Indo-Islamic Textual Traditions (ISLA 420)

Fall 2017

Instructor: Prashant Keshavmurthy

Class room: 328 Morrice Hall

Office and office hour: 311 Morrice Hall, Wednesday 4.05-6.55

Academic Integrity:

“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).

« L’université McGill attache une haute importance à l’honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l’on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/).»

Language of Submission:

“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.”

« Conformément à la Charte des droits de l’étudiant de l’Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l’un des objets est la maîtrise d’une langue). »

Course description: Islam’s legacy in pre-colonial South Asia has never been more in question than it is today. Modern nationalisms in the region have altered, in some cases beyond recognition, the memories of Islam’s millennial legacy in India. This course aims to equip you to authoritatively answer salient contemporary questions concerning this legacy: what were the beginnings of Muslim political power in India? What did it mean to convert to Islam before English colonialism? What can we accurately say about Muslim social relations with India’s non-Muslim majority during the nearly thousand years of Muslim presence in pre-colonial India? And, given
the abiding popular association of South Asian Islam with certain genres of poetry (e.g. ghazal), painting (e.g. miniature) and architecture (e.g. mosque), what have been Islam’s aesthetic legacies in the region?

**Grading scheme:**

Attendance and participation in class discussions makes up a significant portion of your grade. Please come to class (on time) and engage in the discussion. For a better understanding of how participation is graded, see below.

Because each class is 3 hours in duration, presence in class is very important. It is imperative to have a doctor's note to avoid losing marks due to absence.

Class attendance: 10%

Class discussion: 20%

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 10-15 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*. I will give you many practical examples of how you could do this. These 10-15 minutes class presentations along with participation in class discussions will account for 20% of your final grade and weekly attendance will account for 10% of it.

The mid term paper will account for 30% of your final grade. It is due on October 30th.
The final essay will account for 40% of your final grade. It is due on December 6th.
Topics for the mid-term paper and final essay must be devised in consultation with me and will be judged for coherence of over-all argument, interpretative insight and grammatical correctness.


**Weekly schedule**

The beginnings of Muslim power in South Asia

**Class 1 (Sept 6):** Introductions and choosing your texts for class presentations followed by a discussion of Altaf Husain Hali, *Musaddas*. We will discuss the translators’ introduction as well as all of the main text.

**Class 2 (Sept 13):** a) Asher & Talbot, Chapters 1, 2 and 3 from *India Before Europe*; b) Blain Auer, selections from *Symbols of Authority in Medieval*
Sunil Kumar, “Assertions of Authority: A Study of the Discursive Statements of Two Sultans of Delhi”.

**Class 3 (Sept 20):** Amir Khusrau, selections from *In the Bazaar of Love: the Selected Poetry of Amir Khusrau*; trans. Sharma & Losensky.


**Class 5 (Oct 4):** a) Richard Davis, “Reconstructions of Somnath” b) Richard Eaton, “Temple desecration and Indo-Muslim States” c) Sunil Kumar, “Qutb and Modern Memory”

**Class 6 (Oct 11):** Barry Flood, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval “Hindu-Muslim” Encounter*. We will discuss the entire book.

**Conversion to Islam**

Class 7 (Oct 18): a) Selections from Nizam al-Din Awliya, *Morals for the Heart: Conversations with Shaykh Nizam al-Din Awliya recorded by Amir Hasan Sijzi*; trans. Bruce Lawrence b) The following 7 essays from


**Class 9 (Nov 1):** a) Selections from Thomas de Bruijn’s *Ruby in the Dust: Poetry and History in ‘Padmavat’ by the South Asian Sufi Poet Muhammad Jayasi*; b) Carl Ernst, “Situating Sufism and Yoga” c) Ayesha Irani, “Mystical Love, Prophetic Compassion and Ethics: An Ascension Narrative in the Medieval Bengali Nabivamsha.”

**Muslim relations with non-Muslims**


**Painting, Literature and Music**

Class 13 (Nov 29): a) Gregory Minissale, “Reading Anti-Illusionism” and “Reading Pictorial Order” from *Images of Thought: Visuality in Islamic India: 1550-1750*. We will also examine some famous Mughal drawings and paintings with Minissale’s ideas in mind b) Katherine Butler Brown, “Learning to Taste the Emotions: the Mughal Rasika”