

REL 3330 Religions of India

University of Florida

Department of Religion

Fall 2014

Course Meeting Times: **MAT 108** Tuesdays 8 & 9 (3:00 – 4:55pm), **AND 134** Thursdays 9 (4:05 – 4:55pm)

Instructor: Bhakti Mamtora

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Office: Anderson 123

Office Hours: Mondays & Wednesdays 10:30am – 12:00pm

& By appointment

Course Description

This course introduces students to the beliefs and practices of the religious traditions of India. This course maintains a special focus on the rich and diverse history and development of the Hindu traditions. Throughout the semester, students will examine Buddhist, Jaina, Islamic, Sikh, Christian and Jewish religious traditions from a range of intellectual lenses and methodological approaches.

The course focuses on tradition and today, analyzing not only the emergence of these religious traditions in India but also their relevance and influence in the contemporary period. As we learn about the religions of India, we will ask ourselves the following questions: (1) What constitutes a religion? (2) What are the major themes discussed in prominent texts? (3) In what ways do those themes manifest in practice?

Course Objectives

- Analyze primary and secondary texts critically
- Identify the beliefs and practices of the religious traditions of India
- Broadly sketch the emergence and development of these religious traditions

Evaluation & Grading Policy

1. **Attendance & Participation (10%):** A participation grade will be determined on the basis of the student's attendance, preparedness and active participation in the discussions throughout the semester. Students are allowed three unexcused absences; however, **every absence thereafter will be penalized** unless appropriate documentation of medical or other emergency is provided.
2. **In-class Quizzes (15%):** In order to ensure students are completing the required course readings in a timely fashion, unannounced assessments in the form of short answer questions will be administered throughout the semester. Students should expect 5 – 7 unannounced assessments throughout the semester. The lowest grade will be dropped.
3. **Brief Reading Responses (30%):** Students will complete three written assignments of 3 – 4 (750 – 1,000 words) during the semester. The response paper topics will be announced in class. The response papers will address theoretical and methodological issues mentioned in the readings, lectures and class discussions. The papers will be due on **Sunday, September 21, Sunday, October 26** and **Sunday, November 23**.
4. **Midterm Exam (20%):** The midterm exam will be designed to evaluate students' understanding of the themes covered in the weekly lectures and discussions. The midterm exam will be held in class during our two hour block. The exam will consist of a combination of identifications, short answers

and essay questions. Students are expected to answer these questions based on their knowledge of the materials covered in class.

5. **Final Exam (25%):** The final exam is designed to evaluate students' understanding of the themes covered in the weekly lectures and discussions. The exam will consist of a combination of identifications, short answers and essay questions. Students are expected to answer these questions based on their knowledge of the materials covered in class.

Grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

| Grade | A | A- | B+ | B | B- | C+ | C | C- | D+ | D | D- | E |
|---------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| Total % | 93-100 | 92-90 | 89-86 | 85-82 | 79-81 | 78-75 | 75-72 | 71-69 | 68-66 | 65-62 | 61-60 | 59-0 |

Class Policies

Academic Honesty

Students should familiarize themselves with the University's standards of academic honesty and integrity. If students are caught or suspected of plagiarizing, cheating or violating the Honor Code in any assignment for this course, they will be reported to the Student Conduct Committee at the Dean of Students' Office. For further information about academic honesty please visit the following website: <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>.

Students with Disabilities

Students requesting classroom accommodations or special consideration must first register with the Dean of Students' Office. The Dean of Students' Office will provide the necessary documentation to the student, who is then required to give that documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation. For further information, please visit the following website: <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

Absences

In order to maximize on their learning experiences, students are expected to attend every single class. Students are allowed three unexcused absences. Thereafter, students will be penalized for any unexcused absence.

Late or Make-Up Assignments

Students can request an extension on an assignment only in extraordinary circumstances. If the instructor does not grant an extension, late assignments will be marked down 1/3 grade for each day late.

Written Assignments

All written assignments should be submitted electronically via Canvas. Please make sure that all written assignments are typed, double-spaced, and have standard fonts (Calibri or Times New Roman, 12 pt.) with 1" margins.

Required Readings

Patton, Laurie. *The Bhagavad Gita* (Penguin Classics). New York: Penguin Books, 2008.

Pechilis, Karen and Selva J. Raj, eds. *South Asian Religions: Tradition and Today*. New York: Routledge, 2013.

All additional readings for the semester will be available via Canvas. Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the readings.

Classroom Etiquette

Students are expected to arrive on time and prepared to discuss the readings for the week. Students should not arrive late to class as it is disruptive to the instructor and their fellow classmates. Before entering the classroom, students should turn off their cell phones. Students who engage in disruptive behavior during class (including, receiving or making calls, sending text messages, whispering, talking in class etc.) will be asked to leave and marked absent for the day.

Class Schedule

Week 1

August 26 Introduction

August 28 Introduction

- Novetzke, Christian Lee. "The Study of Indian Religions in the US Academy." *India Review*. 5.1 (2006): 91-121.

Week 2

September 2 Vedic Traditions

- Patton, Laurie. "Veda and Upanishad." *The Hindu World*. Ed. Sushil Mittal and Gene Thursby. London: Routledge, 2004, pp. 37-51.
- Clothey, Fred. *Religion in India: A Historical Introduction*. New York: Routledge, 2006, pp. 14-37.
- Michael Woods, *The Story of India* (film)

September 4 Vedic Traditions

- Olivelle, Patrick. "Mundaka Upanishad." *The Early Upanishads*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 434-455.

Week 3

September 9 Jaina Traditions

- Clothey, Fred. *Religion in India: A Historical Introduction*. New York: Routledge, 2006, pp. 37- 41.
- Pechilis, Karen and Selva J. Raj, eds. *South Asian Religions: Tradition and Today*, pp. 73 – 100.

September 11 Buddhist Traditions

- Clothey, Fred. *Religion in India: A Historical Introduction*. New York: Routledge, 2006, pp. 41 – 48.

Week 4

September 16 Buddhist Traditions

- Pechilis, Karen and Selva J. Raj, eds. *South Asian Religions: Tradition and Today*, pp. 101 – 120.

September 18 **Dharma and The Epics: Ramayana**

- Clothey, Fred. *Religion in India: A Historical Introduction*. New York: Routledge, 2006, pp. 61 – 72.
- Goldman, Robert and Sally Goldman. "Ramayana." *The Hindu World*. Ed. Sushil Mittal and Gene Thursby. London: Routledge, 2004, pp. 75-89.

Response Paper # 1 due Sunday 9/21

Week 5

September 23 **Bhagavad Gita**

- Patton, Laurie. *The Bhagavad Gita* (Penguin Classics). New York: Penguin Books, 2008. (selections)
- Mahabharata Overview Reading: TBA

September 25 **Yoga in the Bhagavad Gita**

- Patton, Laurie. *The Bhagavad Gita* (Penguin Classics). New York: Penguin Books, 2008. (selections)

Recommended Resources:

Fitzgerald, James L. "Mahabharata" in *The Hindu World*, pp. 52-74.

Search/Watch clips of the *Mahabharata* on your own on YouTube and/or children's/comic books

<https://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/southasia/Religions/texts/gita.html>

Week 6

September 30 **Gods and Goddesses: Visnu, Siva, Devi**

- Pechilis, Karen and Selva J. Raj, eds. *South Asian Religions: Tradition and Today*, pp. 39 – 46.
- Narayanan, Vasudha. "Gods and Goddesses" pp. 131-173

October 3 **Hindu Traditions (Rituals and Festivals)**

- Pechilis, Karen and Selva J. Raj, eds. *South Asian Religions: Tradition and Today*, pp. 46-69.
- Bahadur, Om Lata. "Divali: The Festival of Lights" in *The Life of Hinduism*, pp. 91-98.

Week 7

October 7 **Hindu Traditions (Temples)**

- Clothey, Fred. *Religion in India: A Historical Introduction*. New York: Routledge, 2006, pp. 89 – 96.
- Additional Reading: TBA

October 9 **Hindu Traditions (Gurus)**

- Kim, Hanna. "Svaminarayana: Bhaktiyoga and the Aksarabrahman Guru." In *Gurus of Modern Yoga*, pp. 237-260.

Week 8

October 14 **Midterm Exam**

October 17 **Tribal Religious Traditions**

- Pechilis, Karen and Selva J. Raj, eds. *South Asian Religions: Tradition and Today*, pp. 21 – 38.

Week 9

October 21 Hindu Devotional Traditions

- Clothey, Fred. *Religion in India: A Historical Introduction*. New York: Routledge, 2006, pp. 138-149.
- Hawley, John Stratton and Mark Juergensmeyer. "Mirabai." *Songs of the Saints of India*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 119 – 140.

October 23 Islam

- Pechilis, Karen and Selva J. Raj, eds. *South Asian Religions: Tradition and Today*, pp. 193 – 205.

Response Paper # 2 due Sunday 10/26

Week 10

October 28 Islam (Sufism)

- Embree, Ainslee et al. *Sources of Indian Tradition: From the Beginning to 1800*, pp. 447-489.

Recommended Reading:

- Richard Eaton, "Sufi Folk literature and the Expansion of Indian Islam," *History of Religions* 14 (1974), pp. 117-127

October 30 Islam in Practice

- Flueckiger, Joyce B. *In Amma's Healing Room*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006. (selections)

Week 11

November 4 Sikh Traditions

- Clothey, Fred. *Religion in India: A Historical Introduction*. New York: Routledge, 2006, pp. 150 – 159.
- Pechilis, Karen and Selva J. Raj, eds. *South Asian Religions: Tradition and Today*, pp. 223 – 249.

November 6 Sikh Traditions in Practice (Pilgrimage)

- Ferraris, Federica. "Narratives of 'Return'?" *Travels to Punjab in the Contemporary Transnational Sikhscapes*. Ed. Knut A. Jacobsen and Kristina Myrvold. New York: Bloomsbury Academic Publishing, 2012, pp. 87-104.

Week 12

November 11 Veteran's Day, No Class

November 13 **Judaism**

- Pechilis, Karen and Selva J. Raj, eds. *South Asian Religions: Tradition and Today*, pp. 143-160.

Week 14

November 18 Christianity

- Pechilis, Karen and Selva J. Raj, eds. *South Asian Religions: Tradition and Today*, pp. 161 – 191.

November 20 Christianity in Practice

- Frenz, Matthias. "The Virgin and her 'relations'." *South Asian Religions on Display*. Ed. Knut Jacobsen. New York: Routledge, 2008, pp. 92-103.
- Raj, Selva J. "Public Display, Communal Devotion." *South Asian Religions on Display*. Ed. Knut Jacobsen. New York: Routledge, 2008, pp. 77-91.

Response Paper # 3 due Sunday 11/23

Week 15

November 25 AAR Annual Meeting, No Class

November 27 Thanksgiving Holiday, No Class

Week 16

December 2 Contemporary Issues

- Readings: TBA

December 4 Global Religions of India

- Clothey, Fred. *Religion in India: A Historical Introduction*. New York: Routledge, 2006, pp. 224 – 247.
- Web Search Assignment

Week 17

December 9 Course Conclusion

Final Exam Date: TBA