



NEW FOCUS ON **SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES**

Center for South Asian Studies

UC SANTA CRUZ



With a quarter of the human population, critical contributions to global cultures and economies, and stark environmental and social challenges, South Asia presents an enormous opportunity for research and scholarship.

As sweeping economic and cultural changes in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka increasingly drive world trends, institutions studying South Asia have left critical issues unexplored:

What does “justice” mean in the midst of economic growth and entrenched gender and caste roles?

How can explorations of inequality engage the region’s politics?

What are the implications of South Asia’s advances and challenges in a world interconnected through business, politics, and culture?

Home to the planet’s largest movie industry, the region’s commercial, classical, and avante garde arts influence

culture everywhere. India’s explosion in per capita income—and widening wealth gap—play a growing role in geopolitics.

South Asia’s diaspora feeds innovation and business success worldwide, and particularly in Silicon Valley. Since 1980, the U.S. population with South Asian heritage has grown rapidly. It may be the most successful immigrant group in U.S. history, with extraordinary entrepreneurial, educational, and professional accomplishments.

With faculty renowned for work in South Asian art forms, a record of groundbreaking research and education, and a commitment to social and economic justice, the **UC Santa Cruz Center for South Asian Studies** shapes the cutting edge of the field.

“North Indian classical music was my first language in music, learning from my father and grandfather. I learned jazz in order to interact with other musicians. The music program gave me a start in Western classical theory. Now I’m focusing on composition for ensembles. Having been exposed to these traditions, I feel I’ve been able to listen to things from different perspectives.”

KESHAV BATISH

(Porter ‘19, music: Hindustani and jazz)

“The opportunity I had at this school to critically analyze the relationship between South Asian popular culture, history, and society has enriched and expanded my education as a student of literature. I believe that when students interact intimately with other cultures, they not only benefit academically, but also gain a stronger sense of empathy and global consciousness. Eventually, I want to become a professor and possibly teach courses like these myself one day.”

MICHAEL J. FENNESSEY

(Stevenson ‘19, literature)

The Center for South Asian Studies provides a thriving hub for faculty, students, and visiting scholars to accelerate and enhance the impact of research while showcasing the region's influence and contributions.

Collaborative: UC Santa Cruz boasts a culture of cross-pollination between academic areas. Combining the talents of researchers in the arts, humanities, and social sciences brings new approaches to persistent questions and opens new directions for exploration.

Connected: The center serves as a critical link and physical venue for the South Asian community in the South Bay area. Our growing Silicon Valley network, the UC Santa Cruz Silicon Valley Campus, and relationships with organizations such as the India Community

Center in Milpitas support vibrant conversations and productive relationships in business, innovation, the arts, and politics.

Impactful: The center combines the best minds to work on questions of politics, poverty, education, environment, and health. By viewing these problems through the lens of South Asia, researchers will arrive at solutions of global importance.



These are just a few areas where UC Santa Cruz is ideally positioned to advance the scholarship of South Asia:



Geopolitics: UC Santa Cruz faculty combine expertise in economics, history, and social sciences to illuminate the influence of trends within South Asia on international power structures.

Environment and sustainability: Since its inception, UC Santa Cruz has been a leader in the field of environmental studies. South Asia presents an enormous laboratory for analysis of common challenges arising from climate change and habitat loss.



Societal issues pertaining to gender, religion, caste, and class: UC Santa Cruz is a pioneer in studies of inequality, well-qualified to study questions of gender inequality, poverty, and religion in South Asia.

The effects of the diaspora: South Asia's diverse global diaspora has created profound economic, political, scientific, and cultural effects worldwide. Yet it is understudied. Our researchers explore how these transnational populations are rediscovering their heritages and what it means to be part of a community that defies geographic boundaries.

History: The center's research and educational programs illuminate the intellectual and social history of the region and its implications for contemporary world events.

Culture and fine art: The center promotes performances and the study of fine art, music, dance, and food across South Asian cultures. Drawing on social justice interventions such as street theater as well as classical and experimental art forms, and commercial works like Bollywood, UC Santa Cruz faculty explore what art reveals about social power.



Our faculty and researchers are doing pioneering work in South Asian studies, influencing a variety of disciplines.



Economics

Distinguished economist Nirvikar Singh recently coauthored the book *The Other One Percent: Indians in America*, examining the history and challenges of the diaspora and its global implications.

“At UC Santa Cruz we have the freedom to create a center that matters to everyone—not just one geographical entity. We can look at the implications for humanity, and this will result in a center that will be internationally renowned for advancing our understanding of global problems—through the lens of South Asia.”

NIRVIKAR SINGH

Distinguished Professor of Economics



Environmental justice

Professor of Environmental Studies Ravi Rajan studies the connection between the environment and human rights, including the effects of natural disasters. What happens when we view

environmental challenges, such as the availability of clean water and sustenance, as a fundamental right? Examining issues from this perspective can provide a new impetus for solutions.

“With the center, we can educate a new generation of young people who are deeply engaged with the region and its diaspora. The center gives us the capacity to train students who will make a big difference.”

RAVI RAJAN

Professor of Environmental Studies



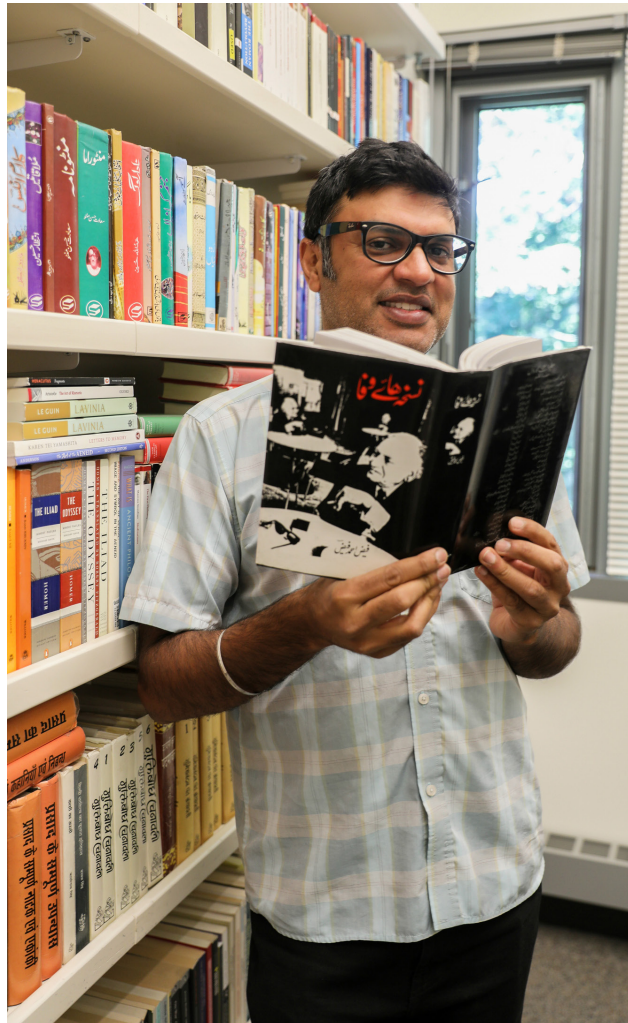
Contemporary culture

Madhavi Murty was a journalist in Bombay before coming to the U.S. She’s now an assistant professor of feminist studies with a particular focus on pop culture in South Asia and its entanglement with Hindu nationalism and neoliberalism.

“The Center for South Asian Studies provides the opportunity for an intellectual and cultural community that is focused on issues of justice, equity, and social difference. It is a welcoming environment—including good food and good company—that fosters engagement within and outside the university.”

MADHAVI MURTY

Assistant Professor of Feminist Studies



Literature and language

Professor G. S. Sahota focuses on South Asian languages and Indian literary and intellectual history, especially in Urdu, Sanskrit, Punjabi, Hindi, and English. He was awarded the Mellon Foundation's Modern Language Initiative Outstanding First Book Prize for *Late Colonial Sublime: Neo-Epics and the End of Romanticism*, which explores Hindi and Urdu literary culture in British India.

"It is of critical importance today that we level the different regional foci on the campus and ensure that the rich cultural legacies of the subcontinent thrive. Doing so affirms the cultural diversity in our midst."

G. S. SAHOTA
Associate Professor of Literature



Classical Indian music

Dard Neuman, the Hasan Endowed Chair in Classical Indian Music and associate professor of music at UC Santa Cruz, studies musical cultivation, transmission, and performance of Hindustani music in 20th century North India, as well as the role of music in social action.

Performance

Cynthia Ling Lee is an interdisciplinary performance-maker whose choreography and scholarship explore postcolonial, queer, and feminist-of-color approaches to experimental South Asian performance. Recent publications include journal articles in *Studies in South Asian Film and Media* and *Indian Theatre Journal* and co-written book chapters in *Queer Dance: Meanings and Makings* and *Dance Matters Too: Memories, Markets, Identities*.

She is a member of the Post Natyam Collective, a transnational web-based coalition of artists of color known for their critical and cutting-edge approaches to South Asian dance.





Inequality and social issues

Associate Professor of Anthropology Megan Moodie’s *We Were Adivasis: Aspiration in an Indian Scheduled Tribe* explores social mobility and inequality in India, shedding light on realities of marginalized groups and affirmative action globally. Moodie lived with an indigenous community or “scheduled tribe” near Jaipur, studying outcomes of affirmative action, gender relations, and everyday practices. She specializes in feminist political and legal anthropology and experimental ethnographic writing.



“We’re framing the center in a larger way than just technology or engineering. It enables us to have exciting scholarship that’s open to the public, including shows, talks, poetry, plays, and seminars.”

KATHARYNE MITCHELL
Dean of the Social Sciences Division



“Public universities should contribute to the cultural and intellectual life of the community. The Center for South Asian Studies at UC Santa Cruz brings the South Asian community together with UC Santa Cruz faculty and students, as well as the mainstream community in the Bay Area, through seminars, talks, conferences, concerts, and exhibitions. It sets a unique precedence for other such centers.”

KAMIL HASAN
General Partner, Hitek Venture Partners, UC Santa Cruz Foundation Trustee



“UC Santa Cruz is uniquely positioned to host this center. The whole idea of being interdisciplinary is baked into what we do here. We look at problems from a variety of disciplines. It is truly different.”

TYLER STOVALL
Dean of the Humanities Division

Leveraging exceptional intellectual strengths, UC Santa Cruz leads the cutting edge of research and creative work across the scope of South Asian studies.

Outside-the-box thinking is the norm. The very physical layout of the campus is designed to bring historians together with sociologists, artists with scientists, and biologists with engineers. The university’s foundational emphasis on the environment and social justice shows in every area of scholarship. No other institution brings to South Asian studies the same combination of innovative approaches to research and emphasis on problem-solving.

With a main campus a short drive from San Jose, a new UC Santa Cruz Silicon Valley Campus in Santa Clara, and well-established relationships throughout the Bay Area—UC Santa Cruz is the premier public university in the area.



Help create a beacon for scholarship and student success

The Center for South Asian Studies has garnered unprecedented interdisciplinary support from university leadership. The divisions of Social Sciences, Humanities, and the Arts have each committed to funding the position of director of the center.

UC Santa Cruz principal supporters Kamil and Talat Hasan, pioneering Silicon Valley entrepreneurs who have long been involved in supporting arts, education, and nonprofits in the area, have committed funds to launch the center.

Donor support is essential to advance the goals of the UC Santa Cruz Center for South Asian Studies in areas such as:

- visiting scholars and distinguished residents
- seminar series
- conferences and symposia
- scholarships for promising undergraduates with financial constraints
- fellowships and graduate student research
- comprehensive language programs

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