

**April 2007**

### **Proposal for a Major in South Asian Studies**

During the spring of 2007, the Committee on Majors reviewed a proposal (attached) from the South Asian Studies Council for a new interdisciplinary second major in South Asian Studies. The Committee received testimony from two members of the Council and the associate director of the MacMillan Center and written communications from several participating faculty and the chairs of the departments of Anthropology, Economics, History, Political Science, and Religious Studies. We also heard a report from the Director of the Teaching Fellow Program and the Deputy Provost for Undergraduate Education on the feasibility of the proposed major. The Committee enthusiastically endorses the creation of the new major for a five-year probationary period.

South Asia, home to a fifth of the world's population, has a rich cultural heritage and growing social, economic, and political significance. Yale currently has area studies programs representing East Asia, Russia and Eastern Europe, the Near East, Africa, and Latin America. One of the few major areas of the world lacking a formal place in our undergraduate curriculum is South Asia. The exceptionally energetic leadership of the South Asian Studies Council and the growing ladder faculty strength in the region make this moment an excellent opportunity to fill a substantial gap.

A few years ago, it might have been difficult to field a full set of courses for a major in the region, but at present approximately 20 courses with a focus on the region are regularly offered in six departments, in addition to language courses on Hindi, Tamil, and Sanskrit. Courses in Bengali, Urdu, and Nepali have been offered through the Directed Independent Language Study program. The proposed major also allows students to draw on broader survey courses with significant South Asian components. Chairs of the cognate departments have assured us of their support for the new major and of the continuing availability of faculty resources to staff it. There is evidence of considerable student interest and significant financial support from donors. The Council has also developed summer research fellowships for study in the region, as well as a wide range of visiting professorships, speaker series, symposia, and seminars. While the committee reacted with general enthusiasm to the well-formulated proposal, some questions did arise regarding curricular design and resources for the new major. The Council's responses to these concerns (indicated below) seem convincing to the Committee on Majors.

### **Curricular Design**

The Council has proposed South Asian Studies as a second major only. The Council describes the major as "strongly thematic [and] problem-focused." All students in the major would also learn a discipline. The Committee endorses this approach (currently used by International Studies) and defers the question of whether this might eventually become a primary major until the time of its next review in five years. Each student's courses will be distributed among two languages, modern and pre-modern historical periods, and the humanities and social sciences. Each student will also write a one-term senior seminar essay or a two-term senior research project.

## Resources

The Council emphasizes that the new major can be staffed with existing resources. Nonetheless, the Committee endorses the Council's suggestion that further instruction in Hindi be offered, possibly by an additional full-time lector. In the longer term, further instruction in other South Asian languages may be called for, particularly as the number of heritage learners continues to grow. Phyllis Granoff, Chair of the Council, will serve as Director of Undergraduate Studies for the Major, and other faculty members have volunteered to play this role in the coming years. The Major will rely, at first, on a considerable number of junior faculty members, but those professors' department chairs have signaled their support for continued teaching of courses relevant for the new major. Current administrative support for the Council should be sufficient to staff a small major. Considerable growth might necessitate more administrative support.

In closing, the committee notes that, while it has in general tried to restrain the growth in new majors in Yale College, this seems like a new major that has a strong intellectual justification, good faculty and administrative support, and a substantial body of potential students. The introduction of a well-designed and supported major in South Asian Studies would mark an important stage in Yale's quest to become a truly global university.

Respectfully submitted,

Pericles Lewis, Chair  
Thomas F. McDow, Secretary  
Shannon Craigo-Snell  
Joseph Gordon  
Philip Gorski  
Christine Mathias '07

## Proposal for a Major in South Asian Studies

The program in South Asian Studies is designed for students who wish to combine the requirements of a discipline-based first major with significant course work in South Asian studies. South Asian Studies is a second major. It cannot be taken as a major by itself. It is intended to provide the student with a broad understanding of the history and culture of South Asia as well as its current social, political, and economic conditions and its languages. Work in a discipline-based major coupled with a focus on South Asia will prepare students for graduate study, employment in NGO's, or business and professional careers in which an understanding of South Asia is essential.

The interdisciplinary nature of the South Asian Studies major permits students to choose courses from a wide range of disciplines. The proposed course of study must be approved by the DUS. At the start of the major, the DUS and the student will draw up a plan of study that is both academically rigorous and meets the needs of the individual student. Students must consult with the DUS each term concerning their course schedules. They should also identify a faculty advisor from the South Asian core faculty in their area of specialization as soon as possible.

## **Requirements**

South Asian Studies can only be taken as a second major. Specific course selection and choices of linked majors should be made in consultation with the student's South Asian Studies faculty adviser and the DUS.

## **Number of Courses**

Seven term courses, a one-credit senior requirement (either a senior seminar SAS 491 or a two-term directed study alternative), plus the language requirement.

## **Language requirement**

The language requirement is formulated to encourage both depth and breadth of language coverage. South Asian Studies majors take two South Asian languages while at Yale. We offer regular courses in Hindi, Tamil, and Sanskrit. One language must be taken to the advanced level (L5); the second language must be taken through the beginning level (L2). In some cases, where a student enters with proficiency in Hindi or Tamil, a different modern language (Bengali, Urdu, Telugu, Kannara) may be taken through DILS. Students are encouraged to pursue intensive language study in the region through study abroad and/or summer work.

## **Distribution of courses**

A total of four courses must be taken from Group A, which are South Asian Studies core courses drawn from across the university. Of these, two must be in pre-modern South Asian. Students should choose their courses under consultation with the DUS so that their program represents a broad spectrum of disciplines and a balance of courses in the humanities and social sciences. A list follows this general description of the program.

The three remaining required courses may be taken from either Group A or the Group B list of additional courses, which is comprised of courses from across the university with significant South Asian content. Of the seven required courses at least two courses should be seminars.

## **Senior requirement**

Either one seminar in the area of special interest culminating in a senior essay or a one-credit, two-term senior research project under the supervision of an advisor. (South Asian Studies 491). Use of primary materials and materials in the languages of the region is encouraged in senior essay projects.

### *Core Faculty:*

Phyllis Granoff, Religious Studies

Jacob Dalton, Religious Studies

Barney Bate, Anthropology

Mridu Rai, History

Karuna Mantena, Political Science

T. N. Srinivasan, Economics

Stanley Insler, Linguistics (Sanskrit)

Kalyanakrishnan Sivaramakrishnan, Anthropology  
Sara Suleiri Goodyear

*Visiting Faculty and Lecturers*

Hugh Flick (Lecturer Religious Studies)

Geetanjali Chanda (Lecturer WGSS)

Robert Brubaker (Singh Visiting Professor)

*Language faculty*

Seema Khurana (Hindi)

E. Annamalai (Tamil)