

Benjamin Robert Siegel

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Education

- Ph.D. Department of History, Harvard University 2014
Dissertation: “Independent India of Plenty: Food, Hunger, and Nation-Building in Modern India” (Winner, Sardar Patel Prize for best dissertation on modern India)
Committee: Sugata Bose (Chair), Sunil Amrith, Emma Rothschild
- A.M., Department of History, Harvard University 2010
- B.A. with honors, Department of History, Yale University 2007

Professional Appointments

- Assistant Professor, Department of History, Boston University
(On supported research leave 2017-18 and spring 2019) 2014–present
- Director of Undergraduate Studies, Department of History, Boston University 2015–2017
- Board Member, Boston University Center for the Study of Asia 2015–2019
- Graduate Fellow, Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies 2013–2014
- Visiting Researcher, Indian Agricultural Research Institute 2011–2012
- Visiting Researcher, Hong Kong Univ. Centre for the Humanities and Medicine Spring 2011

Publications

Books

- Markets of Pain: American Bodies and Indian Drugs in an Age of Distress*, manuscript in progress
- Hungry Nation: Food, Famine, and the Making of Modern India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018)

Peer Reviewed Articles

- ‘The Claims of Asia and the Far East’: India and the FAO in the Age of Ambivalent Internationalism” *International History Review* (forthcoming)
- “Asian Drama Revisited,” *Humanity*, volume 8, number 1 (Spring 2017), pp. 195–205

“Modernizing Peasants and ‘Master Farmers’: Progressive Agriculture in Early Independent India,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* volume 37, issue 1 (May 2017), pp. 64-85

“‘Self-Help Which Ennobles a Nation’: Development, Citizenship, and the Obligations of Eating in India’s Austerity Years,” *Modern Asian Studies* volume 50, issue 3 (2016), pp. 975-1018

“Learning to Eat in a Capital City: Constructing Public Eating Culture in Delhi,” *Food, Culture, & Society* volume 13, issue 1 (March 2010), pp. 71-91

Book Chapters and Reference Entries

“‘The World Has Changed’: Development, Land Reform, and the Ethical Work of India’s Independence” in *The Postcolonial Moment in South and Southeast Asia*, eds. Gyan Prakash, Michael Laffan, and Nikhil Menon (London: Bloomsbury, 2018)

“‘Fantastic Quantities of Food Grains’: Cold War Visions and Agrarian Fantasies in Independent India,” in *Negotiating Independence: New Directions in the History of Decolonization and the Cold War*, eds. Leslie James and Elisabeth Leake (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 21-42

“Raagtime,” *Civil Lines 6: New Writing from India*, eds. Achal Prabhala, Kai Frieese and Mukul Kesavan (New Delhi: HarperCollins, 2012)

“Food,” “Green Revolution,” *Cultural Sociology of the Middle East, Asia, and Africa: An Encyclopedia*, eds. Andrea L. Stanton et al. (London: Sage, 2012)

Journalistic Articles and Occasional Pieces

“Indian Drugs, American Addiction: How India’s Role in the Global Opiate Trade Contributed to a Crisis in the USA,” *Vice*, March 1, 2018

“World Food Day: 35 Years On, India Still Struggles Against Hunger,” *WION News / Zee TV*, October 16, 2016

“Before Malala,” *Marginalia Review of Books*, September 15, 2014

“The Multiple Ideas of India: Narendra Modi and the Meaning of Indian Secularism,” *Marginalia Review of Books*, May 27, 2014

“Reluctantly Lahore,” *The Caravan* volume 4, issue 1 (January 2012)

“Playing Host is Hard to Do,” *World Policy Journal* volume 27, issue 4 (Winter 2010/2011), pp. 59-66

“India’s Feel-Good Fast,” *World Policy Journal* blog, April 18, 2011

“Fighting Harassment on India’s Streets,” *Christian Science Monitor*, August 23, 2007

“Stressful Times for Chinese Students,” *Time.com*, June 12, 2007

“How to Kill the Tiger,” *Time Magazine*, July 30, 2006

“Sweet Nothing: the Triumph of Diet Soda,” *American Heritage* volume 57, issue 3 (June/July 2006), pp. 42-49

Book Reviews

“Rethinking Revolutions: Soyabean, Choupals, and the Changing Countryside in Central India” (Richa Kumar),” *Economic and Political Weekly*, volume LII, issue 36 (September 9, 2017), pp. 36-38

“India At War: The Subcontinent and the Second World War” (Yasmin Khan),” *The Historian*, forthcoming.

“Democracy Against Development: Lower-Caste Politics and Political Modernity in Postcolonial India (Jeffrey Witsoe),” *Contemporary South Asia*, volume 22, issue 3 (Summer 2014), pp. 326-327

“Red Tape: Bureaucracy, Structural Violence, and Poverty in India (Akhil Gupta),” *Contemporary South Asia* volume 21, issue 4 (Winter 2013), pp. 104-105

“Poverty Amid Plenty in the New India (Atul Kohli),” *Contemporary South Asia* volume 20, issue 4 (Winter 2012), pp. 545-546

Prizes, Grants, and Awards

Junior Fellowship, Boston University Center for the Humanities	Spring 2018
American Council of Learned Societies Fellowship	Fall 2017
Sardar Patel Prize, Center for India and South Asia, UCLA	2014
Graduate Fellow, Harvard Academy for International Affairs	2013–2014
Graduate Student Associate, Harvard University South Asia Initiative	2012–2013
American Institute of Indian Studies Junior Fellowship	2011–2012
Clive Fellowship, Harvard University	2011–2012
Teaching Fellow, Department of History, Harvard University	2010, 2012–2013
Harvard University South Asia Initiative Research Grant	2009, 2010, 2012
Harvard University Asia Center Research Grant	2009
Homer J. Hagedorn Graduate Fellowship Fund, Harvard University	2009–10, 2010–11
Graduate Student Fellowship, Harvard University	2008–2013
Fox International Fellowship, Yale University / Jawaharlal Nehru University	2007–2008

Book Talks

India Political Economy Seminar, University of California, Berkeley, November 16, 2017

Invited Lectures and Workshop Presentations

Talk title to be announced, Agrarian Studies Colloquium, Yale University, October 26, 2018

“‘Except as Found Necessary for Medicine and Science’: The Fall and Rise of the Indian Opium Regime, 1935–1969,” at *Sovereignty, Economy and the Global Histories of Natural Resources*, Cambridge University, December 19, 2017

”Culinary Nationalism in Times of Scarcity: Visions of Plenty and Want in Independent India,” at *Culinary Nationalism in Asia*, University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, April 1, 2017

Keynote Address, “Hunger, Food, and Development in Modern India,” Educators for Teaching South Asia Annual Conference, Cambridge MA, May 13, 2016

“Remaking Rationing in Independent India,” at *Midnight’s Institutions: Rethinking Political Imaginations and Institutional Change after India’s Independence*, Yale University, April 23, 2016

“Rights, Rationing, and the Envisioning of the Postcolonial City,” at *Decolonizing India and Pakistan, at Urbanism, Exclusion and Change in South Asia*, Lahore University of Management Sciences, Lahore, Pakistan, March 5, 2016

“On *Asian Drama*,” at Revisiting Gunnar Myrdal, *Humanity* / Harvard Law School Seminar, January 22, 2016

“Land, Labor, and Postcolonial Ethics,” *The Postcolonial Moment*, Princeton University, November 14, 2015

“The Indian Merchants’ Chamber and the Idioms of National Development,” at *The Business History of India and South Asia: Recent Trends in Research*, Harvard Business School, October 30, 2015.

“Swadeshi Spaces / Sovereign Spaces: Scale and Time in the Indian Economic Imaginary” at *Spaces, Scales, and Routes: Region Formation in History and Anthropology*, Harvard University, April 30, 2015

“Jayaprakash Narayan and the Ethics of Counter-Development, at Jayaprakash Narayan Reconsidered, Harvard University, April 9, 2015

“Agriculture and the Politics of Labor in Nehruvian India,” at Global Midwest Workshop, Penn State University, April 12, 2015

Discussant, “Economies & the Reinvention of Space,” Yale South Asia Workshop, April 11, 2015

“Indian Independence and the Future of Food,” at Lost Futures in the History of European Empires (Part II), University of North Carolina Chapel Hill / King’s College London, September 14, 2014

- “Internationalism and the Indian Food Problem,” at *FAO in a Global Context*, Institute for Global Studies, Basel, Switzerland, August 2014
- “The Fat of the Land: Vegetable Ghee and the Ends of Indian Industry, 1925–1950,” *Fasting to Feasting: The Politics of Provisioning and Consumption*, at NYU Global South Asia Workshop, New York University, February 14, 2014
- “‘The Dictator Officials are Losing the Business’: Indian Merchants and National Needs, 1955–65,” *Defining the Economy in Political Crisis: Revolution, Rupture and the Law*, Center for History and Economics, Harvard University, October 4, 2013
- “‘Grains and Geopolitics’: American Grain, Soviet Expertise, and Cold War Agricultural Contestations in Nehruvian India,” at *Negotiating Independence*, Cambridge University, May 3, 2013
- “Food, Rights, and Hunger and the Making of Modern India,” Department of History, University of California, Berkeley, March 5, 2013
- “How to Feed the Hungry State,” Department of History, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, January 31, 2013
- “The Hungry State: Food and Nation in Twentieth-Century India,” *Feast and Famine* speaker series, Department of Nutrition, Food Studies, and Public Health, New York University, November 30, 2012
- “‘Self-Help Which Ennobles a Nation’: Rights, Citizenship, and the Obligations of Eating in India’s Austerity Years,” Center for History and Economics, Harvard University, October 12, 2012
- “Meals for Millions: Food and Citizenship in India’s Scarcity Era,” Technologies of Bureaucracy and State-Making, Yale University South Asia Workshop, April 6, 2012
- “Food, Agriculture, and the State in Modern Indian History,” American Institute of Indian Studies, Gurgaon, Haryana, India, January 1, 2012
- “More Grass than Corn: Indian Agricultural Development in Historical Context,” Department of History and Centre for the Humanities and Medicine, Hong Kong University, April 7, 2011

Annual Conference Presentations

- Narcotic Pasts and Futures in South Asia panel (co-organizer with Mauricio Najarro), Madison South Asia Conference, October 2018
- “Tiller, Owner, Soil: Land and the Indian Postcolonial Ethic,” Madison South Asia Conference, October 24, 2015
- “Stakhanovites on the Ganges: Krishi Pandits and the Politics of Labor in Nehruvian India,” in “Revisiting Development in Modern India: Science, Ethics and the Agricultural Landscape” panel, Association for Asian Studies Conference, March 29, 2015

“Political Imaginaries of Food in a Hungry Decade,” in “From Colonial to Postcolonial Imaginaries,” panel (co-organizer with Rohit De and Julia Stephens), Madison South Asia Conference, October 2014

“Cloth and the Calorie: Scarcity Regimes and Political Power in Independent India, 1947-1967,” The Problems and Possibilities of Want: Scarcity and the State in China, India, and Japan, American Society for Environmental History Conference, San Francisco, March 15, 2014

Campus and Departmental Talks

Discussant, “Researching the Real World: Practical Strategies for Field Work and Career Building,” Boston University Frederick S. Pardee School of Global Studies, November 1, 2016

Discussant, “Changing Food Systems in the United States and China,” Boston University Frederick S. Pardee School of Global Studies and Center for the Study of Asia, March 19, 2015

“Food and the Indian Political Imagination,” Boston University Center for the Study of Asia, November 7, 2014

Chair, *Economic Growth and its Discontents in Post-Independence India*, Weatherhead Center for International Affairs Undergraduate Associates’ Thesis Conference, Harvard University February 8, 2014

“Why Food?” *Big Ideas*, Harvard University South Asia Institute, April 4, 2013

“Two Blades of Grass: Building Indian Agriculture, 1905-2010,” Center for History and Economics, Harvard University, November 30, 2010

“Food and Urban India,” Harvard South Asia Workshop, October 8, 2008

Guest Lectures at Boston University

“Food Histories,” MET ML589: Nature’s Past: Histories of Environment, Society (James McCann), April 20, 2016

“Introduction to South Asia,” IR230: Fundamentals of International Politics (Houchang Chehabi), November 17, 2016

“New Delhi: Edwin Lutyens and the Making of a ‘Modern’ Capital,” HI226: Cities and Cultures (Diana Wylie), October 19, 2015

“The Mughals,” Muslim Societies proseminar (Betty Anderson), October 9, 2015

Media Appearances

Panelist, “#TKOP (The Kinds Of Pain),” *Syntalk* (Mumbai), September 16, 2017

Departmental and University Service

Member, steering committee, Boston University Forum on the Opioid Crisis	2017-2018
Member, planning committee, Boston University Study Abroad in India	2017-2018
Co-planner, History Department Internship Program	2016-2017
Campus co-coordinator, BU Global Programs (London, Lancaster)	2016-present
Faculty author, South Asia Library Collection Grant, Mugar Memorial Library	2017
Program development lead, Asian Studies Minor proposal	2016-2017
Member, Academic Conduct Committee, BU College of Arts and Sciences	2016-present
Director of Undergraduate Studies, Department of History, Boston University	2015-2017
Member, Boston University Department of History Curriculum Committee	2015-2017
Co-convener, Boston University Tertulia Junior Faculty Symposium	2015-2016
History Department representative, CAS Academic Credit Committee	2014-2015

Professional Service

Book manuscript reviewer, University of Chicago Press, the New Press, Routledge, Springer Publishing	Ongoing
Article manuscript reviewer, <i>History Compass</i> , <i>Itinerario</i> , <i>South Asia</i>	Ongoing
External reviewer, Wellcome Trust, Mellon International Dissertation Research Fellowship	Ongoing
Country expert witness (India) for United States Executive Office for Immigration Review, Boston College Law School Immigration Clinic	Fall 2017
Contributing editor, <i>Marginalia Review of Books</i>	2014-2016
Coordinator, United Nations Foundation Digital History Project	2009-2010
Alumni admissions interviewer, Yale University	2008-present

Professional Experience

Reporter-Researcher, <i>Time Magazine</i> , Hong Kong	2007
Intern, <i>Time Magazine</i> , South Asia Bureau, New Delhi	2006

Professional Memberships and Affiliations

Member, Association for Asian Studies	2014–present
Member, American Historical Association	2012–present

Student Supervision

General Examinations for Doctoral Students

Jeanna Kinnebrew (Gender and Reproduction in South Asia)	Spring 2018
Cari Babitzke (Law, Violence, and the Colonial State)	Fall 2017
Agnes Burt (British Empire and South Asia)	Spring 2016

Master Thesis Supervision

Lucy Valena, “From Fruitcake to Foam: Commodity Fetishism, ‘Tradition,’ and the Evolution of the Wedding Cake,” Master of Liberal Arts in Gastronomy	Fall 2015
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Undergraduate Supervision and Examination

Tenaya N. Goldsen, “Al-Huda: A Study of Revivalist Movements and a Window into the Al-Huda Institute,” (Boston University Department of Religion, external examiner)	Spring 2017
Aisha Chandraker, “Casting Light on Society: Cire-Perdue Bronzes of the Chola Period” (Boston University Academy)	Spring 2017
Fred Schmidt, “Oranges, Caracul Sheep Porcelain Teeth: Capital, Capacity and Economic Development during the Formative Interwar Yishuv of 1920 – 1939”	Spring 2016
Sydney Hou, “A New Lens: Understanding Taiwanese Identity Through Food”	Spring 2016
Aabir Pablo Das, “India’s Look East Policy: The Opportunities of a Democratic Myanmar” (Boston University Department of International Relations, external examiner)	Spring 2016
Marlene Stoute, “Development through FTAs: Comparing Panama’s Promise with Chile’s Experience,” (Boston University Department of International Relations, external examiner) Spring 2015	
Harper Sutherland, “Royalty in Transition” (Harvard University Department of South Asian Studies)	Spring 2014

Courses Taught

Boston University

- HI200: The Historian's Craft
- HI234: Introduction to India and South Asia
- HI343: Culture, Taste, Power: A Global History of Food
- HI401: Senior Honors Thesis Supervision
- HI525: Development in Historical Perspective
- HI526: Poverty and Democracy
- HI987: Directed Readings in South Asian History

Harvard University

- CB20: Reason and Faith in the West (teaching fellow, Ann Blair)
- HI84U: Gender, Migration, and Globalization in 20th-Century U.S. History (teaching fellow, Lili M. Kim)
- HI86H: Asia After Europe (teaching fellow, Sugata Bose)
- SW36: Modern India & South Asia (teaching fellow, Amartya Sen and Sugata Bose)

Teaching Areas

Citizenship, governance, and statehood; comparative colonial and global history (Africa, South Asia, Southeast Asia); development, technology, and the politics of expertise; history of economic thought; history of medicine, drugs, and the body; history of South Asia, 1500 – present; food politics, famine, and hunger; modern South Asian politics, economy, and culture; poverty and inequality in comparative perspective

Languages

- Hindi and Urdu (High proficiency)
- French (High proficiency)
- Hebrew (High proficiency)
- Italian (Intermediate proficiency)
- Spanish (Reading)
- Russian (Elementary)

Last Updated: January 26, 2018