

GLOBAL SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES MAJOR

MAJOR DESCRIPTION

The Global South Asian Studies program uniquely explores the cultures connected to the region in a worldwide context. South Asia (including India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, the Maldives, and the Tibetan cultural world) is home to more than a quarter of the world's population. Diasporas associated with it include perhaps 24 million people. The program offers opportunities to study these cultures through disciplines as diverse as anthropology, art history, music performance and theory, cultural studies, creative writing, film studies, dance, history, literature, language, government, and religion. This allows students to cultivate critical thinking skills using a variety of disciplinary methods and theories, including postcolonial critique, embodiment theory, and feminist and queer theory, while cultivating an awareness of transnational dynamics.

The program enthusiastically promotes and supports study abroad, so that students can be immersed in the cultures of South Asia and the diasporas associated with it.

ADMISSION TO THE MAJOR

Students may apply for the major no earlier than their second semester of their sophomore year. There are no prerequisites for application. The same process applies to transfer students.

MAJOR REQUIREMENTS

Students are required to take a minimum of 11 courses (10 courses for one credit each and .25 credit capstone experience) designated as appropriate for the major. A maximum of 15.25 credits—including thesis credits—may be taken.

Except for language courses (which have no limit), up to two of these may be taken away from Wesleyan (e.g., on a study abroad program). The 11 required courses must include:

- GSAS 150: Foundations in Global South Asian Studies.
- The equivalent of at least four credits in South Asian languages. There is no limit to the number that can be taken off campus in approved programs.
- The capstone experience.
- At least one course in each of the four distribution categories.
- No more than six courses that count towards the major can come from any one of these categories.
- The distribution categories are as follows:
 - Contemporary Society and Practice (CSP): Courses primarily concerned with the study of contemporary South Asian communities, their practices, and their productions
 - Historical Inquiry (HI): Courses primarily concerned with the historical study of South Asia
 - Creative Arts (CA): Courses in which students obtain training in the practice of a specific form of art deriving from South Asian communities

- Language (L): Courses in which students gain comprehension in South Asian languages

GENERAL EDUCATION EXPECTATIONS

Among other expectations, honors will only be awarded to those who have completed at least stage I of the general education expectations.

STUDENT LEARNING GOALS

Students completing the major will be expected to have:

- Expertise in the cultural breadth and historical depth of South Asia and the global South Asian diaspora complemented by experience with some creative artistic traditions.
- Intermediate or advanced language proficiency in a South Asian language.
- Analytic skills in intercultural interpretation with an awareness of the necessity for a coherent, multi-methodical approach to study. Understanding of the development of South Asian studies as a field (and its most recent iteration as “Global South Asian Studies”), and of “area studies” more generally.

STUDY ABROAD

Majors are encouraged to study abroad for at least one semester, if not two. Ordinarily, study abroad would be conducted in a South Asian country. However, as the South Asian diaspora is global, students may profit from study abroad in a country with a significant South Asian diasporic population, such as Trinidad, Guyana, Canada, Fiji, Singapore, South Africa, etc. It is recommended that students discuss such choices with their faculty advisor in the major.

LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT

The major requires the equivalent of at least four credits in South Asian languages. There is no limit to the number that can be taken off campus in approved programs.

The language requirement signals to students how essential linguistic understanding is not only for communication but for understanding the cognitive worlds involved in spoken and written interaction.

TRANSFER CREDIT

The program accepts only one credit from courses taken off-campus, except in the case of foreign study. This must be for a course not available at Wesleyan. It accepts up to two approved credits taken before arrival at Wesleyan by transfer students for each year of work they transfer (i.e., two credits from incoming sophomores, four credits from incoming juniors).

HONORS

Candidates must declare their interest in undertaking a thesis and a general idea of their topic in a 2-3 page proposal, to be given to the program chair by the last Friday in April.

The proposal should contain a focused description of the work to be undertaken, and a thoughtful articulation of a student's interest in—and history with (such as a list of relevant coursework)—their discipline of choice. In the case of a research project, a bibliography should be included. Students must meet with at least one potential advisor to get feedback on the project before submitting their proposal. Securing the consent of a particular faculty member (named in the proposal) to serve as thesis advisor will facilitate approval of the proposal. The program will determine which proposals will be approved, and students will be notified of the program's decision before classes end in May.

The student must have a minimum of a B+ or 88.3 GPA in the program's courses by the end of their junior year to proceed with the project.

Honors is available for majors who (a) have successfully completed a senior honors thesis, (b) who have at least a 88.3 GPA in the major, and (c) have completed at least stage I of the general education expectations.

Thesis courses may not count toward the 11 required courses for the major.

CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE

Required capstone experience:

Assessment Portfolio and Capstone Symposium. During their time in the major, students will assemble a portfolio of three papers (at least four pages in length each) or works of creative art that they have created during three separate semesters. Taken together, these should give evidence of the student's personal, creative, and intellectual development, as well as their command of critical, analytical, creative, and interpretative skills.

In the drop/add period of the spring term, all senior majors enroll in a .25 credit Cr/U tutorial (GSAS 404), for which they will write a three- to four-page paper reflecting on the portfolio they have assembled and perhaps on other work in the program. This paper allows students an opportunity to assess the arc of their intellectual development as a GSAS major. Papers will be submitted to the program chair and distributed to faculty members for evaluation. At the end of the spring semester, all faculty and graduating majors will meet for a symposium banquet during which faculty will offer detailed feedback on these self-assessments as a prelude to a general discussion about student experiences.

Optional additional capstone experiences:

- Senior essay (one semester, one credit)
- Senior thesis – written, visual, or performative (two semesters, two credits)
- In regard to both, note:
 1. Seniors writing theses and essays will present to faculty and majors their work to date at a November gathering each year.
 2. Seniors who have completed a thesis will present to faculty and majors their work a week after its submission.