



Hinduism

RELIG 352/CHID 498D

Fulfills “Individuals and Societies” requirement for the College
Fulfills “Historical Traditions” track for Comparative Religion
Fulfills “Encounters across Cultures” and “Ideas in the World” requirement for CHID

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Winter Quarter 2012
Monday and Wednesday 1:30-3:20
Location: Sieg Hall 225

Course Synopsis: What is Hinduism? A religion? A philosophy? A way of life? This course, which assumes no prior knowledge of Hinduism or India, explores the fundamental components of the collection of stories, rituals, poems, songs, actions, philosophies, beliefs, images, places, practices, and concepts that together shape the many ideas of Hinduism in India. We will study Hinduism from its most ancient rudiments to contemporary politics on the subcontinent, observing the many ways Hinduism has been determined in specific contexts. During the quarter you will have a chance to read several texts that are central to various forms of Hinduism, including yogic texts, the *Upanishads* and *Vedas*, the *Bhagavad Gita*, stories from the ancient “mythic” texts or *puranas*, and the writings and speeches of modern Hindu figures. You’ll also experience the two Indian epics in unique forms: you will read the *Ramayana* in comic book format and watch a theatrical production of the *Mahabharata*. By the end of the course students will have a fluency in the vocabulary of Hinduism, through key terms, images, and practices set in their historical and cultural contexts.

Format: This is a lecture course in which I will encourage discussion and questions. Our readings are almost exclusively “primary” materials and the lectures serve to provide context for the readings and help explain what you have read. The syllabus is divided by themes which do not necessarily correspond to weeks. I intend to create opportunities for discussion and group work during the course and expect students to participate in all activities, whether being attentive and engaged in lecture, or vocal and creative in discussion.

Grading and Requirements:

Participation (30%): Participation is measured by in-class engagement with the materials of the course and the course lectures in the form of asking questions, making productive comments, completing any and all in class writing assignments, and generally being involved

in your own learning in class. As part of your participation grade, you will hand in a **daily hand-written reaction (approximately 1 page) to the readings**. You will write these in the first 10 minutes of class based on a question given by me. The best reaction papers reflect on the **reading** in a synthetic way and aim toward **generating discussion by asking one or two questions**.

Writing Assignments (20% each):

One Critical Review (3-4 pages, plus half page synopsis) based on a film, television show, novel, or other media associated with Hinduism. An assignment description will be provided. This is due on **1/25**.

One Ethnography (3-4 pages, plus half page synopsis) based on visiting a place in or around Seattle associated with Hinduism: a list will be distributed. This is due on **2/22**.

One Final Essay Exam in Class (30%). This is an open book exam, open note exam, but you cannot use any other materials for the exam. You'll have the full class time to complete the essay exam. The exam is on **3/7 in class**.

Class Etiquette: Please do not use computers in class. If you must use a computer in class as a way to accommodate a disability, please talk to me before class begins and/or visit Disabled Student Services (see below). **Please do not use iphones, mobile phones, ipods, gameboys, gadgets, doohickeys, thingamabobs or other devices in class.** Use pen/pencil and paper to take notes and exams; do not read other materials, like books, newspapers, magazines, letters, etc., in class; do not eat in class, though caffeinated beverages are encouraged. Please come on time and stay for the entire class.

Syllabus: I reserve the right to change this syllabus at any point, including the readings and assignments, as required in order to adapt to the needs of the class or other factors.

Lecture Materials: I do not give students copies of my lecture notes or powerpoint slides. They are cues to help me lecture and are not intended to be stand-alone documents.

Absences: Please try to let me know if you'll be absent from class. Also keep in mind that I do not give my lecture notes or powerpoint slides to students (as noted above), so you will need to get lecture notes from colleagues in the class.

How to Get an A: You can get an A by participating in class conversation in an informed way, and by completing all the work conscientiously and on time.

How to Get an F: Plagiarize! You run a significant risk of failing if you plagiarize. If you are unsure of what plagiarism is, see the University's Guidelines: <http://depts.washington.edu/grading/issue1/honesty.htm>. **It is your responsibility to understand what plagiarism is and the consequences involved.** If you have any specific questions about the way you are using materials in your work, I strongly encourage you to consult me in a timely

manner. Also, generally checking out or disappearing, especially throughout the middle of the quarter, is a bad idea.

Disabled Students: If you would like to request accommodations due to a disability, please contact Disabled Student Services, 448 Schmitz Hall, 543-8924 (V/TDD). If you have a letter from Disabled Student Services indicating you require accommodations, please present the letter to me as soon as possible so that I can make necessary arrangements.

Materials: The books listed below are available at the bookstore. All other readings are online at the course's Catalyst site and in a course pack at Ave Copy (4141 University Way NE # 103 Seattle, WA 98105 633-1837). You are responsible for downloading these readings and forming your own "coursepack" from them if you don't buy the course pack. You should bring readings to class on the day indicated on the syllabus.

- *Yoga: Discipline of Freedom*, Patanjali, translated by B. S. Miller.
- *Classical Hindu Mythology*, Dimmitt and van Buitenen, eds.
- *The Bhagavad Gita*, B. S. Miller, translator.
- *The Songs of the Saints of India*, Hawley and Jeurgensmeyer, eds.
- *The Ramayana*, R. K. Narayan, translator.

Syllabus

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

1/4: Outline of Class

Introduction of the content of the course.

OLD SCHOOL

Read by 1/9: Davis, Richard "Introduction: A Brief History of Religions in India," *Religions of India in Practice*, pages 3-52; "Introduction" and "Cosmic and Ritual Order in the Vedic Literature," Embree 7-28; Read "Introduction" and examine images at <http://www.harappa.com/har/indus-saraswati.html>; read "Introduction" and "Mohenjodaro" by J. M. Kenoyer at <http://www.mohenjodaro.net/mohenjodarointroduction.html> [note these readings are not in the course pack]

1/9: Lecture: The Indus Valley and the Vedic World

We will explore the Vedic world through its literature and "spiritual economy," discussing the Vedic sacrifice and the Vedic world view. We will also discuss the Indus Valley civilization and its possible (or not) connection to the Vedic world.

Read by 1/11: "Dharma: The First End of Man", Embree 203-233.

1/11: Lecture: The Ancient Brahminical World View

This lecture will rehearse key concepts central to Brahminical Hinduism, such as *dharmā*, *artha*, *moksha*, *kama*, *samsara*, etc. I will also discuss Brahminical cosmology in general, the outline of a soul's migration through stages of life, through castes in further lives, and how this is structured by a Brahminical world view.

SOUL POWER

Read by 1/18: "Ultimate Reality in the Upanishads," Embree, 29-40; selection from *Chandogya Upanishad*, chapters 1, 5, 6, and 7.

1/18: Lecture: The Self and Rebirth

This lecture will discuss the internalization of Vedic principles of sacrifice, the birth of philosophical and existential speculation, and the outline the six essential philosophical systems with their unique conceptualizations of the "soul".

THE PARADOX OF ACTION AND JUSTICE

Read for 1/23: Read the *Bhagavad Gita*.

1/23: Lecture: The *Mahabharata*, the *Bhagavad Gita*, and the Subtlety of Dharma

We will discuss the story of the *Mahabharata* and how it seeks to grapple with the complexity of *dharma* in a world of moral decay, paying special attention to the resolutions given in the *Bhagavad Gita*.

THE OTHER TRINITY—SHIVA, VISHNU, AND THE GODDESS

Read by 1/25: Puranic myths from Dimmitt and van Buitenen, pgs 3-14, 59-68, 71-84, 100-130.

CRITICAL REVIEW DUE 1/25 IN CLASS

1/25: Lecture: Vishnu, Krishna, and Sri/Lakshmi

In this lecture we'll view primary iconography of the manifestations of Vishnu/Krishna and Lakshmi, and understand the character of these "Vaishnava" deities in Hinduism in general that relate these deities to life "in this world".

Read by 1/30: Puranic myths from Dimmitt and van Buitenen, pgs 147-184 from "Shiva", Dimmitt and Buitenen, pgs 30-58, "Origins," and 205-213, from "Shiva." and 219-242 from "The Goddess".

1/30: Lecture: Shiva, Ganesh, and Parvati/Durga/Kali

We will discuss the iconography and narrative history of these "Shaiva" deities and their character as mediators of opposites: the family and renunciation, creation and destruction, tenderness and violence.

Read by 2/1: *Yoga: The Discipline of Freedom*, entire.

2/1: Lecture: Yoga, the Self, and the Phenomenal World

I will outline the key rationales for renunciation and "freedom" from rebirth, and the technologies used in this endeavor, most importantly, different forms of *yoga* and *tantra*. I will relate this philosophy to broader concepts of society that make the central problem of this strand of Hinduism the "self".

EPIC AMBIGUITIES

Read for 2/6: *The Ramayana*, first half.

2/6: In Class Screening: “Sita Sings the Blues”.

Read for 2/8: Finish the *Ramayana*.

2/8: The Ambiguities of *Dharma* and Freedom in the *Ramayana*

We will discuss some of the issues raised in the *Ramayana* about righteousness and justice. I will also trace the use of Ramayana iconography and its retellings in history.

THE RITUAL WORLD

Read for 2/13: “How to Worship at Shiva’s Temple,” Hudson in Davis, pages 304-325 [fix this reading]; Wadley, “Hindu Women’s Family and Household Rites in a North Indian Village,” in Davis, pages 157-170.

2/13: Lecture: The Ritual World and the World as Ritual

This lecture will detail life-cycle rituals, rituals of passage, the ritual engagement with an image of God, and uncommon rituals, such as possession and pilgrimage. We’ll also see the video “Puja: Expressions of Devotion” in class.

Read for 2/15: “Seven Prevalent Misconceptions about India’s Caste System” by Diane Mines and Sarah Lamb, in *Everyday Life in South Asia*, pgs. 227-228; from *Untouchable* by Jadhav, pgs 209-226. B. R. Ambedkar, “The Annihilation of Caste”; “Sanskritization,” M. N. Srinivas.

RELIGION AND CASTE

2/15: Lecture: Religion, Caste, Untouchability, and Society

This lecture engages three notions of caste (*varna*, *jati*, and “caste”) and the relationship of these ideas to Hinduism.

PUBLIC DISPLAYS OF DEVOTION

Read by 2/22: “Kabir” from Hawley and Jeurgensmeyer.

2/22: Screen *Koi Sunta Hai* (Someone Is Listening)

Read by 2/27: Hawley and Juergensmeyer, entire preferably, but be sure to read “Surdas,” “Mirbai,” and “Tulsidas”; “Mahadeviyakka” and “Basava” from Ramanujan.

Ethnography Due 2/22 in Class

2/27: Lecture: Bhakti and Its Public

I will outline the history and basic principles of the idea of *bhakti* or devotion in India, and will present a theory of its use as a public religious form.

THERE'S A THIN LINE BETWEEN LOVE AND HATE

Read by 2/29: Alberuni's India, Sachau, ed. and trans., pages 17-32, 99-104, 130-163, 395-406; and "A Medieval Encounter between Hindu and Muslim: Eknath's Drama-poem Hindu-Turk *samvad*," by Eleanor Zelliott.

2/29: Lecture: Hinduism and Islam in India

This lecture engages the encounter between Islam and Hinduism, particularly in the Delhi Sultanate around the Qutb Minar and in the Mughal Period around the dialogic figures of Akbar (the "good" Muslim ruler) and Aurangzeb (the "bad" Muslim ruler).

FROM HINDOOS TO HINDUISM

Read by 3/5: From Embree: "Rammohun Roy" (15-35), "Tagore" and "Dayananda Saraswati" (36-62), "Bankim Chandra Chatterjee" (130-139), "Bal Gangadhar Tilak" (140-147), "Mahatma Gandhi" (243-274), "Vinayak Damodar Savarkar" (289-295), "Bhim Rao Ambedkar" (324-333 and 339-348).

3/5: Lecture: Hinduism and Modernity and Course Review

This lecture will touch upon the colonial construction of Hinduism and reactions by Hindu Indians to that construction; the role of Hinduism in the Independence movement; and post-Independence political uses of Hinduism for both the purposes of unification and division. We will save 45 minutes for course review and exam prep.

Read by 3/7: Everything you missed in the preceding weeks and all your notes.

3/7 IN CLASS ESSAY EXAM