

Politics 378
Politics in India
Fall 2006

Atul Kohli
Tues. & Thurs. 11:00-11:50am
Room: McCosh 60
Office hours: Tuesday, 1:45-4:15pm
Office: 323 Bendheim Hall

Preceptor: Prerna Singh
prenas@princeton.edu

This course will introduce students to politics in the large subcontinental country of India. The themes discussed during the course will be those that are both important to India and to a general study of politics in a developing country. The following questions will help organize the course: How does one make sense of democracy in a poor, multi-ethnic setting? How has democratic politics shaped and been shaped by a society divided along numerous lines such as caste, class, and linguistic and religious identities? And how well has India's democratic state fared in promoting economic development, both growth and equity?

In addition to course lectures, students will be expected to read regularly and to participate in precepts. I have tried to keep weekly readings to around 150 pages. Course grade will be determined by two exams, and by the quality of participation in the precepts. The reading material for the course will be available both as books ordered at the University bookstore and as a xeroxed collection of articles/chapters at Pequod.

The following books ought to be available at the bookstore:

Paul Brass, The Politics of India since Independence, 1994 (from here on, Brass).

Atul Kohli, ed., The Success of India's Democracy, 2001 (from here on, Kohli).

Stuart Corbridge and John Harriss, Reinventing India, 2000 (from here on C & H).

Part I: Political Change in India (4 weeks)

Week 1: Introduction to the course

The first two lectures will lay out some of the main themes of the course, clarify some conceptual issues, as well as your responsibilities in the course (all this in lecture 1) and then (in lecture 2) provide a quick overview of Indian politics, including a little more detailed discussion of the historical background. **There will be no precepts in the first week.**

Required readings

Brass 1-63; Corbridge and Harriss, 3-42; and Kohli, 1-46 (Introduction and the essay by Sumit Sarkar).

Reference: Atul Kohli and Amrita Basu, “India” (in the reader). This is not a “required reading.” However, it provides a quick overview of Indian politics that will help you situate various specific pieces of information in some coherent whole.

Recommended readings

For historical background, consult one or more of the following:

Barbara Metcalf and Thomas Metcalf, A Concise History of India, 2002.

Stanley Wolpert, A New History of India, 1982.

Sumit Sarkar, Modern India, 1885-1947, 1989.

Herman Kulke and Dietmar Rothermund, A History of India, 1986.

Bipan Chandra, et. al., India’s Struggle for Independence, 1857-1947, 1998.

Week 2: Nehru’s India

The focus this week will be on political changes in India during the Nehru years. For precepts come prepared to discuss such issues: what factors help explain the consolidation of nation-state and the routinization of democracy in India; how was the trade off between creating political order and creating an effective developmental state resolved in India; and what significant problems did Nehru fail to address.

Required readings

Corbridge and Harriss, 43-66; Bipan Chandra, et. al., India after Independence (1999), 68-184, plus footnotes on 508-12 (in the reader).

Recommended readings

Rajni Kothari, Politics in India, 1970.

W.H. Morris Jones, the Government and Politics of India, 1964.

S. Gopal, Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography (3 volumes), 1984.

Week 3: Indira Gandhi Years

This week we will focus mainly on the challenges to Indian democracy that emerged during Indira Gandhi's rule, and on how she responded to them, often by centralizing power in her person. We will especially want to understand some such issues: was Indira Gandhi more a cause or a consequence of deinstitutionalization of Indian politics; was her early radicalism mainly political opportunism, and how might one understand her subsequent conservative turn.

Required readings

Corbridge and Harriss, 67-92; Bipan Chandra, et.al India after Independence (1999) 217-72 (in the reader); Henry Hart, "Political Leadership in India," in Atul Kohli, ed., India's Democracy, 1988, 18-61 (in the reader).

Recommended readings

Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph, In Pursuit of Lakshmi, 1987.

Atul Kohli, ed. India's Democracy, 1988.

Pupul Jayakar, Indira Gandhi: An Intimate Biography, 1992.

Katherine Frank, Indira, 2002.

Week 4: Contemporary India, 1985-2006

We will review the political changes over the last two decades, especially growing political fragmentation on the one hand, and the emergence of business power as well as the rise of a right wing Hindu nationalist party, The BJP, on the other hand. For discussion, focus on the following: what is the nature of the numerous challenges to central control that have emerged in recent years; how does one best understand the reemergence of communal politics; in spite of a variety of destabilizing movements, why does Indian democracy still appear relatively secure.

Required readings

Corbridge and Harriss 93-142, 173-230; Niraja Gopal Jayal, "Politics: The BJP Falls from Power" in Alyssa Ayres and Philip Oldenburg, eds., India Briefing, 2005, 9-44 (in the reader).

Recommended readings

Francine Frankel, India's Political Economy, 2005.

Thomas Hansen, Saffron Wave, 1999.

Pratap Mehta, The Burden of Democracy, 2003.

Bimal Jalan, The Future of India, 2005.

Part II: State and Society (4 weeks)Week 5: State Institutions

Both the political and the bureaucratic institutions of the Indian state will be the focus of our study this week. In addition to understanding the basic architecture of the Indian state, come prepared to discuss the following: how well have parliamentary institutions adapted to a social context that is (or was) arguably not very democratic; how and why does India's federalism work; and what role does the judiciary play in India.

Required readings

Brass, 116-47; and Kohli, 49-162 (essays by Jyoti Dasgupta, James Manor, Subrata Mitra and Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph).

Recommended readings

Stephen Cohen, The Indian Army, 1971.

David Potter, India's Political Administrators, 1996.

Granville Austin, The Indian Constitution, 1966.

Week 6: Political Parties

The focus this week will be on the changes in the main parties, especially the Congress, The CPM, and the BJP, as well as on the changing party system. For discussions come prepared to discuss your understanding of how the Congress party has been transformed in recent decades and how one explains the emergence of the BJP.

Required reading

Brass, 67-115; Kohli, 163-90 (essay by Amrita Basu); Pradeep Chhibber, "Do Party Systems Count?", Comparative Political Studies, 37 (2), 152-87 (in the reader); Manali Desai, "Party Formation, Political Power, and the Capacity for Reform," Social Forces, 80 (1), 37-60 (in the reader).

Recommended readings

Myron Weiner, Party Building in a New Nation: The Indian National Congress, 1967.

Atul Kohli, Democracy and Discontent, 1991.

Christofe Jafferlot, The Hindu Nationalist Movement in Indian Politics, 1996.

Pradeep Chhibber, Democracy without Associations, 1999.

Week 7: Caste and Class

The focus in this and the next week will shift away from political institutions and towards a variety of social forces that impinge upon Indian democracy. A variety of social cleavages that do or do not become politicized will be analyzed. Think about the following issues: in spite of enormous poverty and inequality, why has India not experienced more class revolts; how has the politics of caste changed; what is the political significance of a variety of social movements, including those around gender and environment issues.

Required readings

Brass, 247-64; Kohli, 191-269 (essay by Myron Weiner, Pranab Bardhan and Mary Katzenstein et. al.); Patrick Heller, "Degrees of Democracy," World Politics, 52 (4) 2000, 484-519 (in the reader.)

Recommended reading

Oliver Mendelsohn and Manika Vicziany, The Untouchables, 1998.

Francine Frankel and M.S.A. Rao, eds., Dominance and State Power in Modern India, (2 volumes), 1989.

Pranab Bardhan, Political Economy of Development in India, 1985.

Gail Omvedt, Reinventing Revolution, 1993.

Patricia Jeffrey and Amrita Basu, eds., Appropriating Gender: Women's Activism and Politicized Religion in South Asia, 1998.

Week 8: Ethnicity and Identity Politics

Hindu-Muslim conflicts, as well as a variety of regional demands vis-à-vis the center, will be analyzed this week. For discussions, come prepared to talk about the following: what are the best explanations for the prevalence of Hindu-Muslim conflict in India; and how does one make sense of the numerous regional demands as well as of the successful accommodation of most—but by no means all—of these demands.

Required reading

Brass, 151-247; Kohli, “Can Democracies Accommodate Ethnic Nationalism”? (in the reader), Journal of Asian Studies, 56 (2), 1997, 323-44; Ashutosh Varshney, “Ethnic Conflict and Civil Society” World Politics, April 2001, 362-98. (in the reader) and Steven Wilkinson, Votes and Violence, 2004, Introduction (in the reader).

Recommended reading

Ashutosh Varshney, Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life, 2002.

Steven Wilkinson, Votes and Violence, 2004.

Kanchan Chandra, Why Ethnic Parties Succeed, 2004.

Part III: Political Economy (3 weeks)

Week 9: State Directed Development

During these two lectures we will discuss the origins, institutionalization and the performance of India’s statist model of economic development. For discussion consider the following: why did India adopt a highly statist model of development; and what were the main achievements and failures of this chosen strategy of change.

Require readings

Brass, 273-89, 303-19; Kohli, State Directed Development, 257-90 (in the reader); and Bipan Chandra, India after Independence, 2000, 339-64, 411-20 (in the reader.)

Recommended readings

Baldev Raj Nayar, India’s Mixed Economy, 1989.

Francine Frankel, India’s Political Economy, 2005.

Bimal Jalan, India’s Economic Crisis, 1991.

Jagdish Bhagwati, India in Transition, 1993.

Sukhamoy Chakravarty, Development Planning: The Indian Experience, 1988.

Week 10: Politics of Rapid Economic Growth

India's economy has grown fairly rapidly since about 1980. During this week we will focus on the political underpinnings of this economic change. Precept discussions might include such issues: how does one evaluate India's economic liberalization; how does a statist interpretation of growth acceleration in India differ from a neoliberal one; and why does the Indian government find it so difficult to invest in infrastructure and other public goods.

Required readings

Corbridge and Harriss 143-72; Isher Ahluwalia, "Indian Economy" in Alyssa Ayres and Philip Oldenburg, India Briefing, 2005, 45-80 (in the reader); and Atul Kohli, "Politics of Economic Growth in India," Economic and Political Weekly, April 1 and 8, 2006, 1251-59, 1361-70 (in the reader).

Recommended readings

Rob Jenkins, Democratic Politics and Economic Reform in India, 1999.

Dani Rodrik and Arvind Subramanian, 2004 "From 'Hindu Growth' to Productivity Surge," 2004. Unpublished manuscript, March (available on request; also available on Rodrik's web site).

T.N. Srinivasan and S. Tendulkar, Reintegrating India with the World Economy, 2003.

Week 11: Politics, Poverty and Redistribution

A variety of distributive issues that impinge on the "life chances" of the common Indian, especially education, land reforms and targeted efforts at poverty alleviation, will be the focus of our deliberations this week. Consider the following: why has land redistribution met with so little success in India; how well have other types of poverty alleviation efforts fared; why do the poor in India not revolt more; and how well do women fare in India?

Required readings

Brass, 289-302, 320-35; Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen, India: Development and Participation 2002, 1-33, 64-93, 143-88, 229-74 (in the reader).

Recommended Readings

Atul Kohli, The State and Poverty in India, 1987.

Patrick Heller, The Labor of Development, 1999.

Jean Dreze and A.K. Sen, India: Development and Participation, 2002.

Angus Deaton and Jean Dreze, "Poverty and Inequality in India," Economic and Political Weekly, Sept. 7, 2002, 3729-48.

Part IV: Conclusion (1 week).

Week 12: Conclusion

In the last week we will try to pull together a variety of themes developed during the course. The very last lecture (on Dec. 14) will be a review session, led by Prerna Singh.

Required readings

Brass, 336-67; Corbridge and Harriss, 231-40.