

REL3300, Religions of India
 Vasudha Narayanan, Distinguished Professor, Religion
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 office hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 1:45 pm to 2:45 pm and by appointment

Credits: 3 credit hours

Course Term: Fall 2017

Class Meeting Time: Monday 8; Wednesday 8-9

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.

We will strike a balance between a historical approach and a thematic one whereby sacraments, rituals, and other issues and activities that are religiously important for a Hindu family can be explained. 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. For instance, 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 kind of diet do they follow? 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 generally been unimportant for the average Hindu for the last one thousand years or so? 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 be indirectly addressed 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.

Course Goals

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

1. Explain world views, 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 and Required Texts

Assigned text: 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.

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 30th 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 November 1, 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>

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Cited below as “Oxtoby.”

Week 1

August 21 Monday. *No office hours today*

Introduction to the course. Intro to the Hindu Tradition: Forehead Marks

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

August 23 Wednesday *No classroom Instruction; no office hours*

Indus Valley Civilization and the Vedas

Watch the following videos.

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

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 28 Monday Ramayana

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

August 30 Wednesday 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 4 Holiday

September 6 Wednesday The Bhagavad Gita

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

Hindu Deities

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

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

Chapter on Hindu Deities

Quiz 2 (on the Ramayana, Mahabharata)

Week 4

September 11, Monday Hindu Philosophies

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

Yoga

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

September 13 Wednesday

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

Chapter on Philosophies

Quiz 3 on The Bhagavad Gita and Hindu Deities

Week 5

September 18, Monday Devotion (Bhakti)

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

September 20 Wednesday 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

Quiz 4 on Philosophies

Week 6

September 25 Monday Hinduism in Southeast Asia

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

September 27 Wednesday 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 5 on Devotion/ Bhakti

Week 7

October 2 Monday Rites of passage/ weddings

October 4 Wednesday Hindu festivals

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

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

Quiz 6 on Southeast Asia

Week 8

October 9 Monday Hindu festivals contd.

October 11 Wednesday Temple Worship

Reading for the week chapter in canvas on Temples

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

Quiz 7 on Rites of Passage

Week 9

October 16 Performing arts (no classroom instruction)

Watch the video by Jodi Shaw; Read chapter in Canvas

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

October 18 Diaspora (Guest Speakers)

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

No quiz

Week 10

October 23 Monday and October 25 Wednesday, Buddhism

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

produced by the National Buddhist Authority, Srilanka

Reading for the week 189-202; 246- to beginning of 248

No quiz

Week 11

October 30 Monday: Sikhism

Reading for the week: Oxtoby pp. 106-115; 120-129

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

November 1 Wednesday Jainism 148-178

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

Quiz 8 Buddhism

Week 12

November 6 Monday Islam in India 1: History

November 8 Wednesday 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. This will be made available to you.

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 6 class

Quiz 9 Sikhism and Jainism

Week 13

November 13 Monday Islam 3: Islam in Modern India; Partition, pains and political tensions.

November 15 Wednesday 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. This will be made available to you.

Quiz 10 on Islam

Week 14

November 20 no classroom instruction

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

November 22 Holiday

Week 15

November 27, Monday Christianity 2 Readings by Selva Raj and Corinne Dempsey tba.

November 29 Wednesday 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. This will be made available to you.

December 4 Monday Student presentations, wrap up discussion on religion

December 6 no class