolulu: Univ. of Hawaii Pr., pp. 21-45.
- Dehejia, V. 1991. "Aniconism and the Multivalence of Emblems." *Ars Orientalis* 21, pp. 45-66.
- Handelman, D., and D. Shulman. 1997. *God Inside Out: Siva's Game of Dice*. New York: Oxford Univ. Pr., pp. 1-17.
- Harris, C.. 2006. "The Buddha Goes Global: Some Thoughts Towards a Transnational Art History." *Art History* 29.4 (Sept): 698-720.
- Huntington, S. 1990. "Early Buddhist Art and the Theory of Aniconism." *Art Journal* 49:4 (Winter): 401-408.
- _____. 1992. "Aniconism and the Multivalence of Emblems: Another Look." *Ars Orientalis* 22: 111-156.
- Hutton, D. *Art of the Court of Bijapur*. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Pr., pp. 1-25 plus notes.
- McGill, F. 1997. "Painting the 'Great Life.'" In Juliane Schober, ed. *Sacred Biography in the Buddhist Traditions of South and Southeast Asia*. Honolulu: Univ. of Hawai'i Pr., pp. 195-217.
- Pinney, C. 1997. "The Nation (Un)Pictured? Chromolithography and 'Popular' Politics in India, 1878-1995." *Critical Inquiry* 23:4 (Summer): 834-67.
- Spink, W. 1991. "The Archaeology of Ajanta." *Ars Orientalis* 21: 67-94.
- Tucker, A. 2001. "Intelligent Seeing." In her *Visual Literacy: Writing about Art*.. New York: McGraw-Hill, pp. 25-58.
- Welch, Anthony. 1993. "Architectural Patronage and the Past: The Tughluq Sultans of India." *Muqarnas* 10: 311-322.

SELECTED BOOKS ON RESERVE

- Huntington, Susan and John Huntington. 1985. *The Art of Ancient India*. New York: Weatherhill. Detailed text, covers to the 14th century CE.
- Metcalf, Barbara, and Thomas Metcalf. 2006. *A Concise History of Modern India*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Excellent history begins in the 16th century CE.
- Mitter, Partha. 2001. *Indian Art*.. New York: Oxford University Press. Textbook, good coverage of later periods.
- Stein, Burton. 1998. *A History of India*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers. Good overall Indian history.

9/4	Introduction to course	D/A/R/ereserve
9/6	Authority & Mud: Harappan Civilization Explore: http://www.harappa.com	D: 25-39, A: Intro, Allchin
9/11	Writing with Authority: Buddhism and Politics: Mauryan Empire	D: 39-48, A: 1, Asher
9/13	Proximity to Authority: Buddhism and Pilgrimage: The Stupa	D: 3, 4; A: 2, 3
9/18	Seeing Authority: Hinduism & the Hindu Temple: Ritual Seeing	D: 6, A: 4, R: 1-105
9/20	Aniconism Debate Day Huntington 1990, Dehejia 1991, DeCaroli, Opt: Huntington 1992	
9/25	<i>no class:</i> go to the Walters to see the Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook video	take notes!
9/27	<i>no class:</i> watch Sita Sings the Blues (a re-telling of the <i>Ramayana</i>) online	take notes!
10/2	Authority of Kings, Authority of Monks: Elephanta & Ajanta	D: 5, Handelman, Spink
10/4	Rock Solid Authority: Ellora and Mamallapuram	D: 8, A: 5
10/9	Authorities in Union: The Cosmos, the Body and the Divine	D: 7, A: 6, 7, 14
10/11	Examining Authority – Midterm	
10/18	Authority of the Text: Palm Leaf Manuscripts & Jainism	Cort
10/23	Authority of the Past: Architecture of the Sultanate	D: 11, Welch
10/25	Authority of the Empire I: Mughal Architecture	D: 13, A: 11, Begley
10/28	Visit Walters Museum, 2-4 pm	
10/30	Authority of the Empire II: Mughal Painting	D: 13, A: 9, 10
11/1	Library day: meet in classroom near library info desk	
11/6	Stories of Authority: Vessantara Jataka in Thailand	A: 15, McGill
11/8	Alternative Narratives of Authority: The Deccan	Hutton
11/13	Princely and Godly Authority: Rajasthani Painting & Architecture	D: 14, A: 12, R: 106-58
11/15	Colonial Authority: The British, Tipu Sultan, and the Emblem	D: 16, A: 13
11/20	Authority of the Artist: Ravi Varma & Nationalism	D: 16, A: 16; Prepaper due
11/27	Authorizing the Modern and the Indian	A: 17, Brown '09
11/29	Authority of the People: Vernacular and Popular art	Pinney
12/4	By Whose Authority? Contemporary Indian Art	Brown '12; Adajania
12/6	Where is the Author? Transnational Art	Harris
12/21	Final Exam will be take-home, due at noon on 12/21	