Course Syllabus

National Identity and the Arts Seminar
ASIA 3000 (6 Credits / 90 class hours)
SIT Study Abroad Program:
India: National Identity and the Arts

PLEASE NOTE: This syllabus represents a recent semester. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.

Course Description
The National Identity and the Arts Seminar (NIA) offers a foundation in Indic arts, culture, and religion in the context of the on-going formation of Indian and Burmese national identities. We will consider India in its own context, but also consider India as the foundation for Southeast Asian identity formation, with a focus on Myanmar (Burma). Throughout history, the arts have played a critical role in the making of cultural and political identities. Essential to human life, the arts and humanities are often co-opted and, as we see so often in the media, are questioned, if not destroyed in the name of a political mission or nation-building.

The aim of this seminar is to give a framework for the understanding of India as an ancient civilization that has shifted and reformed identity many times, in that process India has also exported her civilization to shape many aspects of Asian civilization, especially Southeast Asian. The current identities of the modern nation states of India and Myanmar are the results of those centuries of religious, political and artistic interactions. In this seminar, students will be challenged to consider the relationships between religion, politics and art in the restructuring of cultural and national identity through three broad themes: 1) Religion, Social Hierarchy and the Arts; 2) Politics, Patronage, Nationalism and the Arts, 3) Aesthetic Heritage and Preservation. These three themes will be interwoven throughout the seminar in every seminar activity: in the classroom, at archaeological sites, in museums, during workshops and on heritage walks.

With the development and spread of Hindu and Buddhist culture, India began to export not only religion, but also notions of kingship, polity, economics, agriculture, mathematics, medicine, literature, language, music, dance, painting, sculpture and architecture. Contemporary Indian and Southeast Asian arts reflect a merger between Indian and local sensitivities and a restless quest to establish a distinctively national identities through the manipulation of the arts.

Integrating different types of learning, such as classroom lectures, readings, site visits, workshops, and varied cultural experiences may be challenging. Occasionally, it may be challenging to appreciate the varied presentation styles of local scholars, as Indian pedagogical styles differ from American teaching methods. This aspect of the course is a critical part of the cross-cultural experience.

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Learning Outcomes
At the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Articulate basic familiarity with the broad outlines of Indian and Burmese arts and their covalent religious structures;
- Discuss issues of Indic art history as expressed through the creation of the national identity discourse and their importance in contemporary society and politics;
- Understand, through the integration of classroom and site visits, that religions, sculpture, painting, architecture, literature and music, and dance are all interwoven in their devotional and aesthetic purpose;
- Demonstrate learning that fieldwork and classroom work must be wholly integrative and mutually supportive for successful art historical study;
- Discuss the long historical trajectory of Indian arts and religions and their contributions to Burmese, Pan-Asian and world cultures;
- Specify and articulate the historical interactions with the many foreign visitors, pilgrims, invaders and colonizers that have shaped the arts and national identity of India and Myanmar;
- Demonstrate an aptitude for thoughtful observation and nuanced connoisseurship in the arts, through study of both postmodernist critical theory and Indian historical aesthetic philosophies, such as rasa.

Course Requirements

Walks, Excursions, Workshop, Presentations and Classroom Integration
This is a program focused on the arts of India and Myanmar (Burma). It makes sense for students to leave the classroom and actually study Hindu temples in situ, Buddhist pilgrimage in situ, colonial architecture in situ, dance in situ, and theatre in situ, etc. There can never be an equivalent classroom experience to the value of walking through a site with a knowledgeable teacher.

It is important to remember you are on the program, not as tourists, but as students. The field experience must be supported by readings and classroom lectures. Students are guided towards awareness of thoughtful observation and away from the tourist perspective of casual sightseeing and tourist photography.

Excursions and workshops provide invaluable opportunities for students to think “outside the box,” and to negotiate and analyze an art historical or performance evaluation in the field. Fieldwork builds confidence in connoisseurship, quick and decisive analytical skills, thoughtful articulation, and the necessary integration of research/classroom/reading information with assessment of field-based performance and visual arts.

The NIA Seminar coincides with the Delhi homestay period and includes the following activities: attendance at the lecture series, submission of written assignments, analysis of required readings at synthesis sessions, participation in excursions (both in India and Myanmar), and participation in the workshops.

Short Excursion

Lectures (36 class hours) & Delhi Walks (12 class hours)
Due to logistical realities, the seminar schedule will vary each semester. Readings are to be found in sequential lecture order in the NIA course reader. To avoid luggage weight there will be a separate reader for our excursion period.

Lectures, excursions and Delhi walks involve interactive learning and discussion. The city name, e.g., (Delhi), indicates the location where the lecture and discussion will take place.

INR NIA Lectures

1) Nationalism in Indian Art History. Dr. Mary Storm. (Delhi)

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2) Separate Laws: Hindu, Muslim, and Christian: The Challenges of a Plural Society, Dr Azim Khan (Delhi)

3) Rasa: Indian Aesthetic Theory. Dr. Mary Storm. (Delhi)

4) The Semiotics of Indian Art: Breaking down the Purpose of Symbolism, Dr. Mary Storm (Delhi)

5) Introduction to the Hindu World: From the Vedas to Hindutva
   Dr. R.P. Bahuguna (Delhi)

6) Reading Ancient Texts in a Modern World: The Case of the Bodhicaryāvatāra, Dr. Mary Storm (Delhi)

7) History of the Cities of Delhi. Part 2 Mr. Tapan Chakravarty, (Delhi)

8) History of the Cities of Delhi. Part 1 Mr. Tapan Chakravarty, (Delhi)

9) Indian Classical Dance. Dr. Urmimala Sarkar. (Delhi)

10) Film Music and the Common Man Ms. Shika Jhinghan. (Delhi)

Long Excursion (see “Course Detail: Excursions” for more information)

11) Owning Buddhism: is Buddhism still an “Indian” Religion? Dr. Mary Storm (Bodhgaya)
    Vinay Lal, “Buddhism’s Disappearance from India,” https://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/southasia/Religions

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12) **The Merit-Based World of Burmese Buddhism**
   Dr. Mary Storm (Bagan)

13) **Buddhist Identity Revival in Myanmar**
   TBD (Yangon)

14) **The 18th and 19th c. Re-Discovery of Buddhist Texts and Teachings**
   TBD (Kolkata)

15) **Pilgrimage and Sacred Geography**
   Dr. Rana B.P. Singh and Mr. Ajay Pande (Varanasi)

16) **Buddhist Revival: The Roots of Modern Buddhism**
   Dr. Mary Storm (Sarnath)

17) **Textiles of Benares**
   Dr. Anjan Chakravorty (Varanasi)

18) **Social Fabric of Indian Theatre**
   Dr. Bishnupriya Dutt. (Delhi)

19) **Calendar Art: The Mass Production of the Holy Image**
   Mr. Yousuf Saeed (Delhi)

20) **Modernist and Contemporary Art: Does it still need to be “Indian?”**
    Dr. Shukla Sawant. (Delhi)

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Final Seminar Discussion: National Identity, Religion, and the Arts
This two-hour session asks students to debate the question of “How has India Helped to Create a Pan-Asian Identity? Whose identity?” and to defend their Independent Study Project proposals in conversation with seminar themes.

Short Weekend Excursion

Agra (6 class hours)
Taj Mahal and environs; Itimad ud Daula; Tomb of Akbar, Sikandra; Red Fort
The Mughals were Central Asians who invaded India in the 16th century in search of empire. Their dominance resulted in a unified empire encompassing the Subcontinent from present day Afghanistan to Bangladesh, from Kashmir to the Southern Deccan Plateau. The Mughal Empire was famous for wealth, power and luxuriant arts and architecture. Along with the ancient Empire of Ashoka, the Mughal Empire created a model for the creation of the modern Indian nation state. During the 17th century, before the Mughal capital was shifted to Delhi, Agra was the seat of the Mughal court in India. The city was strategically located on the banks of the Yamuna River and along the Grand Trunk Road, and it flourished under the patronage of the emperors Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jahan. The city attracted artists from Persia, Central Asia, and other parts of India who built the luxurious forts, palaces, and mausoleums that still stand today. Of these structures, the best known are the Taj Mahal and Agra Fort, which have been declared World Heritage Sites by UNESCO. This is unquestionably the best place to understand the glories of the Mughal period.

Lecture: The Creation of an Imperial Image: Mughal Patronage
Dr. Mary Storm (Agra)

Long Excursion

Bodhgaya (4 Class Hours)
Mahabodhi temple, Bodhi Tree, Bhutan temple, Japanese temple, Thai temple.

Bodhgaya marks the place of the Awakening of Gautama Siddhartha under the Bodhi Tree. As it remains today, Bodhgaya has been a place of pilgrimage for 2600 years. The Mahabodhi temple has seen years of construction, decay and reconstruction. Over the years many foreigners have come to Bodhgaya to meditate under the Bodhi tree. The Burmese community has been most consistently involved in the maintenance and restoration of the site.

Yangon (Rangoon), Burma/Myanmar (4 class hours)
Shwedagon Pagoda, Sule Pagoda, and below.

The former capital of Myanmar, Yangon, is a clean city - full of character. In Yangon we will visit the Shwedagon pagoda, the most glittering of Myanmar’s many pagodas and a symbol of Buddhist nationalism. We will also visit the Sule pagoda, a meeting point for pro-democracy protestors. Yangon (formerly Rangoon) is a time capsule of Asian colonial architecture. Buildings still present are the former Myanmar Railway Headquarters, the spectacular Immigration Building (once Asia’s fanciest department store, Rowe & Co), and the High Court Building built in 1914 in Queen Anne style. The Secretariat Office, also known as the Prime Minister’s Office, is where General Aung San was assassinated in 1947. We will also visit every day Burma: Street 26 Their Gyi Market offers a look at the fascinating vegetables and fruits used in Burmese cooking.

Bagan (Pagan), Burma/Myanmar (6 Class hours)
Ananda temple, Shwezigon Pagoda, Htilominlo temple, Gawdaw Palin Temple, and others.

Myanmar is a devoutly Buddhist culture, but nowhere does the rich history of Burmese Buddhism manifest with more dramatic presence than in Bagan (Pagan). From the 9th to the 13th century the rulers of Bagan built...

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thousands of temples at this site. At present 2,229 temples, stupas, and monasteries remain at the site. At the height of its wealth and power Bagan was a cosmopolitan city known for religious and secular studies. This Buddhism was a syncretic form, combining Theravada, Mahayana and Tantric Buddhism along with elements of Hinduism and indigenous animist beliefs. In the 1990s the military government restored many of the Bagan temples. However, the international community of art historians has condemned these restorations for using inappropriate materials and insensitivity to historical accuracy.

**Mandalay, Burma/Myanmar (4 class hours)**
Kuthodaw Pagoda, Mandalay Hill, Mandalay Palace, Mahamuni Buddha Temple

Mandalay was the last royal capital of Burma. Throughout the British colonial period (1824-1948) Mandalay remained a symbol of Burmese identity and sovereignty. It was a city with close Chinese contacts, and this continues to the present. This is reflected in architecture, Buddhist practice and cuisine. At Kuthodaw Pagoda, the world’s largest “book,” of Buddhist scriptures is inscribed on hundreds of marble slabs, each in its own pagoda.

**Kolkata (6 class hours)**
Indian Museum; Victoria Memorial; St Paul’s Cathedral; Park Street Cemetery; Tagore House; Marble Palace; Jain temples; Old Central Area: Writers’ Building; Mutiny Memorial; St John’s Church; Black Hole of Calcutta Memorial, Asiatic Society.

On our heritage walk we will consider the important issues of “problem heritage:” how should the architectural legacy of colonialism be understood? Kolkata is the capital of West Bengal, and is the second-largest city in India. As the former imperial capital, it retains some of the country’s most striking colonial buildings. The history of the city dates back to 1690 when Job Charnock established a new factory for the East India Company, and the city of Calcutta was born. In 1773, Calcutta became the headquarters and nascent capital of the British administration in India. The British shaped the architecture and culture of the city through the construction of imposing Victorian Neo-Gothic buildings, churches, and boulevards. Simultaneously, there occurred a renaissance of Bengali art and literature, and a strong nationalist reform movement. Calcutta prospered as the commercial and political capital of British Raj until 1911, when the capital was moved to Delhi.

**Varanasi (4 class hours)**
River Ghats; Historical River Boat Ride, Pilgrimage walk

Varanasi is one of the oldest living cities in the world, and is arguably one of the most intense in all of India. For more than 2500 years, the city has attracted seekers and pilgrims. It is also where visitors will experience what is said to be the most sacred stretch of the Ganges River. It is believed that to die in Varanasi on the banks of its holy river is to receive moksha, and to be liberated from the cycle of life and death. In addition to its intense spirituality, Varanasi is also known for its textiles. A wide range of brocade saris, scarves, and Tibetan-style fabrics are made and sold in the city.

**Course Detail: Small Group Workshops and Additional Learning Activities**

**Workshops (10 class hours)**
Five days either in South India studying architecture of the great temples or five days in Molela village doing an intensive hands-on pottery practicum. The workshops allow students to study the religious/art historical culture of South India or to become immersed into a distinctive North Indian art form.

**South India Workshop:** Students who choose to go on the South India workshop will be introduced to the great temples of South India. During this workshop we will discuss the integration of Hinduism into every aspect of South Indian life. We will consider patterns of patronage, shifts in devotional practice such as bhakti and tantrism, the purpose of imagery: stone, bronze and painting. We will study the reciprocal concepts of darshan, the economy of the temple, the development of literature, music and dance linked to religious life and the spread of Indic culture from South India to the rest of Southeast Asia.

**Molela Workshop:** Students will stay in the nearby Hindu pilgrimage town of Nathdwara, but will spend their days 9-5 in the famous pottery village of Molela, Rajasthan. While in Molela, they will learn to make the distinctive Hindu devotional terracotta plaques that are the products of this village. Students will work

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with an awarded craftsman, the descendant of many generation of a pottery family. This is a chance to experience village life and the hands-on practice of a hereditary craft.

Student Presentations and Directed Reading Discussions (8 class hours)
Hindu Deity Presentations
Excursion Group Presentation
Workshop Group Presentation
Reading Discussions

Bodhicaryāvatārā Readings (8 class hours)
We will read the Bodhicaryāvatārā (also titled Bodhisattva-caryāvatāra, meaning the Way of the Bodhisattva) in English translation from the Sanskrit. This is an Eighth century root text of Mahāyana Buddhism. It is written in 10 chapters, in poetic form, explaining the value of bodhicitta, a “wise heart,” or awakened mind. The Bodhicaryāvatārā was written by Śāntideva, a Buddhist monk-scholar associated with the ancient university of Nalanda in Bihar. The text is considered one of the masterpieces of medieval Asian literature. The Bodhicaryāvatārā was chosen because it is accessible to modern readers, it is still an important texts for millions of Buddhists, and it has many commentaries and translations. This text helps students gain insight into an important period in the development of Indian religious thought and aesthetic theory and to understand those developments as they were exported to the rest of Asia.

Other Activities
Music Recital and discussion

Evaluation and Grading Criteria
For all assignments it is important to read the directions below and follow them. For example, if you are asked to use topic headers, please do so. Keep in mind that participation includes many factors including culturally appropriate good manners.

- **Two Response Essays:** Students are required to submit a typed, analytical book response essay. The possible books have been listed in pre-departure assignments. Students are also expected to write an analytical response essay of the film Jodhaa Akbar.
- **Walks and Talks:** mandatory walks and talks about different aspects of Delhi with our faculty. Students are expected to keep current with assigned readings and to take notes while in the field.
- **Hindu Deities:** one 5-minute oral presentation on an assigned Hindu deity. Illustrations must be included.
- **Monument Response Paper:** 4-page paper in the DIE format on a monument chosen from the list. Illustrations must be included.
- **Excursion and Workshop presentations.** A student led brief oral presentations on our major excursion and the workshops.
- **Deity Presentation:** students will give a five minute presentation of a Hindu deity.
- **One Final Essay Exam:** The Final Exam will be a take home essay. Information from lectures, readings, excursions, and personal explorations should be integrated into the essays. Examinations will be marked on the accuracy of the information, quality of analysis, variety of sources, and clarity of presentation.
- **ISP Proposal Defense & Final Thematic Discussion:** students will gather to present their ISP topics for AD and group consideration in light of the program theme. Students must be ready to discuss topic relevance, critical theory, methodology, bibliography, ethics and logistics.
- **Participation:** The depth and quality of students’ participation in all aspects of the course is considered for evaluation, including: cultural awareness and sensitivity, participation in reading discussions, conscientious, prompt and courteous presence at all lectures, walks, excursions and workshops, as well as excellence of performance in the excursion, practicum and workshop presentations.

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Grading Assessment Criteria for this Course

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grading Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Pre-Departure Book and Film Response Essays</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>(2) Monument Response, D.I.E. format (four-page paper)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>(3) Walks and Talks (active participation in the explore Delhi days keeping current with assigned readings)</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>(4) Oral Reports: Hindu Deities, Excursion Report, Workshop Report</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>(5) One Take-Home Essay Exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>(6) ISP Proposal Defense &amp; Final Thematic Discussion</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>(7) Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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Active involvement in lectures, readings, discussions and excursions using the following criteria:

- **Attendance** - promptness to class and positive presence in class.
- **Evidence of Assigned Readings.**
- **Active Listening** - attention in class and field excursions, appropriate questions, interest and enthusiasm (this includes body language), entertaining contradictory perspectives, taking notes.
- **Involvement in Class Discussions** - challenging yourself to speak up if you usually don’t, and allowing others to speak.
- **Group Accountability** – positive participation in the group during field excursions and classes, not keeping others waiting.
- **Displaying Respect** – culturally appropriate interaction with hosts, SIT program staff, AD, SIT lecturers and communities.

**Written Assignments: Expectations**

1. All written assignments are to be typed and handed into Dr. Storm’s box.
2. All components of the course must be completed satisfactorily to receive a passing grade.
3. Late papers will be graded down one half grade for every day late. Late papers will not be accepted after five days and a grade of F will be accorded to that paper. If documentation of a medical emergency is produced, extensions for meetings and written work may be negotiated. If make-ups granted due to illness are not completed within the agreed upon time, a grade of F will be recorded for that assignment.
4. Students must attend all lectures, complete all reading assignments to the best of their abilities, take an active part in all excursions, workshops, and synthesis sessions, and demonstrate cultural sensitivity as participants in the program.

Grades are calculated in the following manner:

- 94-100%  A
- 90-93%  A-
- 87-89%  B+
- 84-86%  B
- 80-83%  B-
- 77-79%  C+
- 74-76%  C
- 70-73%  C-
- 67-69%  D+
- 64-66%  D
- Below 64  F

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Expectations and Policies

**Show up prepared.** The course is based on group learning; you must participate fully. Be on time for all lectures, workshops and field trips. There are many long days; you must be well rested and have a clear head and have your readings completed and points in mind for discussion or clarification.

**Complete assignments on time.** Assignments are due by 5pm unless otherwise instructed. Assignments are docked 5% for each day or part of a day that they are late. Contact the Academic Director in advance if health or other issues prevent you from submitting an assignment on time. All assignments must be completed to get a passing grade. Graded assignments will be returned within two weeks of submission.

The whole time we are on field trips we are in class- You are not a tourist. You are expected to act appropriately; including refraining from using cameras, cell phones, iPods, Internet etc. when we are on site. Intrusive touristic photography is not acceptable during site visits. There will be time outside of class when you can take photographs.

**Comply with academic integrity policies** (no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical).

**Respect differences of opinion** (classmates’, lecturers, local constituents engaged with on the visits). You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen across difference and consider other perspectives with respect.

**Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad handbook** for policies on academic integrity, ethics, warning and probation, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and the academic appeals process. Also, refer to the specific information available in the program handbook given to you at Orientation, particularly the code of conduct, the policy on blogging and taking photographs, and the grading policy.

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