



M.A. (DLB)0697 –Forgotten Soldiers: India's Role in World War I and II

BA&MA- Spring **Spring 2026** Semester

Course Information

Course Duration: 15 weeks

Credit Hours: 4 (3 hours teaching + 1 Office Hour)

Meetings: Weekly, Wednesday

Location: TBD

Prerequisites: A keen interest in the history of the British Empire

Equivalent Courses:NA

Exclusive Courses:NA

Instructor Information

Instructor: Bhavika Behal

Biography: Bhavika Behal completed her MPhil from the University of Cambridge. Her specialization includes South Asian visual cultures with a special emphasis on colonial history via mediums such as films, photographs and documentaries. She completed her BA and MA in Political Science from the University of Delhi where she remained amongst the high scorers throughout. She achieved an AIR-26 in the nationwide entrance examination (DUET) for Masters at the University of Delhi.

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Office: 7B, Ground Floor, South block, Old FOB

Office Hours: based on prior appointments

1. Course Description

This paper explores the experiences of the British Indian Army, which fought for the Empire during the First and Second World Wars. It aims to bring together military experts, historians, and anthropologists to retell a forgotten story and uncover the sacrifices of Indian soldiers for the colonial government.

Thematically, the paper examines three core aspects: Firstly, it will study the creation, organisation and impact of the army in key military theatres such as in Germany, France, Africa, South East Asia etc during both the World Wars .

Secondly, the paper attempts an exploration of the soldiers' sentiments and longings through their letters, diaries, and songs, offering a personal perspective on those fighting abroad. Thirdly it will analyse how these soldiers were depicted through colonial legislation, barrack structures, and official documentaries, to understand the discourse constructed around them.

2. Course Intended Learning Objectives(Aim)

Course Intended Learning Outcomes	Teaching and Learning Activities	Assessments/ Activities
Develop an alternative understanding of colonial histories in India	Discussion on readings and writings of other historians, anthropologists and strategists	Presentation and questioning
Engage students with diverse source materials, from traditional archives to unconventional sources like letters, songs, and photographs.	Engagement with visuals, videos, songs linked to experiences of fighting for the empire	Class participation and Group Discussions
Encourage critical thinking about the politics of 'remembering' and 'forgetting' in the construction of national histories.		Book Review

3. Scheme of Evaluation and Grading

1. Presentation (30%): Students are required to make a 15 minute presentation on the different Battle Frontiers of the First and Second World War.

- The presentation will be carried out in **groups of three**
- Groups will be assigned topics for the same by the instructor based on the date of presentation from the list below :

World War 1 (1914-1918)

1. Australia and Gallipoli – The role of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) in the Gallipoli campaign.
2. West African Soldiers in the French Army – Experiences of Senegalese Tirailleurs and other West African troops in Europe and Africa.
3. Caribbean Troops in the British Army – The British West Indies Regiment and their contributions on the Western Front and the Middle East.
4. Egyptian Labour Corps and Soldiers in the British Army – Their role in logistics and combat, particularly in the Middle East and Africa.
5. Chinese Labour Corps – The role of Chinese workers supporting the Allies on the Western Front.

World War 2 (1939-1945)

1. The Role of Nigerian Soldiers in the British Army – Their participation in Burma and North Africa.
2. French Indochinese Soldiers in the French Army – Experiences of Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian troops under French command.
3. The Polish Army in Exile – Polish soldiers who fought under British command after Poland's fall.
4. South African Forces in the African and Italian Campaigns – The contributions of Black and White South Africans in combat and support roles.
5. The Soviet Union's Central Asian Soldiers – Experiences of Kazakh, Uzbek, and other Central Asian troops in the Red Army.

2. Book Review (30%) or Field Trip:

- Students are required to write a 1500 word review on a pre-approved book/piece of media. Or
- Discuss the experience of alienation faced by Lallu in the book "Across the Black Waters" by Mulk Raj Anand?

3. Class participation (10%): Active engagement in the class discussions is a requirement. Students are expected to keep up with the readings and contribute their insights to the topic.

4. Written exam (30%): Final examination conducted at the end of the semester

Grade Definition

COURSE LETTER GRADES AND THEIR INTERPRETATION			
Letter Grade	Percentage of Marks	Grade Points	
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 analyse 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

Academic honesty is expected. Cheating or plagiarism will result in immediate failure irrespective of the circumstances.

5. Keyword Syllabus :NA

6. Course Material: All assigned readings will be made available to students through online platforms.

7. Session Plan

Course Contents

Introduction		
Understanding European Race Science	Tayyab Mahmud, Colonialism and Modern Constructions of Race: A Preliminary Inquiry, 53 U. MI AMI L.REV . 1219 (1999). https://digitalcommons.law.seattleu.edu/faculty/501	Week 1
The Martial Races- origins	Streets, H. (2017). Martial Races the Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857–1914. Manchester University Press, pp.18–52.	Week -2
Fields of Recruitment	Mandair, Navdeep S., 'Colonial Formations of Sikhism', in Pashaura Singh, and Louis E. Fenech (eds), The Oxford Handbook of Sikh Studies (2014; online edn, Oxford Academic, 1 Apr. 2014.	Week-3
World War 1		
Overview	Lowe, N. (2013). Mastering Modern World History. 5th ed. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.3–50.	Week-4
The Ottoman Experience	Jihad and Islam in World War I: Studies on the Ottoman Jihad on the Centenary of Snouck Hurgronje's "Holy War Made in Germany". first ed. Leiden University Press, 2016. Project MUSE. https://muse.jhu.edu/book/46328 .	Week -5
Visual Cultures and WW-1	Santanu Das (2018). India, Empire, and First World War culture. Literature, images, and	Week-6

	songs. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.119–174.	
A Soldier's Perspective	Omishi, D. (1998) The Sepoy and the Raj: The Indian Army, 1860-1940. Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 113-150	Week-7
Home coming	Santanu Das (2018). India, Empire, and First World War culture. Literature, images, and songs. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.343–376.	Week-8
World War 2		
Overview	Lowe, N. (2013). Mastering Modern World History. 5th ed. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.89–122.	Week-9
Indian performance in South East Asia	Newsinger, J. (1989). A forgotten war: British intervention in Indonesia 1945-46. Race & Class, 30(4), 51-66.	Week-10
Experiences in Burma	Barkawi T. History and Theory. In: Soldiers of Empire: Indian and British Armies in World War II. Cambridge University Press; 2017:227-281.	Week- 11
Loyalty and the INA	Lelyveld, D. (1990). Transmitters and Culture: the Colonial Roots of Indian Broadcasting. South Asia Research, 10(1), 41-52.	Week- 12
The Aftermath		
The partition	Jalal, A. (1987). India's partition and the defence of Pakistan: An historical perspective. The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, 15(3), 289–310. https://doi.org/10.1080/03086538708582743	Week- 13
End of the British-Indian Army	Marston, D. (2014) The Indian Army and the end of the Raj. Cambridge University Press, pp.281-338	Week-14
Revision		Week -15