‘Indo-Muslim Civilization’ (ISLA 420)

Fall 2013

Instructor: Prashant Keshavmurthy

Class room: Room 101, McTavish 3438

Hours: Friday 2.35 – 5.25

Office and office hour: 311 Morrice Hall, Tuesday 12.00-1.00

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information).

In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

Course content and aims: This course aims to introduce students to two modes in which the Islamic cultures of South Asia have been represented from the tenth century C.E. to the mid twentieth: the aesthetic and the historiographical. The course assumes no prior knowledge of South Asia in students and will thus include readings, key-word lists and maps from introductory narrative histories. Premised on the idea that representations of the past are valuable to the extent that they address present concerns, each set of readings on a topic in this course will begin chronologically in the present and end at a point in the past. While contemporary representations of the topic in question address its controversial aspects today, our subsequent
study of the topic’s earlier representations will aim to put into question or complicate the contemporary ones. Each such set of readings will combine aesthetic (literary, architectural, painted and cinematic) and historiographical texts in varying proportions.

By the end of the course students should be able to contextualize contemporary invocations of South Asia’s Islamic pasts by assigning these invocations aesthetic and historical contexts that put them into question. In this sense, this course aims to prepare students to pose critical questions about why, how and when Indo-Islamic pasts are produced.

**Instructional method:** Each class will combine lecturing, student-presentations on the week’s readings and instructor-led discussions in varying proportions.

**Method of evaluation:** while varying portions of every class will be taken up by a lecture by the instructor, students will be called upon in pairs to make joint presentations of 10 minutes each person at the beginning of every class on the readings of the week or fortnight. You will be expected in these presentations, *not to summarize the week’s readings, but to raise critical questions with regard to it.* These 10 minutes class presentations along with participation in class discussions, weekly attendance and performance in map-quizzes and key-word tests will account for 30% of your final grade. The mid term paper will account for another 30% and the final essay for the remaining 40% of your final grade.

Topics for the mid-term paper and final essay must be devised in consultation with the instructor and will be judged for coherence of over-all argument, interpretative insight and grammatical correctness. Your weekly
readings for this course will range between 90 to 120 pages per week.

**Texts to be purchased:** as you will have access to most of the texts on this syllabus through WEBCT or through PDFs I will send you, you will only need to buy from McGill Bookstore: 1. Gyanendra Pandey, *Remembering Partition* and 2. Abdullah Hussein, *The Weary Generations*.

**Note:** please print out the PDFs. Do not read from your laptops to class.

**Weekly reading schedule**

**Theme: The beginnings of Muslim political power in South Asia:**

**WEEK 1:**

(September 6) **Class 1:**

i) Introductions and choosing your texts for class presentations.


**Week 2:**

(September 13) **Class 2:**


Situating India’ and ‘The Expansion of Turkic Power: 1180 – 1350’.

WEEK 3:
(September 20) Class 3:
i) Mirza Ghalib’s “Taqreez” on Sayyad Ahmad Khan’s ‘Ai’n’ (1855-56) at http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00fwp/srf/txt_ghalib_sirsayyid.html

Week 4:
(September 27) Class 4:
WEEK 5:
(October 4) Class 5:
We will spend the first 10 minutes of this class on a map quiz. You will be required to identify places on an unmarked map of South Asia. You will already have encountered these places in the maps included in your readings.
Students should also have decided by this date on their mid-term essay topic in consultation with the instructor.

Week 6:
(October 11) Class 6:
The first 20 minutes of this class will be spent on a key-word test. You will be required to briefly gloss 20 South Asian key words from a
selection of 30. You will already have encountered these words in your readings.


ii) Sunil Kumar, ‘Qutb and Modern Memory’ (from The Present in Delhi’s Pasts: Five Essays, Three Essays Collective, 2008).


Theme: Conversion to Islam:

Week 7:
(October 18) Class 7:


WEEK 4:
(October 25): Class 8:
Mid-term essays are due on this day.


Theme: Sultanate and Mughal Rule as Muslim rule:

WEEK 5:
Class 9 (November 1):


iii) Shahid Amin, ‘On Telling the Muslim Conquest of North India’ (from History and the Present, ed. Partha Chatterjee and Anjan Ghosh, (Permanent Black, 2002).


WEEK 6:
Class 10 (November 8):

ii) A selection of Safavid/Mughal paintings to be examined with an attention to features Minissale calls your attention to. Students will be sent these images.

Class 11: (November 15):


iv) The following selections from Catherine B. Asher & Cynthia Talbot, India Before Europe (Cambridge University press, 2006): ‘Elite Cultures in
Seventeenth Century South Asia’ and ‘Challenging Central Authority, 1650 – 1750’.

Theme: Partitions

Class 12: (November 22):

Class 13: (November 29):