

Fall 2013
REL 6129 Hindu Traditions in America

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TIME: Thursday Periods 8-10 (3.00-6.00 pm)

PLACE: CBD 234

CREDITS: 3 Semester Hours

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Hindus living in India have had the comfort and luxury of having their religion, ethnicity, and culture all conflate together in a Venn-diagram fashion in the bounded landmass of the south Asian sub-continent. Religious concepts, philosophies, social relationships, and sacred geography are all embedded in and articulated through the performing arts. Vegetables, lentils, and spices, are connected with notions of orthopraxy. Every religious ritual framed by brahminical Sanskrit verses begins with a recitation of the geography of the sacred land—India-- in which the observant resides.

But what happens when Hindus migrate to a different continent, removed from the sacred territories? How do they see themselves as connected with the new socio-political structures of the new land they now call home? What happens when people in other countries adopt “Hindu” lifestyles--variously defined—in explicit ways?

Hinduism in the United States can be studied in at least two ways: the history of ideas and practices which are derived from Hindu traditions but which may not explicitly use the term “Hindu,” and the history of Hindus in this country. One can further divide these histories, which have fuzzy boundaries, into two large periods, with 1965 being the watershed year when the immigration laws were changed, making it easy for technically qualified workers to enter the country. The period up to 1965 can be characterized as one where the history of Hindu ideas dominates. While this certainly does not stop after 1965 (the boom in yoga, meditation, and gurus starts in the 1960s), the post-1965 period is also one where we can tell the story of large numbers of Hindus entering America, building temples, and transmitting traditions through domestic rituals and expressive arts.

This course will examine the experiences of both immigrants and those who in some part adopt elements of what one may call a “Hindu” lifestyle. How do the post-1965 immigrant Hindus, second generation, and Euro/ African-American Hindus “accommodate” religion and culture with their life-styles in the United States? What kind of architecture and spatial arrangements are negotiated? Who participates in leadership and ritual functions? Where do the priests/ monks come from? What kind of people come to this country? What bearing does their ethnicity, approximate economic class, gender, status (laypeople, or renunciants, etc.) have on their new roles and functions? Specifically, the architecture and spatial arrangements may reflect the group's negotiated peace with the larger American milieu, and compromises worked out between Hindu traditions and other South Asian traditions (usually Jainism, but occasionally Sikhism); north and south Indian forms of Hindu worship; between Shaiva, Vaishnava and Goddess traditions; caste/ community traditions; and finally, the institution's financial situation and prognosis for the future.

We will have the opportunity to explore the ideas and practices which are thought to have origins in the Hindu tradition in India, and also practices and performances connected with Hindus in the United States. There will be special focus on the performing arts, temple building, gurus, yoga, marriage patterns, and Hindu involvement in the larger socio-economic milieu.

Students are expected to do the readings before class and if two people are leading the discussions, do meet before class and review literature/materials together. I would like one or two students to lead the discussion each week.

Grading:

Class participation and presentation: 33%
Periodic written reports and Syllabus: 33%
Final paper (about 20 pages or more): 33%

August 22, 2013

Introduction, review of syllabus, overview of Hindu Traditions in America in the context of Global Hinduism

Vasudha Narayanan, "Hinduism in America." *The Cambridge History of Religion in America*, ed. Stephen Stein. Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Vasudha Narayanan, "Hinduism." *Encyclopedia of Global Studies*. Edited by Mark Juergensmeyer and Helmut K. Anheier, Sage Publications, volume 2, pp. 793-799, 2012.

"Hinduism." Anchor article for *Religion and American Cultures*, edited by Gary Laderman and Luis Leon. ABC-CLIO, 2003, 97-109.

Goldberg, ch. 1

August 29

Early Encounters through Material Culture/ journals/narratives of sailors

Bean, Susan S. *Yankee India: American Commercial and Cultural Encounters with India in the Age of Sail, 1784-1860*. Salem, MA: Peabody Essex Museum, 2001.

American Transcendentalism

Emerson "Brahma;"

<http://www.web-books.com/Classics/Poetry/Anthology/Emerson/Brahma.htm>

Hamatreya <http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/eng385/hamatrey.htm>

Thoreau (Sections of Walden – "The Pond in Winter" and "Conclusion.")

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/205/205-h/205-h.htm>

Recommended: Emerson's Journals.

Malini Schueller: *US Orientalisms* (Chapter on "Mine Asia": Emerson's erotics of oriental possession -- Whitman, Columbus, and the Asian mother.)

Goldberg, ch. 2

September 5

Early Movements/Organizations

- Ramkrishna Mission/Trigunatita

Book: Swamy Trigunatita: His Life and Work by Mary Louise Burke
Jackson, Carl T. 1994. *Vedanta for the West: the Ramakrishna movement in the United States*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
Jackson, Carl T. *Vedanta for the West The Ramakrishna Movement in the United States*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994. Ebook
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=11075>

Check out Vedanta Center websites. How many Centers are there?

Paramahansa Yogananda

Book: Autobiography of a Yogi– [How often does he use the word 'Hindu'?]

Goldberg, ch. 3- 6

September 12 Hinduism's early entry to the U.S./ Orientalism of Ted Shawn and Ruth St. Denis

Ted Shawn and Ruth St. Denis– all available from Library West or the Fine Arts Library

Terry, Walter. 1976. *Ted Shawn, father of American dance: a biography*. New York: Dial Press.

Schlundt, Christena L. 1962. *The professional appearances of Ruth St. Denis & Ted Shawn; a chronology and an index of dances, 1906-1932*. New York: New York Public Library.

Reed, J. M. L., Reed, P., Chisman, R., Sherman, J., Santee, C., Santee, D. G., Center Dance Collective., ... Kultur International Films. (1988). *Denishawn: The contributions of American dance pioneers Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn*. West Long Branch, N.J: Kultur. VHS Tape:

Sherman, Jane. 1976. *Soaring: the diary and letters of a Denishawn dancer in the Far East, 1925-1926*. Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press (Not sure of this one.)

St. Denis, Ruth, Ted Shawn, Doris Humphrey, James Moody, Ron Honsa, and Chris Sloben. 2002. *Denishawn dances on!* West Long Branch, NJ: Kultur.

Shawn, Ted, and John Henry Nash. 1920. *Ruth St. Denis: pioneer & prophet; being a history of her cycle of oriental dances*. San Francisco: Printed for J. Howell by J. H. Nash.

Shawn, Ted. 1929. *Gods who dance*. New York: E.P. Dutton & Co.

Sections of Pandey, Anuradha. [2011]. *Circles of History: the Remaking of Indian Classical Dance*. Unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Florida.

September 19 Sacred Spaces and architecture

Vasudha Narayanan, "Sacred Land, Sacred Service: Hindu Adaptations to the American Landscape." *A Nation of Religions: The Politics of Pluralism in Multi-religious America*, edited by Stephen Prothero. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press

Or

Vasudha Narayanan, "Heterogenous Spaces and Modernities: Hindu Rituals to Sacralize the American Landscape." *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* Spring 2005 (April) 127-148.

Sacred Architecture–Temple spaces. Slides– Vasu Lecture

Joanne Punzo Waghorne's "Hindu Gods in a Split-level World: The Sri Siva-Vishnu Temple in Suburban Washington, D.C." in *Gods of the City*, Robert Orsi, ed. Indiana University Press, 1999.

Dempsey, Corinne G. 2006. *The Goddess lives in upstate New York: breaking convention and making home at a North American Hindu temple*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

September 26 - October 3 "Universalism" and "Ethnicity" Siddha Yoga, TM, and ISKCON
<http://www.siddhayoga.org/>

Goldberg, ch. 8-9

ISKCON Edwin Bryant and Maria Ekstrand, ed. *The Hare Krishna Movement: The Postcharismatic Fate of a Religious Transplant*

"Hindu," "Indian," or "spiritual" movements: Siddha Yoga and TM

<http://www.siddhayoga.org/>

<http://tm.org/discover/glance/why.html>

Presentation on ISKCON and "Krishna Food"

October 10 The Debate on Yoga

Several Websites.

Shreena Gandhi, PhD Dissertation: "Translating, Practicing, and COMmodifying Yoga in the US"

Goldberg, ch. 10

October 17 Transnational gurus

1. Amanda Huffer-Lucia
2. *The Graceful Guru: Hindu Female Gurus in India and the United States*. Edited by Karen Pechilis. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2004
3. Goldberg, ch. 11, 12, 14

October 24 Transmission of cultures: Dance traditions

O'Shea, Janet. 1998. "'Traditional' Indian Dance and the Making of Interpretive Communities." *Asian Theatre Journal* 15, no. 1.

Articles from narthaki.com

Dance Traditions –Video

Performance: Sunaina Marr Maira, 2002, *Desis in the House: Indian American Youth Culture in New York City*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Blogs: natyarasa.wordpress.com specifically:

<http://www.hindu.com/fr/2009/03/20/stories/2009032051420500.htm>

<http://natyarasa.wordpress.com/2008/11/18/dashavatars-good-over-evil-theme-not-so-clear-cut/>

<http://natyarasa.wordpress.com/2008/09/30/has-shyness-died-in-a-generation-of-emblazoned-women/>

<http://natyarasa.wordpress.com/2008/10/07/indian-dance-branches-away-from-purely-hindu-themes/>

October 31 Temple Rituals – *Review of Ephemera (bulletins/ brochures/ websites)*

November 7 Controversies on pedagogical issues. Selected websites

November 14 Presentation of Syllabi

November 21 Paper Presentation by Students

November 28 (Thanksgiving)

As per the University Calendar, Nov. 21 ends up being the last day of classes, but I would like us to meet one day before Dec. 4 just to wrap up the class.

Requirements:

Regular reading and weekly reaction papers to the reading. Please do the reading before the class and come prepared with *written* comments and a summary of the reading. Feel free to change and revise your draft in light of the discussions and turn the papers in at the appointed time.

Completion of suggested field work, analyses of websites, and viewing of video-s and / or performances when and where relevant. I will pass on information on any events in the area which may pertain to the course.

You will be asked to read and write a reaction paper regularly but the pace will step up considerably towards the end of the semester.

A full term paper with notes, biblio. is to be submitted by a date that we will discuss in class. I presume this will be sometime in the second-third week of November. The papers are expected to be about 20 pages plus notes and biblio. on a topic of your choice. I will discuss your projects with you regularly.