



Steering Committee News



Dr. Gareth Nellis, a longstanding member of the South Asia Initiative's Steering Committee and Associate Professor of Political Science has joined the University of Pennsylvania as an Associate Professor of Political Science. We thank Prof Nellis for all his contributions to SAI. We will miss him and wish him all the best in his new position!



SAI warmly welcomes Aniket De as our newest Steering Committee member. Dr. Aniket De is Assistant Professor of History, where he is building a curriculum of South Asian and Indian Ocean History. He is the author of *The Boundary of Laughter: Popular Performances across Borders in South Asia* (Oxford, 2021), and is currently writing his second monograph on the history of federalism in colonial India.

Calendar of Events

The Department of Anthropology
The Ramanathan Tang Foundation Speaker Series
and the South Asia Initiative present

Water Beings and Commercial Aquaculture in India's Sundarbans Delta



Calynn Dowler
Assistant Professor of Religious Studies and Climate & Environmental Studies, Vanderbilt University
Author, *Undercurrents: Water Cosmologies and Ethics in India's Sundarbans Delta*



RSVP for Lunch

Wednesday, February 11
SSB 102
11:00 am – 12:30pm



Calynn Dowler is a cultural anthropologist specializing in South Asia. Her research explores ecological cosmologies and socio-environmental change in the Sundarbans of West Bengal, India. Her current book project, *Undercurrents: Water Cosmologies and Ethics in India's Sundarbans Delta*, traces how a multi-faith community of Hindus, Muslims, and Christians sustain and transform spiritual relationships with water and the deltaic environment amid capital-intensive development, religious reform, and climate change. Her broader research engages questions of multispecies entanglements in contexts of ecological precarity, religion and moral economy, and ritual and performance studies.

FILM SCREENING AND FILMMAKER Q&A



LONGING SUITE

LONGING SUITE IS A MEDITATIVE VIDEOPOEM THAT TRACES THE ARC OF A HEART-MIND-BODY AWAKENING TO THE FEMININE DIVINE AND THE SACRED IN ALL THAT EXISTS. GRANDI AND MANI BUILD ON A CYCLE OF POEMS WRITTEN BY MANI IN THE 1990S TO CONTINUE THEIR TRANSMEDIA EXPERIMENTS IN KALEIDOSCOPIC STORYTELLING. DRAWING AESTHETIC INSPIRATION FROM THE DYNAMICS OF THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY LONGING SUITE OFFERS AN EVOCATIVE VISUAL AND SENSORIAL EXPERIENCE AT ONCE INDIVIDUAL AND UNIVERSAL.

BY

LATA MANI & NICOLÁS GRANDI

DR. MANI WILL JOIN ON ZOOM FOR A VIRTUAL Q&A AFTER THE SCREENING



Tuesday, February 24th 2026

3:30-4:50 PM

**Public Engagement Building
(PEB), Room 721 (In Sixth College)**

When: Tuesday, February 24th at 3:30 PM

Where: Public Engagement Building (PEB), Room 721 (Sixth College)

Lata Mani

is a historian whose books and articles span feminism, colonialism, illness, spiritual philosophy, and contemporary politics. Raised in Mumbai and London and educated in Political Science at Delhi University, she later taught Women's Studies at UC Davis before a 1993 head injury reshaped her work toward disability, spirituality, and social justice.

Based in Oakland, CA, her recent book *Myriad Intimacies* (Duke University Press, 2022) won the 2023 Nautilus Book Award Silver for Lyric Prose.

Nicolás Grandi

His work spans film, poetry, music, and sculpture, exploring the evolving relationship between images and words while deliberately challenging disciplinary boundaries and conventional narrative forms. With a strong focus on facilitating transcultural dialogue, his artistic practice emphasizes learning that bridges theory, reflexivity, and praxis in collaborative settings. He teaches at UNTREF and directs the Medialab for young artists at Otro Mundo in Argentina.

SAS Minor Course Offerings Winter 2026

South Asian Studies Minor



WINTER 2026 COURSE OFFERINGS



CORE

- ANTH 87. India and the US: from democracy to authoritarianism? (1 unit, must be petitioned)
HISA 120. Race and Empire in South Asia (4 units)
MUS 95W. Indian Classical Ensemble (2 units, can be taken twice)

ELECTIVE

- ANSC 148. Global Health and Cultural Diversity
ANSC 166. Film and Culture in Asia
ANSC 184. Food, Culture, and Society
ANTH 45. Wisdom and Ecstasy
ANTH 188. Cultures of Healing
ANTH 109. Climate Change, Heritage, and Vulnerability
COMM 106i. Internet Industries
ECON 116. Economic Development
ECON 138. Economics of Discrimination
ECON 185. Detecting Discrimination in Data
GLBH 100. Special Topics in Global Health: Demography and Social Networks in Global Health
GLBH 113. Women's Health in Global Perspective
LTEN 181. Asian American Literature: Transoceanic Film Corridors
POLI 117. Bending the Curve: Climate Change Solutions
POLI 122. Politics of Human Rights

ADDITIONAL COURSES FOR THE SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES MINOR CAN BE PETITIONED

FOR QUESTIONS ABOUT THE SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES MINOR, PLEASE EMAIL:

LYDIA RAMIREZ - LPRAMIREZ@UCSD.EDU

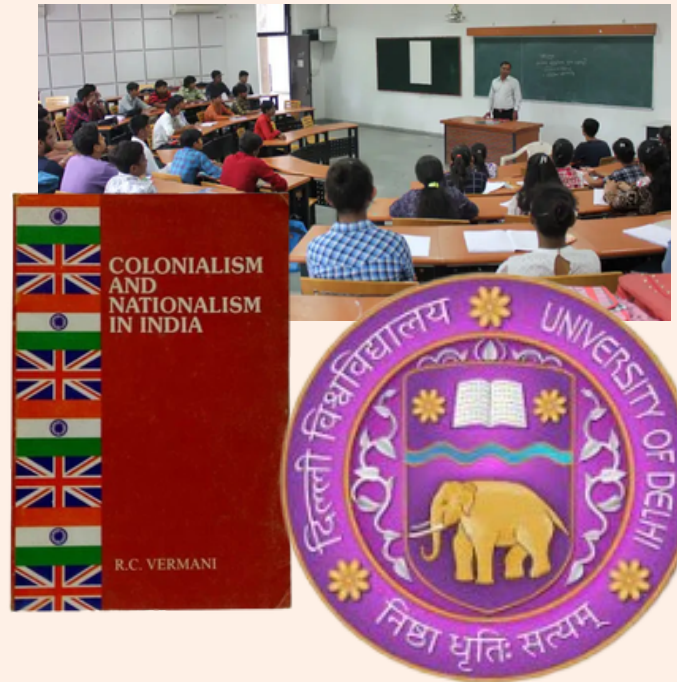
OR SAIBA VARMA - S2VARMA@UCSD.EDU

South Asian Studies Minor Course Spotlight

ANSC 152: Social Justice in South Asia

Learning Democracy Through Lived Experience by Tavishaa Vanjani

This ethnographic interview centers on Tavishaa's grandfather, a retired political science professor who lived through the Partition and spent decades teaching democracy and citizenship. Professor Vermani's story reveals how historical trauma, caste, and political pressure shape who feels safe speaking in classrooms today. Professor Vermani described teaching as a public service, where protecting students' ability to question freely is an act of social justice. The project links personal memory to course themes, showing how education can resist inequality without looking like traditional activism. It reframes democracy as something built daily through mentorship, patience, and the creation of safe spaces for difficult conversations.



Art as an Emotional Infrastructure by Bhavika Ailawadi



This ethnographic interview centers on Kamiya Dargan, an art therapist and founder of MyPerch, whose work engages the urban poor navigating trauma, inequality, and emotional precarity. Dargan's account reveals how structural violence shapes whose emotions are heard, suppressed, or rendered invisible in educational and NGO spaces. She frames art-making not as enrichment, but as emotional infrastructure: a necessary language through which participants process grief, anger, and confusion when verbal expression is unsafe or unavailable. The project links personal narratives and observed artwork to broader theories of gendered emotional labor and embodied trauma. The interview demonstrates how collective art practices create temporary but meaningful spaces of safety, allowing marginalized individuals to reclaim emotional agency without overt political protest. Ultimately, the project reframes social justice as everyday, relational work—built through listening, patience, and the cultivation of environments where healing can begin quietly, through color, form, and shared presence.

[Click to view the presentation](#)



South Asian Studies library guide

Working on a paper
or research project
related to South
Asia? Check out our
brand new library
guide



For more information or
for research help, reach
out to UCSD Librarian,
Cristela Garcia-Spitz at
cgarciaspitz@ucsd.edu

SAI Faculty in the News

In Higher Ed Drive, Dr. Gaurav Khanna notes that “enrolling more Chinese students allows universities to expand their offerings, and it leads to the growth of these new master’s programs in STEM, and that kind of essentially allows there to be increasing enrollment for American students and other international students”

find the link to the full article [here!](#)



Dr. Gaurav Khanna is an associate professor of economics at the School of Global Policy and Strategy. He is also a nonresident fellow at the Center for Global Development and an editor at the Journal of Labor Economics, whose research is primarily focused on development and labor economics.

Animal Cultures, Under Rising Threat, Are Key To Species Survival, argues Dr. Shermin de Silva

“A changing world doesn’t just erase existing cultures: it creates new ones. As the Arctic continues to warm, hungry polar bears are digging muzzle-deep into garbage dumps instead of hunting seals on sea ice—an increasingly common behavior that’s problematic for both bears and humans. When we think of dumpster-diving, the word culture may not come up, Dr. de Silva explained. “But that’s what’s going on.”

We’ve long assumed animals are born knowing what to eat and where to go, de Silva pointed out—but that’s simply not true. “It’s helpful to think about culture as this alternative inheritance mechanism,” she said... Yet conservation policies, for the most part, have been slow to reflect this understanding. They “usually tend to be crafted around numbers,” de Silva said. And that’s no longer enough. Culture, once considered rare and confined to a select few, is emerging as widespread—and, for some in the animal kingdom, foundational.

find the link to the full article [here!](#)



Dr. Shermin de Silva is an Assistant Professor of Ecology, Behavior and Evolution. She is a biologist and conservation scientist with close to 20 years of experience primarily focused on the behavior, ecology and conservation of Asian elephants as Director of the Udawalawe Elephant Research Project in Sri Lanka.

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WEEKS 3-9

<https://linktr.ee/ihouseucsd>

PostDoc Opportunity

Yale University

South Asian Studies Council: Postdoctoral Associate in South Asian Studies, 2026–27

The South Asian Studies Council at the MacMillan Center invites applications for a Postdoctoral Associate position at Yale University for the 2026–2027 academic year. Candidates must have research and teaching experience relevant to modern and contemporary South Asia, in the humanities or social sciences.

The salary for this position is commensurate with experience and complies with the Yale Office of Postdoctoral Affairs [compensation policy](#) and includes a [benefits package](#). We will accept applications immediately with review beginning on February 15, 2026 and continuing until the selections are final.

Qualifications

All applicants must have completed their PhD by the time of appointment. The PhD must be awarded between 2022 and the time of the appointment. Graduate students who are working on their PhDs may apply but must present proof of having completed and filed their dissertations, even if awaiting formal conferral of the PhD degree. Fluency in English is required, as is in-depth knowledge of at least one South Asian language. During the two semesters of this appointment, the Postdoctoral Associate will teach one course related to their interests per semester, pursue their own research, and participate in the activities of the South Asian Studies Council. Selected Postdoctoral Associates are expected to be in residence in New Haven, Connecticut for the full duration of the appointment to take an active part in the intellectual exchange with other members of the Council and the MacMillan Center.

Application Instructions

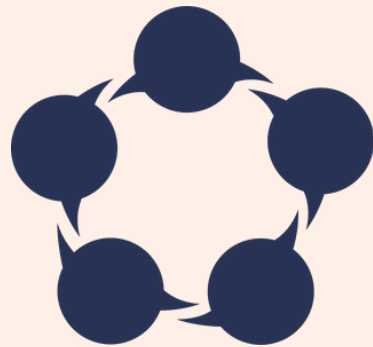
Applicants should submit a cover letter; a one-page description of research plans; a draft of a course syllabus and a title and brief summary of a second course; and a CV. Letters of reference are not required at this initial stage but will be requested later. We will accept applications immediately with review beginning on February 15, 2026 and continuing until the selections are final.

All information from the applicant should be submitted electronically through Interfolio: <https://apply.interfolio.com/180248>

For questions, please email: south.asia@yale.edu

South Asian Seminar

International Association for Political Science Students



IAPSS

The International Association
For Political Science Students

This live online workshop critically interrogates the theories, tenants, and contemporary trends of nationalism across the South Asian subcontinent. Delivered over ten weeks, the seminar combines conceptual exposition, illustrative case studies, and discussion to support participants' empirical research and publication goals.

The International Association for Political Science Students (IAPSS) is a globally recognized, politically independent, student-run nonprofit that supports the intellectual and professional development of political science students worldwide. Founded in 1998 in Leiden, the Netherlands, it has grown from a European initiative into a global network spanning Africa, the Americas, and Asia. IAPSS offers conferences, academic conventions, seasonal schools, study trips, and several publications that promote scholarly exchange and professional growth. Now based in Montreal, Canada, IAPSS continues to foster international collaboration and engagement in political science in an increasingly connected, post-pandemic world.

Registration Link:

https://instats.org/seminar_n/south-asian-nationalisms

SAI's 2025-2026 Steering Committee

Prashant Bharadwaj (Economics)
Aniket De (History)
Shermin de Silva (EBE)
Teevrat Garg (GPS)
Gaurav Khanna (GPS)
Aftab Jassal (Anthropology)
Meera Mahadevan (GPS)
Rishika Mehrishi (Theatre & Dance)
Silpa Mukherjee (Literature)
Saiba Varma (Anthropology)

SAI Undergraduate Coordinators (2025-2026)

Krithika Karthik
Tavishaa Vanjani
Bhavika Ailawadi

Have news to share?

Email us: southasiaucsd@gmail.com &
Follow us on Instagram: [@southasiaucsd](https://www.instagram.com/southasiaucsd)

