

## REL3300, Religions of India

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office hours: Thursdays, 2:00 pm to 3:45 pm and by appointment

**Class Meeting Time**

Tuesday 8-9 MAT 103;

Thursday 9 AND 134

**Credits:** 3 credit hours**Course Term:** Fall 2019

This course focusses on the religious traditions and cultural diversity seen in the Indian subcontinent. The lectures and discussions will span the following areas:

- (a) a historical introduction to the Hindu tradition;
- (b) thematic studies including domestic and temple rituals, discussions on the status of women, and Hinduism in the diaspora; and
- (c) a study of the "minority" traditions in India.

Our approach to the materials will be historical and thematic. There will be a focus on specific sacraments, rituals, and other issues and activities which have been significant for millions of Hindus. This will include discussion of issues that may not be found in traditional texts, and I will be supplementing the readings with short journal and magazine articles, videos, and slides. We will raise many questions concerning the *practice* of Hinduism, and pay particular attention to the experience of women. Why do the Hindus (especially women) wear a mark on their foreheads? What are the food restrictions and preferences of Hindus around the world? How do Hindus worship at the home shrine and at the temple? How do they celebrate their festivals? What do they say during their weddings? Why has "yoga" (as it is known in the west now) not been very important for the larger Hindu population but become important in urban areas in the last fifty years? What do the Hindus mean by auspicious times and sacred places? How does the caste system function when marriages are arranged?

The larger questions we will work with in the course will include the following: Are the Indian concepts of "Hinduism" and western concepts of "religion" congruent? How has colonial scholarship and assumptions shaped our understanding of south Asian Hindus and the "minority traditions" as distinct religious and social groups, blurring regional differences? How are gender issues made manifest in rituals? To what extent does language identity overshadow religious identity? How does religious identity influence political and social behavior? How do Hindus in South Asia differentiate among themselves and what criteria do they use?

In the third part of the course we will discuss "minority" religions of India. This will include discussions on Jainism, Sikhism, and Islam, as well as the relationship between Hinduism and these religious traditions.

**Course Goals**

When you complete this course, you will be able to:

1. Explain worldviews, rituals, and beliefs of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism.
2. Problematize the category of religion and identify some working definitions, along with their limitations.
3. Identify the social, political, and cultural factors that come into play in the formation and understanding of a given religion.
4. Recognize the significance of performance in the practice and transmission of these religions.

### Course Readings, Required Texts, and Videos

*South Asian Religions*, edited by Pechilis and Raj

I will be supplementing this with readings from Willard Gurdon Oxtoby, Amore, Roy C., and Amir Hussain. 2014. *World religions: Eastern traditions*. FOURTH EDITION. ALL PAGE NUMBERS GIVEN FOR THE FOURTH EDITION. Cited below as “Oxtoby.”

*\*\* Other supplemental materials, such as videos will be provided on this course website or through the class list serve.*

**Instructional Methods:** Class room teaching and videos made by the instructor. I will be communicating with you through the class list serve regularly to send assigned readings. Term papers and the final exam are to be submitted through turnitin in Canvas.

### Course Requirements and Policies

1. Regular attendance and completion of required reading on time. Students are responsible for all the material covered in the class. Lectures will complement the reading and will not repeat them.

Attendance will be taken regularly. You are allowed two absences; after that each unexcused absence will cost a half grade reduction in your final grade. Coming late to class regularly may also affect your attendance record and cause your grade to be lowered.

#### 2. Quizzes

Regular quizzes will be administered in class. Quizzes are non-cumulative and are worth **50%** of your overall grade. You will have ten minutes to do the quiz IN CLASS.

Quizzes will be a combination of (a) choosing from multiple answers and (b) short answers to describe a concept or a ritual. Quizzes will be based on the classroom lectures, videos assigned, and the assigned readings.

No makeups are allowed, except for DOCUMENTED medical or family emergencies.

#### 3. Class Term Paper

Possible topics for the term papers will be discussed in class. You are free to choose any topic that interests you and submit it through turnitin/ Canvas. I will be happy to discuss your interests and suggest an initial biblio. to get you started. The **term paper** should be about 8 double spaced pages (about 300 words per page) + endnotes/citations, bibliography and all the academic niceties. **It is due on October 29th<sup>th</sup> 6:00 pm.** Papers submitted late (within 48 hours

of the due date) will be accepted, **but the grade for the paper will be lowered by one letter.**  
No paper will be accepted after October 31, 6:00 pm.

#### 4. Final Exam

You will have a final exam (take home) that will be submitted through turnitin. This will involve two essay type questions. More details will be given during the semester.

#### Course Technology

Frequent access to a computer with a good broadband connection is required to view videos.

#### University Policies

##### *University Policy on Accommodating Students with Disabilities*

Students requesting accommodation for disabilities must first register with the [Dean of Students Office \(Links to an external site.\)](#). The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation. You must submit this documentation prior to submitting assignments or taking the quizzes or exams. Accommodations are not retroactive, therefore, students should contact the office as soon as possible in the term for which they are seeking accommodations.

##### *University Policy on Academic Misconduct*

Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students should be sure that they understand the [UF Student Honor Code \(Links to an external site.\)](#).

#### University Rules on Attendance policies/ absences from classes are posted on

<http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationattendance.html>

Students are expected to come to class on time and not use electronic devices for any other purpose except for taking notes. Attendance will be taken regularly with sign in sheets. Missing class more than twice will result in the lowering of final grade by one notch.

#### Grading Breakdown

Quizzes: 50%

Term Paper: 25%

Final Exam: 25%

#### Grading Scale

GRADE	POINTS
A	93-100
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D/PASS	65-69
F/FAIL	64 and below

For more information about UF's minus grade system  
visit: <http://www.isis.ufl.edu/minusgrades.html>

Extra-curricular activities:

Sept. 7 Classical Indian Dance at the Hipp (see below)

Class at the Samuel Harn Museum of Art (to be arranged).

### **Week 1**

August 20 Tuesday.

Introduction to the course.

Indus Valley Civilization and the Vedas

Assignment: watch this video. Intro to the Hindu Tradition: Forehead Marks

<https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/93169297dd3646ccbff1dc6ce82c3d641d>

<https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/f3b25f15d5ea437fb19e0b8ef5d5cb681d>

August 22 Thursday

The Vedas

<https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/82183b9beff240209b83aedc13713d341d>

Upanishads

<https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/b918debfa92c46e6bfc39e52466cc7051d>

**Reading for the week:**

Oxtoby, pp. 28-40

### **Week 2**

August 27 Tuesday Ramayana

<https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/bec39dd3123341d0ac88b0b42255f92f1d>

August 29 Thursday Mahabharata

<https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/b5540f42fcb3420b86850f4a18fce0971d>

**Reading for the week:** Oxtoby, pp. 41-44

*Quiz 1 (on Indus Valley Civ. The Vedas and The Upanishads)*

### **Week 3**

September 3 Tuesday The Bhagavad Gita

<https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/ceb720a6e6724817b8d98d0a3f8505b11d>

September 5 Thursday Hindu Deities

<https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/b1aa1be27a044015aa6df7d5ce6656fe1d>

**Reading for the week:** Oxtoby, pp. 44-53; 74-75

Chapter on Hindu Deities in CANVAS (this will be in the file "A Hundred Autumns to Live.")

*Quiz 2 (on the Ramayana, Mahabharata)*

**September 7, Saturday, 3:00-4:00 pm**, at the Hipp Cinema, The Hippodrome, 25 Southeast 2nd Place, Gainesville, FL 32601: **Classical Indian Dance, South Indian Bharata Natyam Style**

by Shyam and Viraja, (from Kalakshetra school in Chennai, India). Write a 300 word observation report and submit through turnitin by Sept. 9<sup>th</sup> 12 noon for extra credit 5 points added to the weekly quiz count.

#### Week 4

September 10 Tuesday Hindu Philosophies

<https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/e1b022c8e9dd463387c382ff35754b401d>

September 12 Thursday Yoga

No in-class instruction. Watch

<https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/46704bad934544009f88dd348bde3ee51d>

**Reading for the week: Oxtoby, pp. 53-57**

#### Week 5

September 17, Tuesday: Devotion (Bhakti )

<https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/46704bad934544009f88dd348bde3ee51d>

September 19 Thursday: Sacred Landscapes

<https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/f23a3a597e81417abe64162d3151c3741d>

**Reading for the week:**

Oxtoby, pp. 59-to first paragraph of 66

Chapter on Bhakti in Canvas

Chapter in Canvas for Sacred Landscapes (these will be in the file “A Hundred Autumns to Live.”)

**Quiz 3 on *The Bhagavad Gita and Hindu Deities***

#### Week 6

September 24 Tuesday: Hinduism in Southeast Asia

<https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/afddad2fdd2341d48d06001e80fca3cb1d>

September 26 Thursday: Transition to modernity

Watch Bhakti Mamtara

<https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/fbad05faed024c908bca8548c999ad101d>

**Reading for the week:** Oxtoby, pp. for SE Asia 57-59

Reading for transition to modernity: Oxtoby, pp. 66-69

**Quiz 4 on *Devotion/ Bhakti***

#### Week 7

October 1 Tuesday: Rites of passage/ weddings

October 3 Thursday: Hindu festivals

**Reading for the week:** Oxtoby, pp. 81-85 Oxtoby pp. 79-81;

<https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/d3d5514246904b8798c01ad8b5c044631d>

**Quiz 5 on *Southeast Asia***

#### Week 8

October 8 Tuesday: Hindu festivals contd.

October 10 Thursday: Temple Worship

**Reading for the week** chapter in canvas on Temples

<https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/f23a3a597e81417abe64162d3151c3741d>

**Quiz 6 on Rites of Passage**

### Week 9

October 15 Tuesday: Performing arts

Watch the video by Jodi Shaw; Read chapter in Canvas

<https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/70fbfaa88c774cc3b8dc3545eed14dbc1d>

October 17 Thursday: Diaspora

**Reading for the week:** Oxtoby pp. 88-90; 91-94

**Quiz 7 Festivals and Temple Worship**

### Week 10

October 22 Tuesday and October 24 Thursday: Buddhism and start discussions on Jainism

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kEe8hI6G0GY>

produced by the National Buddhist Authority, Srilanka

**Reading for the week** Buddhism Chapter in South Asian Religions

**No quiz**

### Week 11

October 29 Tuesday: Jainism

<http://www.pbs.org/video/religion-and-ethics-newsweekly-indias-jains/>

October 31 Thursday: Sikhism

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qrn6YucQ-wY> (Video made by and for the police in Chicago to enhance understanding of the community).

**Reading for the week:** Chapters on Jainism and Sikhism from South Asian Religions

**Quiz 8 Buddhism**

### Week 12

November 5 Tuesday: Islam in India 1: History

November 7 Thursday: Islam in India 2 Sufi traditions, Dargahs, architecture

**Reading:** Karen G. Ruffle, "Islam in South Asia" Pechilis in Karen, and Selva J. Raj. 2013. *South Asian religions: tradition and today*, pp. 193-219.

For an introduction, see Professor Simmons' lecture at

<https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/65f698e13a3843f59c550f3d84a6514b1d>

OR

Professor Ostebo's lecture at

<https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/18c82ad062bf4763b6a0e49b93f7ae771d>

**This video should be seen prior to the November 5 class**

**Quiz 9 Sikhism and Jainism**

### Week 13

November 12 Tuesday: Islam 3: Islam in Modern India; Partition, pains and political tensions.

November 14 Thursday: Christianity in India 1

Readings tba on the partition.

For Christianity, read in chapter on Christianity by Thomas Thangaraj, in Karen Pechilis and Selva J. Raj. 2013. *South Asian religions: tradition and today*, 161-188.

### ***Quiz 10 on Islam***

### **Week 14**

November 19 Tuesday: Christianity 2 Readings by Selva Raj and Corinne Dempsey tba.

Watch: <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/2009/04/24/april-24-2009-ancient-christians-in-india/2754/>

November 21 Thursday: Either Judaism in India or Classroom presentations.

If we do Judaism, the reading will be Nathan Katz, Judaism in India, in Karen Pechilis and Selva J. Raj. 2013. *South Asian religions: tradition and today*, 143 -156

### **Week 15**

November 26, Tuesday: No classroom instruction

November 28 Thursday: Thanksgiving Holiday

December 3 Tuesday: Student presentations, wrap up discussion on religion