

Gods, Sages and Kings: Readings in Indian Mythology (REL 3333)

Department of Religion, University of Florida

Spring 2014

T 2-3, R 3 (Tuesday 8:30 – 10:25 am, Thursday 9:35 – 10:25 am)

AND (Anderson Hall) 13

INSTRUCTOR

Travis L. Smith, Department of Religion (tlsmith@ufl.edu)

Office Hours: Tuesday 1:30am – 1:30pm, Anderson 008, and by appointment

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Course Description

A survey and analysis of some important narrative genres and myth cycles of premodern India, featuring selections from the Vedas, Purāṇas, the Indian epics and Sanskrit courtly poetry, read in translation.

Introduction

This course will examine a broad selection of mythological narratives of traditional India, focusing on figures such as Śiva, Kṛṣṇa and the Goddess, and on premodern textual traditions such as the Vedas, Purāṇas, epics and lyric poetry, read in translation from Sanskrit and other Indic languages. Through these stories, the course will examine important themes such as karma and rebirth, time and cosmology, sacred place, asceticism, class and caste, and the relationship between the human and divine realms. The readings in the course will also provide an occasion to re-think categories such as “myth,” “history,” and “religion” in framing our analyses of these narrative texts. Though the focus in this course is on premodern Indian literature, it will introduce the students to themes and concepts that can be traced through contemporary Indian thought, and will additionally provide a basis for students outside the field to engage in comparative work with other traditions.

Required Texts

The following books will be available for purchase from local booksellers, and will also be placed on library reserve (Library West) where possible. Other editions (reprints, etc.) of these texts are fine, but please ensure that the translator is the same. You are welcome to consult

other translations of texts such as the Ramayana, Mahabharata and Bhagavad-gita, but you are expected to use the following translations as your primary references.

Edwin Bryant, *Krishna: The Beautiful Legend of God (Śrīmad Bhāgavata Purāṇa Book X)*. Penguin, 2004.

Thomas Coburn, *Encountering the Goddess: A Translation of the Devī-Māhātmya*. SUNY, 1991. [optional]

W.J. Johnson, trans. *Kālidāsa: The Recognition of Śakuntalā*. Oxford, 2001.

Barbara Stoler Miller, trans. *The Bhagavad-Gītā: Krishna's Counsel in Time of War*. Bantam, 2004.

R.K. Narayan, *The Ramayana: a shortened modern prose version of the Indian epic*. Penguin, 2006.

John D. Smith, trans. *The Mahābhārata*. Penguin, 2009.

Course Requirements and Grading Policy

ALL REQUIREMENTS MUST BE FULFILLED FOR A PASSING GRADE in the class. You cannot simply skip one of the assignments and expect to pass.

ANY PAPER HANDED IN LATE WILL BE PENALIZED, up to a half-grade per full day of lateness. Extensions without penalty will only be granted in advance of the due date, and if sufficient, reasonable justification for the extension is provided.

1. Attendance and Participation (10%)

It is imperative that you come to class prepared to discuss the readings. This is a discussion-centered course, so attendance and participation are very important parts of your grade; absences will be monitored closely and excessive tardiness will be counted towards absences. Students in attendance are expected to sign in at every class session; attendance will be taken from the sign in sheet in order to eliminate attendance oversights. In case of disputed absences, the sign in sheet will be considered the verification of records. Those who miss more than three classes due to medical illness might consider dropping the course in accordance with the UF illness guidelines. Students should consult the University of Florida attendance

policy for any questions or clarifications at the following URL:

<http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationattendance.html>. Students are expected to take notes on the assigned readings and review notes **before** coming to class. Be in class on time and to stay until class is finished.

2. In-class Quizzes (15%)

Periodically, brief quizzes will be administered at the beginning of class to assess students' assimilating of the required readings. These will not be announced beforehand. Expect from 5-10 such quizzes during the course of the semester. In-class quizzes can only be made up if the absence was due to a documented medical emergency or the absence was otherwise arranged with the instructor. The lowest quiz grade will be dropped.

2. Midterm Exam (15%)

An in-class midterm exam will be held on **Thursday, February 27**. The exam will test terms and concepts from the readings and class discussions and will consist of three parts: short answers, close reading and a critical essay.

3. Response Papers (40%)

Four brief response papers of roughly 1000 words (about 3-5 double-spaced pages) each will be required. The paper topics will be announced in class, and the assignment and writing guidelines will be posted on Sakai under the Assignments tab. These are not intended to be research papers, but rather, responses to specific course readings. The response papers will be due via Sakai on the following **Sundays: February 2, February 23, March 23 and April 13**.

4. Final Exam (20%)

An in-class final exam will be held on **Tuesday, April 22**. The exam will consist of four parts: short answers, identifications, close reading and a critical essay.

Grade Proportion	Grade Scale	Grade Value
Participation 10%	100-93=A	A=4.0
Quizzes 15%	92-90=A-	A-=3.67
Midterm Exam 25 %	89-86=B+	B+=3.33

Response Papers 30%	85-82=B	B=3.00
Research Paper 25%	81-79=B-	B-=2.67
	78-75=C+	C+=2.33
	75-72=C	C=2.00
	71-69=C-	C-=1.67
	68-66=D+	D+=1.33
	65-62=D	D=1.00
	61-60=D-	D-=0.67
	59-0=E	E=0.00

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

Links to the articles, along with complete bibliographic references, are available on the Sakai website, under the "Lessons" tab

WEEK ONE: "Mythology" and Indic literary traditions

T 1/7 Introduction to the course

R 1/9 Laurie Honko, "The Problem of Defining Myth" in A. Dundes, ed. *Sacred Narrative: Readings in the Theory of Myth* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1984), pp. 41-52.

William W. Malandra, *An Introduction to Ancient Iranian Religion* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), pp. 3-16.

WEEK TWO: Vedas and Brāhmaṇas

T 1/14 Laurie L. Patton, "Veda and Upanishad," in S. Mittal and G. Thursby, eds., *The Hindu World* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 37-51

Wendy Doniger, trans. *The Rig Veda* (pp. 97-104, 121-126, 128-138, 139-146, 148-156)

"Indra, Tvastr and Vrtra" (from the *Kṛsna Yajur Veda*) (pp. 188-193)

R 1/16 Cyavana (from the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*)

Cyavana (from the Mahābhārata)

WEEK THREE: The Mahābhārata and its Context

T 1/21 James L. Fitzgerald, "Mahabharata" in K. Jacobsen, et al., eds., *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill 2010), pp. 72-94.

R 1/23 Smith, trans., *Mahābhārata*, selections from "Beginnings": pp. 1-3, 10-17, 23-25, 28-83.

WEEK FOUR: Mahābhārata II

T 1/28 Smith, trans., *Mahābhārata*, "The Hall," pp. 85-163.

R 1/30 Smith, trans., *Mahābhārata*, "Virata," pp. 243-292.

Response paper #1 due on Sunday 2/2

WEEK FIVE: Mahābhārata III

T 2/4 Smith, trans., *Mahābhārata*, "Perserverance," pp. 293-347.

R 2/6 Smith, trans., *Mahābhārata*, "Karna," pp. 488-525.

WEEK SIX: Mahābhārata IV

T 2/11 Smith, trans., *Mahābhārata*, "Salya," "The Night Raid," and "The Women," pp. 526-596.

R 2/13 Smith, trans., *Mahābhārata*, "The Clubs," "The Great Journey" and "The Ascent to Heaven," pp. 756-791.

WEEK SEVEN: The Bhagavad-Gītā

T 2/18 Angelika Malinar, “Bhavagadgītā” in *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, v.2. (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 95-109.

Smith, trans., *Mahabharata*, pp. 348-366.

Barbara Stoler Miller, *Bhagavad-Gita*, chapters 1-6.

R 2/20 Miller, *Bhagavad-Gita*, chapters 9-11, 18.

Response paper #2 due on Sunday 2/23

WEEK EIGHT: Midterm

T 2/25 Minor, ed., *Modern Interpreters of the Bhagavad Gītā* (SUNY, 1986), chapters by Jordan (88-109), French (131-146) and Baird (200-221).

R 2/27 **In-class Midterm Exam**

WEEK NINE: SPRING BREAK

No class, no readings: enjoy the break!

WEEK TEN: Purāṇa

T 3/11 Greg Bailey, “Purāṇas” in K. Jacobsen, et al., eds. *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Hinduism* v.2 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 127-152.

“Myths on the Origin of Linga Worship” W. Doniger, *Hindu Myths* (Penguin, 1975), pp. 137-154.

R 3/13 “Śiva and Divodāsa” from the *Skandapurāṇa*

Diana Eck, *Banaras: City of Light* (New York: Columbia, 1999), pp. 146-157.

Travis L. Smith “Renewing the Ancient: the *Kāśīkhaṇḍa* and Śaiva Varanasi” *Acta Orientalia Vilnensia* 8.1 (2007): 83-108.

WEEK ELEVEN: Kṛṣṇa in the Purāṇas

T 3/18 Edwin Bryant, *Krishna: the Beautiful Legend of God* (Śrīmad Bhāgavata Purāṇa Book X), pp. 7-51, 100-106, 125-143.

R 3/20 Bryant, *Krishna: the Beautiful Legend of God*, pp. 150-209, 400-419.

Response paper #3 due on Sunday 3/23

WEEK TWELVE: The Devī-Māhātmya

T 3/25 Tracy Pintchman, "Mahādevī," in *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism* v.1 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp. 627-636.

Thomas Coburn, *Encountering the Goddess: A Translation of the Devī-Māhātmya* (SUNY Press, 1991), selections.

R 3/27 Coburn, *Encountering the Goddess*, selections.

WEEK THIRTEEN: Rāmāyaṇa I – Vālmīki's "Original Poem"

T 4/1 Robert P. Goldman and Sally Sutherland Goldman, "Rāmāyaṇa" in *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, v.2 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 111-126.

Robert P. Goldman, trans., *The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki: An Epic of Ancient India. Bālakāṇḍa. vol. 1* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), selections.

R 4/3 R.K. Narayan, *Ramayana*, begin.

Kathleen Erndl, "The Mutilation of Surpanakha," in n P. Richman, ed., *Many Ramayanas: The Diversity of a Narrative Tradition in South Asia* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1991), pp. 67-88.

WEEK FOURTEEN: Rāmāyaṇa II – Many Rāmāyaṇas

T 4/8 Narayan, *Ramayana*, continue.

Phillip Lutgendorf, "An Excerpt from the *Rāmcāritmānas* of Tulsīdās Book Five: *Sundar Kāṇḍ*" *Journal of Vaiṣṇava Studies* 2.4 (1994): 91-127.

R 4/10 Narayan, *Ramayana*, complete.

David Shulman, "The Testing of Sita in Kampan's *Iramavataram*" in P. Richman, ed. *Many Ramayanas: The Diversity of a Narrative Tradition in South Asia* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1991), pp. 89-113.

Response Paper #4 due Sunday, April 13

WEEK FIFTEEN: Kālidāsa's *Śākuntala*

T 4/15 Johnson, trans., "Śākuntalā in the Mahābhārata" in *The Recognition of Śākuntalā* (pp. 109-137).

Johnson, trans., *Recognition of Śākuntalā*, begin.

R 4/17 Johnson, trans., *Recognition of Śākuntalā*, complete.

WEEK SIXTEEN: *Śākuntala* II

T 4/22 In-class Final Exam