The history of knowledge in what we can provisionally call early modern India (c. 1500-1800) is an almost completely new area of research, and many problems, both substantive and theoretical, remain to be solved. This seminar explores some of the first fruits of scholarship in this area, while at the same time raising questions about “early modernity” as a coherent research problematic, about comparison as a coherent research protocol, and about intellectual history as a coherent subdiscipline.

For the first few weeks we will concentrate on the knowledge forms that found expression in Sanskrit, and the scholarship that is emerging from the collaborative project “Sanskrit Knowledge Systems on the Eve of Colonialism.” We’ll then go on to examine vernacular and Persianate materials. Ideally I would have liked to read primary works before looking at secondary scholarship, but virtually all of the texts in question remain untranslated.

The comparative concerns implicit in the problematic as I’ve defined it for this seminar will be made explicit by looking at parallel developments in late-imperial China, the Middle East, and Europe. Questions of method and theory are our third concern. I’ve chosen here eclectically rather than systematically, nor have I always placed theoretical readings with texts they complement directly. I have also tried to include in each major section more strictly historical explorations of early modernity.

On a rotating schedule students will prepare a short (three-page) analysis of the readings for that class (two or three readings per student, amounting to about 50 pp.) These are to be posted on the Courseworks website by the MONDAY evening before the Wednesday meeting and then briefly presented in class. Class members should read these responses ahead of time and come prepared to discuss them and the works in question. The response papers should try to briefly restate the main argument of the article (do not quote; rephrase), and raise several points for group discussion, focusing on, say, the method of the article, the quality of its data, its assumptions, the status of its claims when viewed from a comparative perspective, or whatever seems pertinent.

A seminar paper (8-10,000 words including notes and bibliography) will be required, and during the final two weeks of the term students will present a précis of these papers, focusing on the main argument, the place of the paper in the scholarship, the importance of the question, and the kind of method employed. These précis too should be posted on the Courseworks website on the SUNDAY evening prior to the
meeting. The seminar paper, along with the précis exercises and class discussion, will be weighed equally in assigning the final grade.

All readings will be available in electronic form and posted on the Courseworks website. Please print them out and bring them with you to class.

**Week 1, January 18**

*Introduction*

**Week 2, January 25**

*“Early Modern”*


**Week 3, February 1**

*Sanskrit South Asia*


______, *The Ends of Man at the End of Premodernity* (Amsterdam: Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2005), pp. 1-99.


Week 4, February 8

Sanskrit South Asia cont’d.


Karin Preisendanz, “The Production of Philosophical Literature in South Asia During the Pre-Colonial Period (15th to 18th Centuries): The Case of the Nyāyaśāstra Commentarial Tradition,” JIP 33,1 (2005): 55-94.


Week 5, February 15

Sanskrit South Asia cont’d


**Week 6, February 22**

**Vernacular South Asia**


Week 7, March 1

Persianate South Asia


Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “The Making of a Munshi,” ms. (an earlier version was published in *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* vol. 24,2 [2004]).

Sunil Sharma, “Urban Ethnography in Indo-Persian Poetic and Historical Texts,” ms. (forthcoming in *Forms of Knowledge in Early-Modern Asia* (an earlier version was published in *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* vol. 24,2 [2004]).

Aditya Behl, “Pages from the Book of Religions: Encountering Difference in Mughal India,” ms., forthcoming in *Forms of Knowledge in Early Modern Asia*.

*Francis Robinson, The 'Ulama of Farangi Mahall and Islamic Culture in South Asia* (London: Hurst, 2001), selections TBA.


Week 8, March 8

The Greater Islamic World


Week 9, March 22

Tibet


China


Benjamin Elman, From Philosophy to Philology: Intellectual and Social Aspects of Change in Late Imperial China (Los Angeles 2001), preface (v-xxvii) and “A Revolution in Discourse” (2-38).


*Martin Jay, "The Textual Approach to Intellectual History" in Force Fields: Between Intellectual History and Cultural Critique (New York: Routledge, 1993);


Week 10, March 29

China Cont’d


Week 11, April 5

Western Europe: Philosophy, Politics


Week 12, April 12

Western Europe Cont’d: Aesthetics


Weeks 13-14, April 19 and 26

Student Presentations
Things I would have liked to include where there world enough and time:


Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York 1973), preface (pp. xv-xxiv) and “Labor, Life, Language” (pp. 250-302).
