

PhD Program in History
Fall 2022, First Exam in South Asian History

Please choose **two** questions, one from **Part I** and one from **Part II**, and prepare your answers in essay format. The essays should make clear and persuasive arguments, supported with appropriate historiographical evidence from the course material. Please provide precise examples from this semester's literature; citations are not necessary and can be informal for any work on the syllabus, unless you are quoting verbatim.

You will have eight hours to complete both essays, which are weighted equally. Please submit your essays to Marilyn Weber (mweber@gc.cuny.edu).

Part I – please pick **one** question:

1. One of the most hotly debated topics in modern South Asian history revolves around the partition of India and Pakistan. With the rise of majoritarian politics in contemporary India, the rich and evolving historiography on Partition has gained special significance. Based on the readings from this semester, write a critical essay on the final course of events that brought about the Partition of India and Pakistan in 1947. Was the Partition inevitable? Was Jinnah the “sole spokesman” and the creation of Pakistan a victory for Jinnah? If not, why?
2. Scholars of gender and women's history in South Asia have debated questions of pluralism and inclusion. This involves women's participation in nationalist politics and their fight for social justice, equity, and freedom. For instance, Mrinalini Sinha's *Specters of Mother India* that you read makes an intervention in this regard. In a critical essay, please discuss how such works have catalyzed far-reaching changes in our understanding of colonial India, especially how the relationship between social and political spheres were reconfigured to forge a collective identity for Indian women.

Part II – please pick **one** question:

1. Many of the founding figures in modern South Asia (such as Gandhi, Nehru, Savarkar, Ambedkar, Sarojini Naidu, and Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay) have generated a lot of controversies. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, for instance, who has been hailed as the Mahatma and the Father of the nation, his role in politics—especially on issues of Hindu-Muslim unity, in mobilizing grassroots politics, and his attitude towards and relationship with women—has been questioned by scholars from across disciplines. In a critical essay based on this semester's readings of primary and secondary sources, reflect on the above issues and share your nuanced assessment of the founders' contribution towards South Asia.
2. Suppose you were asked to offer a course on Modern South Asia (1700-present). How would you design that course based on the historiography readings you completed this semester? What would be the crucial topics and historiographical debates that you would introduce to your students and why?