Course Description & Goals

This course explores the development of Hindu Indian Philosophy starting from the middle of the first millennium BCE. We will:

- Read & discuss excerpts from the Rg and Atharva Vedas that hint at the beginnings of philosophical speculations,
- Trace the development of these ideas in select Upaniṣads,
- Explore the purpose of Yoga as described in the Yoga Sūtras,
- Examine the conflict between renunciation and religion as presented in the Mahābhārata’s Mokṣa-dharma-parvan (“Section on the Laws of Liberation”), and
- See how the Bhagavad Gītā effects a synthesis between the tensions of performing one’s role in society and renouncing society for the pursuit of liberation.

Throughout the course, we will also be reading in parallel Roberto Calasso’s *Ka: Stories of the Mind and Gods of India*, in order to gain further appreciation for the added dimensions of and interconnectivity between these seemingly disparate texts.

All texts will be read in English translations, no knowledge of Sanskrit or other Indian languages is required. There are no pre-requisites for this class.

The primary goals of this course are to familiarize ourselves with this literature and the practices and teachings that are presented here, and to understand the concerns & motivations of their creators and the various perspectives from which these can be interpreted. We will use writing as a means to organize our understanding and work our ideas into coherent arguments. Our goal in class sessions will be to engage with the ideas and issues raised by our readings, with the active participation of all students.

Assignments and Grading policy

The final grade in Asian 207B / CHID 270A will be based on the following factors:

- 10% - Class Preparation & Participation, which includes contributing to in-class discussion by asking questions, and making thoughtful academic arguments.
- 35% - Responses to readings on WebQ, GoPost, DropBox and peer feedback on specified topics, reading journal to help you collect ideas towards term papers.
- 25% - Two Term Papers, 6-8 pages each (double-spaced, 12pt. font, 1” margins), on each of the major readings;
- 30% - Final Term Paper, 12-15 pages, with a max. 10 minute presentation in class during Finals time (worth 10% of Final Paper grade).
Required readings

The following five books (all available from the University Bookstore) are required. They are listed in the order we will read them. In addition, we will read other selections and many secondary readings which will be made available as PDFs online through the course website.


General Guidelines

- All readings must be completed before the class in which they will be discussed, and should be read using close reading techniques that will be covered in class.
- All written assignments are to be turned in online before the beginning of class, and should be typed in 12-point font and double-spaced, with one inch margins.
- All term papers will be graded on: having a defensible thesis statement, the use of textual support, and the overall strength and clarity of the argument. These elements will be discussed in class.

Policy on Attendance and Late Assignments

Students enrolled in ASIAN 207B / CHID 270A are expected to attend all classes and are responsible for all material covered in class. If you are unable to attend a class, it is your responsibility to find out from another student what was covered and what assignments were given. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class. Any missing or unexcused late assignments will receive no grade. If, owing to exceptional circumstances such as illness, death in the family, etc. (substantiated by appropriate medical or other documentation), you are unable to submit an assignment on time, it is your responsibility to inform the instructor as early as possible and to make alternate arrangements. While in class, the student’s conduct needs to be such that a productive learning environment for all is maintained. Students engaging in behavior that distracts other students or interferes in the ability of the instructor to teach will be asked to leave the classroom and will be considered as absent on that day.

Policy regarding Academic Honesty

All students are expected to follow University of Washington standards of academic responsibility, to be found at https://depts.washington.edu/grading/pdf/AcademicResponsibility.pdf. Cheating and plagiarism, i.e. submitting anyone else's work as your own (whether it be an essay written by another student, downloaded from the Internet, or use of others’ published work without citation) are strictly forbidden. Cases of suspected plagiarism will be reported immediately to the Committee on Academic Conduct of the University's Office of Undergraduate Education.

For graduate students in Asian Languages & Literature only

If you are a graduate student in the Department of Asian Languages & Literature, you must take this course for a letter grade (4.0 scale). You may not elect S/NS grading. (Please see section 5.1.0 of the Graduate Policies & Procedures.) If you elect S/NS grading, you will jeopardize your academic standing.