

Art and Archaeology of South Asia (A005649)

Course size *(nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)*

Credits 5.0

Study time 150 h

Course offerings in academic year 2026-2027

A (semester 1)

English

Gent

Lecturers in academic year 2026-2027

De Simone, Daniela

LW21

lecturer-in-charge

Trinco, Letizia

LW21

co-lecturer

Offered in the following programmes in 2026-2027

	crdts	offering
Bachelor of Arts in Oriental Languages and Cultures(main subject China (China Track))	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Oriental Languages and Cultures(main subject China (UGent Track))	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Oriental Languages and Cultures(main subject India)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Oriental Languages and Cultures(main subject Japan)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in History	5	A
Exchange Programme Archaeology	5	A
Exchange Programme Art Studies	5	A
Exchange Programme Oriental Languages and Cultures	5	A
Elective Set Archaeology	5	A
Elective Set Culture and Society	5	A

Teaching languages

English

Keywords

Art and Archaeology, Material and Visual Cultures, Decolonisation, South Asia (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Tibet, Afghanistan), Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Islam, Colonialism, Ancient Art, Medieval Art, Modern and Contemporary Art

Position of the course

This course offers a critical overview of key themes in the art and archaeology of South Asia, with a particular emphasis on decolonial perspectives. It explores the social, political, and religious dimensions of the region's diverse artistic and architectural traditions, interrogating how colonial narratives have shaped their interpretation and representation. Through a decolonised lens, students will examine how indigenous voices, local contexts, and alternative historiographies challenge Eurocentric frameworks.

Lectures address a wide range of topics across an extensive geographical area, including India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Tibet, and Afghanistan, and span a broad chronological scope from approximately 1.5 million years ago to the present day. Selected sessions are delivered by leading scholars and influential museum curators, whose work engages directly with issues of decolonisation and heritage activism.

The course is further enriched by a visit to the South Asian galleries at the Royal Museum of Art and History in Brussels, where students are encouraged to critically reflect on the role of museums in shaping perceptions of South Asian art and heritage.

Contents

- Rethinking South Asia: Decolonial Approaches to Art and Archaeology

- The Palaeolithic to the Earliest Cities
- Buddhist Art of the Gangetic Plain and the Hellenised East
- Hindu Iconography and the Origins and Development of the Hindu Temple
- Jain Art and Architecture
- Tibetan and Himalayan Art
- Islamic Architecture
- Mughal and Rajput Painting
- Much Maligned and Misunderstood: British Encounters with Indian Art
- Indian Modernism and Trends in Contemporary South Asian Art
- Decolonising the Museum: Curatorship and Heritage Activism in South Asia
- Visit to the South Asian Galleries at the Royal Museum of Art and History, Brussels

Initial competences

Attended (preferably) one of the courses below:

- 'Visual Culture: Art in Historical Context'
- 'Introduction to World Archaeology'
- 'Introduction to World History'
- 'History of South Asia'
- 'Religious Traditions of India'
- 'Buddhism'
- 'Sanskrit I'
- 'Hindi I'

Final competences

- 1 Acquire a broad knowledge of key themes in the art and archaeology of South Asia.
- 2 Situate archaeological remains and assemblages in their chronological and regional context.
- 3 Critically analyse South Asian artistic production, including sculpture, painting and architecture, within its historical context.

Conditions for credit contract

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is unrestricted: the student takes into consideration the conditions mentioned in 'Starting Competences'

Conditions for exam contract

This course unit cannot be taken via an exam contract

Teaching methods

Group work, Excursion, Lecture

Extra information on the teaching methods

Lectures (2 hours/week): PowerPoint presentations, videos and other media.

Groupwork (1 hour/week): Each week, a small group of students gives a 15-minute presentation about an object or work of art, which is followed by a classroom discussion.

Excursion: Royal Museum of Art and History, Brussels.

Study material

None

References

- Coningham, R. and Young R. (2015). *The Archaeology of South Asia: From the Indus to Asoka, C.6500 BCE-200 CE*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dehejia, V. (1997). *Indian Art*. London: Phaidon.
- Huntington, S. and Huntington, J. (1985) [2014]. *The Art of Ancient India: Buddhist, Hindu, Jain*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Koch, E. (1991). *Mughal Architecture: An Outline of Its History and Development (1526-1858)*. Munich: Prestel.
- Mitter, P. (2007). *The Triumph of Modernism: India's Artists and the Avant-garde, 1922-47*. Reaktion Books: London.

Course content-related study coaching

Upon appointment (face-to-face or on MS Teams) or by email.

Assessment moments

end-of-term and continuous assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the first examination period

Written assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the second examination period

Written assessment

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Participation, Presentation, Written assessment

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

examination during the second examination period is possible

Extra information on the examination methods

- Attendance
- 15-minute group presentation on object or work of art
- Written exam

Calculation of the examination mark

- Attendance (10%)
- Presentation (30%)
- Exam (60%)

Students who do not take part in the assessment of one or more parts of the course evaluation or obtain a mark of less than 10/20 for one of its parts cannot pass the course evaluation. Should the average mark be higher than 10/20, the final mark will be reduced to the highest non-pass mark (= 9).

Facilities for Working Students

- Possible exemption from educational activities requiring student attendance (to be discussed with the teacher)
- Possible alternative examination on a different time (in the same academic year)
- Alternative time for feedback: upon appointment (face-to-face or on MS teams) or by email