N I K H I L M E N O N

University of Notre Dame, 464 Decio Hall, Notre Dame, IN 46556, nikhilmenon@nd.edu

P o s i t i o n s

Associate Professor of History, University of Notre Dame, 2024 - present

Assistant Professor of History, University of Notre Dame, 2018 - 2024.

Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of History, University of Notre Dame, 2017- 2018.

E d u c a t i o n

Ph.D., Princeton University, History, 2017

M.Phil., Jawaharlal Nehru University, Modern Indian History, 2011

M.A., St. Stephen's College, University of Delhi, History, 2009

B.A., Ramjas College, University of Delhi, History (Honours), 2007

P u b l i c a t i o n s

Books

Planning Democracy: Modern India's Quest for Development (Cambridge University Press, 2022)

South Asian edition by Penguin India, 2022.

- Winner, Joseph W. Elder Prize in the Indian Social Sciences (for best book manuscript on an Indian subject), American Institute of Indian Studies

- Finalist, BASAS Book Prize, British Association for South Asian Studies, 2024

The Postcolonial Moment in South and Southeast Asia, co-edited with Gyan Prakash and Michael Laffan (Bloomsbury Academic, 2018).

Articles

"Dancing Ambassadors: The Indian Republic's Global Cultural Project," *Journal of Global History*, (accepted and forthcoming)

"Afterword" in special issue on 'Women and Development in Asia and Africa' *Journal of Global History*, (accepted and forthcoming)

"Developing Histories of Indian Development," *History Compass*, Vol. 19, No. 10, October 2021, 1-14.

"Gandhi's Spinning Wheel: The Charkha and its Regenerative Effects," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 81, No. 4, October 2020, 642-662.

"'Fancy Calculating Machine': Computers and Planning in Independent India," *Modern Asian Studies*, March 2018, Vol. 52, Issue 2, 421-457.

- Winner, Mahoney Prize (for "outstanding article on the history of computing and information technology, broadly conceived"), Society for the History of Technology, 2019

"Battling the Bottle: Experiments in Regulating Drink in Late Colonial Madras," *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, January – March 2015, 52 (1): 29-51.

Book Chapters

"'Help the Plan—Help Yourself': Making India Plan-Conscious," in Gyan Prakash, Michael Laffan, and Nikhil Menon eds. *The Postcolonial Moment in South and Southeast Asia*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 221-242.

"Introduction," co-authored with Gyan Prakash and Michael Laffan, in Gyan Prakash, Michael Laffan, and Nikhil Menon eds. *The Postcolonial Moment in South and Southeast Asia*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 1-10.

Public Writing

"Oppenheimer, the Bhagavad Gita, and a Secret Message to Nehru," *The Times of India*, July 16, 2023, p. 17.

"Planning and Democracy—Story of a Unique Marriage," *Business Line* (75th Anniversary of Indian Independence edition), August 15, 2022, p. 8.

"The Folly of Soft Hindutva," *Scroll*, July 14, 2022. (republished from *The Wire*)

"Congress' History Proves that Soft Hindutva Does Not Work," *The Wire*, July 7, 2022.

"How India Taught the World the Art of Collecting Data," *BBC*, June 29, 2022.

"A Short History of Data," *The Hindu*, March 21, 2019, p. 8.

"Jumbo Exports: India's History of Elephant Diplomacy," *The Caravan*, March 2019, pp. 8-10.

"Chasing the Machine: India's First Computers and the Cold War," *The Caravan*, April 2018, pp. 2-3.

"Out of Commission," *The Indian Express*, July 15, 2014.

Book Reviews

Review of Dwaipayan Banerjee, *Computing in the Age of Decolonization: India's Lost Technological Revolution* (Princeton University Press, 2026), *Issues in Science and Technology* (forthcoming).

Review of Andrea Benvenuti, *Nehru's Bandung: Non-Alignment and Regional Order in Indian Cold War Strategy* (Hurst, 2024), *American Historical Review*, Volume 130, Issue 2, June 2025, 860–861.

Review of Daniel Deudney, G. John Ikenberry, and Karoline Postel-Vinay (eds.), *Debating Worlds: Contested Narratives of Global Modernity and World Order* (Oxford University Press, 2023), *Journal of Asian Studies*, November 2024, 83 (4): 1110–1112.

Review of Ross Bassett, *The Technological Indian* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), *Business History Review,* October 2016, Vol. 90, Issue 3, pp. 611-613.

Prizes and Awards

Winner, Joseph W. Elder Prize in the Indian Social Sciences (for best book manuscript on an Indian subject), American Institute of Indian Studies

Finalist, BASAS Book Prize, British Association for South Asian Studies, 2024

Longlisted, Best Humanities Dissertation on Asia, International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS), 2019

Fellowships and Grants

External

Mellon/ACLS Dissertation Completion Fellowship, 2016-17

Rockefeller Archive Center Grant-in-Aid, 2014-15

The History Project Research Grant (Harvard University and University of Cambridge), 2013

Internal

Arts & Letters Summer Teaching Support for AI-Responsive Course Design, for "Promoting Historical Thinking in the Age of AI," 2026.

Kellogg Institute Faculty Research Grant, 2024

Liu Faculty Fellow Research Grant, 2024 (declined)

Faculty Research Support Program–Initiation Grant, Notre Dame Research, 2021

Institute for Scholarship in the Liberal Arts, Book Subvention Grant, 2021

Institute for Scholarship in the Liberal Arts, Small Research Grant, University of Notre Dame, 2019.

Kellogg Faculty Travel Grant, University of Notre Dame, 2018.

Fellowship of the Society of Woodrow Wilson Scholars (since renamed the Prize Fellowship in the Social Sciences), Princeton University, 2015-16.

Summer Research Grant, Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies, 2015.

Teagle Teaching Seminar Fellow, Teagle Foundation—McGraw Center for Teaching and Learning, 2014-15.

Dissertation Research Grant, Princeton University Department of History, 2013-14.

Language Study Grant, Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies, 2012.

Work in Progress

Status Anxiety: The Global Life of Indian Culture (book manuscript in progress)

Invited Talks

External

"Planning Democracy: Modern India's Quest for Development" (virtual), as part of the 'Masterclass' guest lecture series in the M.Sc. in Development Practice, O.P. Jindal Global University, Sonipat, India, September 27, 2025.

"Planning Democracy: How a Professor, an Institute, and an Idea Shaped India" (virtual), invited to speak as Guest of Honor at a daylong conference to commemorate Statistics Day, Indian Statistical Institute, New Delhi, June 29, 2023.

"The Professor and the Machine: A Transnational History of India's First Computers," Institutions and Historical Dynamics of the Economics and Society Laboratory (IDHES), Université Paris-Saclay, May 23, 2023.

Book Talk on *Planning Democracy* (virtual), Center for the Study of Law and Governance, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, April 14, 2023.

Book Talk on *Planning Democracy*, Center for the Advanced Study of India, University of Pennsylvania, February 16, 2023.

Book Talk on *Planning Democracy*, Dhar India Studies Program, Indiana University-Bloomington, February 2, 2023.

Book Talk on *Planning Democracy* (online), Centre de Sciences Humaines, New Delhi, January 23, 2023.

Book Talk on *Planning Democracy*, National Law School of India University, Bengaluru, November 16, 2022.

"Counting A Country: The Infrastructure of Development in Independent India" (online), Department of History, University of Cape Town, October 12, 2022.

Virtual Lecture, as part of a book panel with Prof. Atanu Biswas and Prof. Aparajith Ramnath discussing *Planning Democracy*, Ahmedabad University, School of Arts and Sciences, September 28, 2022.

Book Talk on *Planning Democracy*, Department of Political Science, Ashoka University, Sonepat, September 21, 2022.

"Numbers, Computers, and (sometimes) Bollywood," book talk and conversation with Prof. Sunalini Kumar, School of Global Affairs, Ambedkar University, New Delhi, September 16, 2022.

"Planning Democracy: How a Professor, an Institute, and an Idea Shaped India," Department of History and Archeology, Shiv Nadar University, September 15, 2022.

"A Nation in Numbers," invited for presentation at the 'Traveling Expertise' workshop, organized by South Asian Studies Council, Yale University, Kathmandu, August 1-2, 2022.

"Statistics as Development Infrastructure: Planning the Indian Republic," paper invited for presentation in the Development Seminar, University of Toronto, April 5, 2019.

"Nehru, the USSR, and Indian Planning," paper invited for presentation at 'Global Elite Knowledge Networks and Anglo-American Power: Think Tanks, Foundations, Universities,

and the New World Order, 1940-90,' London School of Economics and University College London, November 4-5, 2016.

"Knowing Through Numbers: Planning and the Rise of National Statistics in India," paper invited for presentation at 'Midnight's Institutions: Rethinking Political Imaginations and Institutional Change after India's Independence (1947-1960),' Yale University, April 22, 2016.

"Planning and the International Hunt for Computers," paper invited for presentation at 'The Business History of India and South Asia: Recent Trends in Research,' Harvard Business School, October 30, 2015.

Internal

"Populism: Notes from India," presented at the Department of History's Intellectual Life seminar, University of Notre Dame, October 30, 2024.

"Planning Democracy: How a Professor, An Institute, and An Idea Shaped India," presented at the History and Philosophy of Science (HPS) Colloquium, University of Notre Dame, September 8, 2023.

"How Calcutta Conquered Delhi: The Statistics that Planned Independent India," paper presented at the Notre Dame Institute for Advanced Study, University of Notre Dame, March 21, 2018.

Media and Public Engagement

Podcasts

"Arbitrary," hosted by the *Law School Policy Review* of National Law School-Bangalore, November 3, 2023.

"Asian Review of Books," with Nicholas Gordon, April 14, 2023.

"New Books in South Asian Studies," with Anubha Anushree, March 5, 2023.

"Ideas of India," with Shruti Rajagopalan, Mercatus Center, George Mason University February 2, 2023.

"The Seen and the Unseen," with Amit Varma, December 5, 2022.

"Past Imperfect," with Dinyar Patel, *Scroll* and S.P. Jain Institute of Management and Research, September 8, 2022.

"BIC Talks," with Niranjan Rajadhyaksha, Bangalore International Centre, July 9, 2022.

"Grand Tamasha," with Milan Vaishnav, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 8, 2022.

"Books and Authors," with Manjula Narayan, *Hindustan Times*, March 26, 2022.

Public Lectures

"Planning Democracy", book event at The Bookshop, Jor Bagh, New Delhi, September 10, 2022.

"The Indian Experiment: Democracy and Five-Year Plans," Bangalore International Centre, Bengaluru, November 3, 2022.

Interviews

Radio Interview about Gandhi, on "Mornings" presented by David Bevan, ABC Radio Adelaide, Australia, March 12, 2024.

"Meet the Writer," *Scroll*, August 6, 2023.

Video interview on *Planning Democracy*, Doing Sociology, September 15, 2023.

"The History of Data Collection in India," *The Times of India*, November 13, p. 23, 2022.

Video interview on *Planning Democracy,* The Print, June 8, 2022.

Video Interview on *Planning Democracy,* Scroll.in, May 25, 2022.

Interview on *Planning Democracy*, News Nine, April 22, 2022.

Media Coverage for *Planning Democracy*

Reviewed in: *The Hindu*, *Hindustan Times*, *The Telegraph*, *Business Line*, *The Financial Express*, *Open Magazine*, *Business Standard*, *Mint*, *The Tribune*, *The Book Review*, *The Caravan*, *The India Forum*, *Himal Southasian, The Print*, *Loksatta* (Marathi)

Excerpted in: *The Print, Outlook Magazine, Scroll*, *The Wire*, *Mint*

Quoted in / Cited By: *Associated Press*, *Reuters*, *The Indian Express*, *The Hindu*, *Business Standard*, *Mint*, *The Lallantop* (Hindi), *Deccan Herald*, *The Print*

Conference Contributions

"Dancing Ambassadors: Postcolonial India and the Birth of a Global Cultural Project," presented in a panel on Decolonization, Nation-Building, and Global Entanglements in South Asia,' at the American Historical Association annual meeting, Chicago, January 9, 2026.

"Dancing to Diplomatic Tunes: Dancers as Cultural Ambassadors in Postcolonial India," presented in a panel on 'Performing Identities,' at the 51st Annual Conference on South Asia, University of Wisconsin-Madison, October 22, 2023.

"Economists and Dancers," presented at the 'Traveling Expertise in Modern Suth Asia and Beyond' workshop organized by Yale University, Kathmandu, August 1, 2022.

"Mastering Calculation: Computers and Science in Postcolonial India," presented in a panel on 'Knowledge in Motion: State, Science, and Medicine in and Beyond South Asia,' at the 49th Annual Conference on South Asia, University of Wisconsin-Madison, moved online, October 22, 2021.

"New State, New Statistics: Planning and Data Infrastructures in Postcolonial India," presented in a panel on 'Planning Infrastructures' at the New States/New Sciences online conference, July 22, 2021.

"Measuring the Everyday: Sample Surveys and Household Industries in 1950s India" paper presented as part of a panel on 'Technology and the Everyday Across Post-War Asia' at the Association for Asian Studies Conference, originally in Boston and then moved online, March 26, 2021.

"Performing Development: Art and 'Democratic Planning' in India," paper presented as part of a panel on 'Art, Citizens, and the State in Nehruvian India,' at the 48th Annual Conference on South Asia, University of Wisconsin-Madison, October 18, 2019.

"The Cold War Tightrope: Superpower Competition and India's Computers," paper presented at 'Technological Innovation and the Spread of Globalization in the Cold War,' University of Vienna, October 12-14, 2018.

"Calcutta to Delhi, via Moscow: The Soviet Union and Indian Planning," paper presented as part of a panel titled 'Asia Learns from the Soviet Union' at the Association of Asian Studies-in-Asia conference (hosted by Ashoka University), New Delhi, June 6, 2018.

"Planning Anxiety: The Intellectual Infrastructure of India's Five-Year Plans," paper presented at 'Anxiety and Authority in South Asia,' Princeton University, April 6, 2018.

"Numbers for a Nation: Statistics and India's Five-Year Plans," paper presented at 'The New Economic History of India,' Cambridge University, May 11-12, 2017.

"The Professor and the Plan: National Statistics and Economic Planning in Independent India," paper presented in a panel on 'Shifting Configurations of State Science in India, 1950-1990: Statistics, Hydraulics, Remote Sensing and Biotechnology" at the 45th Annual Conference on South Asia, University of Wisconsin-Madison, October 24, 2016.

"Numbers and the National Economy: Planning and the Rise of Statistical Indicators," paper presented at 'Historicizing the Economy' workshop, Harvard University, September 24, 2016.

"Making the Plan Popular: 'Economic Democracy' and 'Democratic Planning' in Postcolonial India," paper presented at 'The Postcolonial Moment,' Princeton University, November 13, 2015.

"A Plan Conscious Nation: 'Democratic Planning' in Nehruvian India," paper presented in a panel on 'The Postcolonial Moment: Political Economy and the Projects of Indian Nationhood,' 44th Annual Conference on South Asia, University of Wisconsin-Madison, October 24, 2015.

"Automating Indian Development: Planning and the Transnational Pursuit of Computers during the Economic Cold War in South Asia", paper presented at the Humboldt-Princeton Global History Project Workshop, Humboldt University (Berlin), May 29, 2015.

"Computing India: Statistics, Computers, and India's Planned Future," paper presented at the Yale Modern South Asia Workshop, Yale University, April 11-12, 2015.

"Computing in Calcutta: Computers and Economic Planning in Independent India," paper presented at the 'Economic History Workshop' organized by the Institute for New Economic Thinking (INET) - Young Scholar's Initiative, New York City, January 25, 2015.

"Battling the Bottle: Experiments in Regulating Drink in Late Colonial Madras," paper presented at 'South Asia by the Bay', Stanford University, May 10, 2012.

Courses Taught

Gods, Empires, Nations: The History of South Asia

Modern India and Pakistan

Gandhi: A Global History of Non-Violence [Freshman Seminar]

History Workshop

Global History of Capitalism and Development [Graduate Seminar]

The Historian's Craft [Graduate Seminar]

Professional Activities and Academic Service

Service to the Profession

Article Manuscript Reviewer for:

Comparative Studies in Society and History

The Historical Journal

South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies

History Compass

Journal of Historical Sociology

IEEE Annals of the History of Computing

Book Manuscript / Book Proposal Reviewer for:

Stanford University Press

Cambridge University Press (UK)

Oxford University Press (USA)

Bloomsbury Academic (UK)

Cambridge University Press (India)

De Gruyter

Anthem Press

Discussant, Roundtable on 'Cold War Genres: Local and International in Hindi Literature,' at the 53rd Annual Conference on South Asia, University of Wisconsin-Madison, October 25, 2025.

Panel Chair and Discussant, 'Dalit Questions,' at the 73rd Annual Midwest Conference on Asian Affairs, University of Notre Dame, September 15, 2024.

External Reviewer, First Book Manuscript Workshop on Anushah Hossain's *Building a Multilingual Internet*, Stanford University, November 10, 2023.

Panel Chair and Discussant, "Debating 'Development: Planning Economies and Societies in Mid-Twentieth Century South Asia," at the 51st Annual Conference on South Asia, University of Wisconsin-Madison, October 21, 2023.

Panel discussant, 'The Forties: The Past and Future of India's International Engagements,' at the 48th Annual Conference on South Asia, University of Wisconsin-Madison, October 18, 2019.

Panel co-organized, 'Art, Citizens, and the State in Nehruvian India,' at the 48th Annual Conference on South Asia, University of Wisconsin-Madison, October 18, 2019

Panel co-organized, 'The Postcolonial Moment: Political Economy and the Projects of Indian Nationhood,' 44th Annual Conference on South Asia, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 24 October, 2015.

Conference co-organized (with Gyan Prakash and Michael Laffan), 'The Postcolonial Moment in South and Southeast Asia' at Princeton University, November 13-14, 2015.

Service to the University

Liu Institute Library Committee, 2026-27.

Ansari Global Fellow Mentor (to Prof. Thahir Jamal Kiliyamannil), Ansari Institute for Global Engagement with Religion, University of Notre Dame, 2025-26.

Elected Member, Faculty Senate, University of Notre Dame, 2025-2028.

Member, Steering Committee, 'Asian Political Cultures' strategic cluster, Liu Institute for Asia and Asian Studies, 2025-2026.

Member, Regional Faculty Advisory Committee for South Asia, Notre Dame Global, 2024-27.

Member, Selection Committee, Kellogg Institute Visiting Fellowship, 2025.

Reviewer, Kellogg Institute Visiting Fellowship Applications, 2024.

Member, Selection Committee, Kellogg Institute Visiting Fellowship, 2023.

Member, Histories of Economics and Development in the Global South Working Group, Kellogg Institute for International Studies, University of Notre Dame, 2020-present.

Selection Committee, Visiting Fellowship, Kellogg Institute for International Studies, 2019

Selection Committee, Kellogg International Scholars Program, University of Notre Dame, 2019-20.

Faculty Advisor, South Asian Student Association, 2020-present.

Co-organizer of Lecture Series (with Elisabeth Koll and Karrie Koesel) on

"Legitimacy and Propaganda in Contemporary Asia," Liu Institute for Asia and Asian Studies, University of Notre Dame, 2018-19.

Selection Committee, Experiencing the World Fellowship, Kellogg Institute for International Studies, University of Notre Dame, 2018-19.

Founding Member and Co-Organizer of the South Asia Group, Liu Institute for Asia and Asian Studies, University of Notre Dame, 2017-present.

Seminar series co-organized, Colonialism and Imperialism Workshop, Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies, Princeton University, 2014-15.

Conference co-organized, `Sourcing the Story: The Archive Anew, And Archives New', Early Career South Asia Conference at Jawaharlal Nehru University, October 4 - 6, 2010, New Delhi.

Conference co-organized (with Joppan George), 'Technologies and Traditions', Princeton Early Career South Asia Conference, April 17-18, 2015.

Service to the Department

Member, Search Committee for Assistant Professor of Transnational History, Department of History, University of Notre Dame, 2025-26.

Elected Member, Advisory Committee to Department Chair, Department of History, University of Notre Dame, 2023-24.

Undergraduate Program Committee, Department of History, University of Notre Dame, 2023-24.

Ad Hoc Committee to Revise Department Organization Plan, Department of History, University of Notre Dame, 2023-24.

Strategic Planning Committee, Department of History, University of Notre Dame, 2021-22.

Selection Committee, O'Brien Prize for Best Undergraduate Research Paper, 2021.

Undergraduate Program Committee, Department of History, University of Notre Dame, 2020-21.

Elected Member, Advisory Committee to Department Chair, Department of History, University of Notre Dame, 2020-21.

Elected Member, Advisory Committee to Department Chair, Department of History, University of Notre Dame, 2019-20.

Selection Committee, DeSantis Prize for best graduate research paper, Department of History, University of Notre Dame, 2019-20.

Graduate Program Committee, Department of History, University of Notre Dame, 2018-19.

Search Committee Graduate Liaison, Early Modern South Asian Historian, Department of History, Princeton University, Fall 2014.

Student Supervision

PhD Supervision

Rutuja Rokade, History and Philosophy of Science, University of Notre Dame, in progress (co-advising with Ijeoma Kola)

Kushal Nandwani, "'Criminal Scientists: Criminology and Governance in Twentieth-Century India," History and Philosophy of Science, University of Notre Dame, in progress (co-advising with Thomas A. Stapleford).

Doctoral Committee Member

Adam Matvya, "Imperial Politics of Emotion: Indo-Persian Elites and the East India Company, 1772-1835," History, University of Notre Dame, in progress.

Debora Rogo, "The Making of the Kenyan State: Citizenship, Belonging, and Nation Building through the East African Airlift and Aeroflot (1920 – 1980)," History and Peace Studies, University of Notre Dame, in progress.

Sarah Pollnow, "A 'New Era' in Liberia-US Relations: Liberalization and its Limits in the Tubman Years," History, University of Notre Dame, 2026.

Jorge Ivan Puma Crespo, "'The Only Correct Line': A Transnational History of French Maoism in Catholic Mexico during the Late Sixties," History, University of Notre Dame, 2023

Sam Thomas, "Hindu Nationalism and Indian Christianity: Perceptions, Approaches and Prescriptions," Theology, University of Notre Dame, 2021.

Elizabeth Baker, "More Romance than Reality: Mary Carpenter, 'Native Gentlemen,' and Female Education Reform in India," History, University of Notre Dame, 2018.

Comprehensive Examinations for Graduate Students

Kushal Nandwani, 'History of Modern South Asia', Fall 2025

Will O'Brien, 'Histories of Development and Capitalism', Spring 2025

Adam Matvya, 'History of Modern South Asia', Spring 2024

Thomas Harvell-DeGolier, 'Histories of Development', Spring 2024

Sam Thomas, 'Colonialism, Communalism, and Nationalism in Modern India', Spring 2018

Senior Theses Directed

Isa Sheikh, "Tagore's Irishmen: Empire and Cultural Revival in India and Ireland, 1878-1941," Department of History, University of Notre Dame, 2025.

Senior Theses Evaluated

Second Reader for, "Sanitation, Victorianism, and Yellow Peril: The Shaping of Bubonic Plague in Sydney, 1900," Department of History, University of Notre Dame, 2026.

Second Reader for, "Codename "Gilka": Hermann Görtz, Irish Neutrality, and Counterintelligence during the Second World War," Department of History, University of Notre Dame, 2023.

Professional Affiliations

American Historical Association

Association of Asian Studies