



MA(DLB) 0701 – History Writing

JSIA Cross-Elective – Fall 2026

Course Information

Course Duration: 8 weeks
Credits: 2
Credit hours: 3 hours per week
Prerequisites: None
Equivalent Courses: None
Exclusive Courses: None

Instructor Information

Instructor: Renu Elizabeth Abraham
Biography: Dr. Abraham is a historian who specializes in the early modern period, Indian Ocean, and historiography.
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1. Course Description

Was Indian society an ahistorical society? Was history writing an import from the West? How do we distinguish between myth and history? How do we make sense of our past?

This course will attempt to answer these questions through key readings on historiographical modes from precolonial and postcolonial India. It will assess the impact of colonialism on precolonial modes of knowledge from India and explore new trends in history-writing in the postcolonial period. The course will introduce students to current debates among historians on what constitutes historical writing and whether Indians had a historical consciousness prior to colonization of the Indian subcontinent by the British.

2. Course Intended Learning Objectives(Aim)

Course Intended Learning Outcomes	Teaching and Learning Activities	Assessments/ Activities
To develop a critical understanding of the discipline and practice of history in India	Lecture	Class presentation
To make students source critical while conducting any form of research.	In class activities	Essay writing
To encourage students to draw parallels and connections in history writing across the Indian Ocean world	Primary source analysis	Close reading of texts

3. Scheme of Evaluation and Grading

Continuous assessment

Assessment will be based on class presentation on a course reading (30%), written essay (30%), and weekly assignments (4x10 marks=40%).

Grade Definition

The final course grade will be based on the sum of the actual points received for each of the components and will be given as follows:

Grading and Comments			
Letter Grade	Percentage of Marks	Grade Points	Comments
O	80 and above	8	Outstanding: Exceptional knowledge of the subject matter, thorough understanding of issues; ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles and extraordinary critical and analytical ability.
A+	75 – 79	7.5	Excellent: Sound knowledge of the subject matter, thorough understanding of issues; ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles and critical and analytical ability.
A	70 – 74	7	Very Good: Sound knowledge of the subject matter, excellent organizational capacity, ability to synthesize ideas, rules, and principles, critically analyze existing material and originality in thinking and presentation.
A-	65 -69	6	Good: Good understanding of the subject matter, ability to identify issues and provide balanced solutions to problems and good critical and analytical skills.

B+	60 – 64	5	Fair: Average understanding of the subject matter, limited ability to identify issues and provide solutions to problems and reasonable critical and analytical skills.
B	55 – 59	4	Acceptable: Adequate knowledge of the subject matter to go to the next level of the study and reasonable critical and analytical skills.
B-	50 – 54	3	Marginal: Limited knowledge of the subject matter and irrelevant use of materials, and poor critical and analytical skills.
P1	45 – 49	2	Pass 1: Pass with Basic understanding of the subject matter.
P2	40 – 44	1	Pass 2: Pass with Rudimentary understanding of the subject matter.
F	Below 40	0	Fail: Poor comprehension of the subject matter; poor critical and analytical skills and marginal use of the relevant materials. Will require repeating the course.

4. Academic Integrity

Your work is expected to be your own. Copying of any kind without proper acknowledgement of the source will be penalized.

This course requires active participation from the class, which means reading the assigned course material before each class and submitting the weekly assignments on time.

Use of phone will not be permitted in class. Photography and videography are strictly prohibited.

5. **Keyword Syllabus:** history-writing; colonialism; Indian Ocean

6. Course Material

Readings for this course will be made available on UMS at the start of the semester. Please keep in mind that the reading list might be subject to change.

7. Session Plan

Session (with Date)	General Topic	Readings
Week 1	Introduction Itihasa Tarikh	Thapar, Romila, 'Itihasa,' in <i>Key Concepts in Modern Indian Studies</i> , ed. by Rachel Dwyer and Jahnvi Phalkey (New York: NYU Press, 2016), pp. 126–128. De Blois, F. C., 'Tarikh,' in <i>The Encyclopaedia of Islam</i> , Vol. 10 (Leiden: Brill, 1986), pp. 257–302.
Week 2	History 'proper' Annals Chronicles	White, Hayden, 'The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality,' <i>Critical Inquiry</i> , 7:1 (1980), 5–27. Thapar, Romila, 'Historical Traditions in Early India,' in <i>The Oxford History of</i>

		<i>Historical Writing: Volume 1: Beginnings to AD 600</i> , ed. by Andrew Feldherr and Grant Hardy (Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 553–576.
Week 3	Modes of history writing Itihasa-purana Inscriptions	Thapar, Romila, ‘Inscriptions as Historical Writing in Early India: Third Century BC to Sixth Century AD,’ in <i>The Oxford History of Historical Writing: Volume 1: Beginnings to AD 600</i> , ed. by Andrew Feldherr and Grant Hardy (Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 577–600. Ali, Daud, ‘Royal Eulogy as World History: Rethinking Copper-plate Inscriptions in Cōla India,’ in <i>Querying the Medieval: Texts and the History of Practices in South Asia</i> , ed. by Ronald Inden, Jonathan Walters, and Daud Ali (Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 165–229. (165–183) (217–229)
Week 4	Modes of history writing Bakhar Tarīkh Qasīda	Guha, Sumit, ‘Speaking Historically: The Changing Voices of Historical Narration in Western India,’ <i>American Historical Review</i> , 109:4 (2004), 1084–1103. Amer, Ayal, ‘The Rise of Jihādīc Sentiments and the Writing of History in Sixteenth-century Kerala,’ <i>The Indian Economic and Social History Review</i> , 53:3 (2016), 297–319.
Week 5	Colonial impact on history writing	Excerpts from Asif, Manan Ahmed, <i>A Book of Conquest: The Chachnama and Muslim Origins in South Asia</i> (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016). Vanina, Eugenia, ‘History or No History? Colonial Perceptions of the Indian Past,’ in <i>Clio and Her Descendants: Essays in Honour of Kesavan Veluthat</i> , ed. by Manu V. Devadevan (Primus Books, 2018), pp. 33–53.
Week 6	Ahistorical society History and non-history	Nandy, Ashis, ‘History's Forgotten Doubles,’ <i>History and Theory</i> , 34:2 (1995), 44–66. Excerpts from Rao, Narayana, David Dean Schulman, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, eds.,

		<i>Textures of Time: Writing History in South India, 1600–1800</i> (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2013).
Week 7	History writing and the nation-state	<p>Mukherjee, Supriya, 'Indian Historical Writing since 1947,' in <i>The Oxford History of Historical Writing: Volume 5: Historical Writing Since 1945</i>, ed. by Axel Schneider and Daniel Woolf (Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 515-538.</p> <p>Excerpts from Savarkar, V.D., <i>Six Glorious Epochs of Indian History</i>, Translated by S.T. Godbole (Bombay: Bal Savarkar, 1971).</p>
Week 8	History writing and the nation-state	Excerpts from Nehru, Jawaharlal, <i>Discovery of India</i> (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1946).