

REL3300, Religions of India

Vasudha Narayanan, Distinguished Professor, Religion

vasu@ufl.edu (*Please use email through CANVAS for all communications*)

office hours: Tuesdays 2:00-2:45 and by appointment (zoom appointments possible)

Class Meeting Time

Credits: 3 credit hours

Tuesday: Periods 8-9; Thursday, Period 9

Anderson 13

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. Understand the different viewpoints on the category of religion and "Hinduism," 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

Required Texts:

South Asian Religions, edited by Pechilis and Raj.

Bhagavad Gita Translation by Laurie Patton

Other Required Reading.

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

Supplemental readings will be from:

1. Vasudha Narayanan, *A Hundred Autumns to Live* manuscript, available in Canvas site.
2. Amore, Roy C., Amir Hussain, and Oxtoby. 2018. *World religions: Eastern traditions*. Fifth Edition. Occasionally, I will augment the readings with materials from this text—or substitute the longer readings that have been assigned with shorter ones from this text. These minor adjustments will be made in class and the substitute materials will be distributed.

You do not have to buy the supplemental readings

Instructional Methods: Classroom 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 or excused absences (religious holidays or active participation in athletic events).

3. **Class Term Paper**

Two possible topics for the term paper, including at least one on the Bhagavad Gita will be announced in class late September. You can choose either of them. The **term paper** should be about six double spaced pages (about 300 words per page) + endnotes/citations, bibliography and all the academic niceties. **It is due on October 31th 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 2, 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 <https://disability.ufl.edu/>

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 at the beginning of the semester and certainly 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 Honesty

Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students should be sure that they understand the **UF Student Honor Code** (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>).

As a UF student, you have agreed to follow the university's Honor Code, meaning you will not give or receive unauthorized assistance in completing assignments. Violations can result in failing an exam, paper or the course. For more information, see:

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/studentguide/studentrights.php>. On all work submitted for credit by University of Florida students, the following pledge is implied, "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." Please note that acts of plagiarism include:

- Turning in a paper or assignment that was written by someone else.
- Copying verbatim a sentence or paragraph of text from the work of another author without proper citation and quotation marks.
- Using and copying verbatim a sentence or paragraph of text from Chatgpt or any other AI software for any kind of course assignments.
- Paraphrasing or restating in your own words, text or ideas written by someone else **without proper citation.**

For more info, see <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/students.html>

All written assignments including discussion posts and papers must include the proper method of citation from the citation style of your choosing. Please see <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/> (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>) for more information on how to cite your work. Please go through the **preventing plagiarism guidelines**.

Again: The use of ChatGPT or other A.I. software for your assignment is not allowed and goes against the university honor code.

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>

While we will try hard to stick to these dates, discussions and questions may lengthen the topic and we may be behind schedule

Week 1

Reading for the week: *A Hundred Autumns* ch. 1

August 24 Thursday.

Introduction to the course.

Intro to the Hindu Tradition: Forehead Marks

Week 2

Reading for the week:

Reading for the week: *A Hundred Autumns* ch. 2 and 3

Ramayana: chapter 4 pp tba

August 29 Tuesday

Indus Valley, The Vedas and the Upanishads

August 31 Thursday Ramayana

Week 3

Reading for the week: *A Hundred Autumns* ch. 4 and 5 pp. tba

September 5 Tuesday Mahabharata and the Bhagavad Gita; start Hindu Deities
Quiz 1 (on Indus Valley Civ., The Vedas, and The Upanishads and the Ramayana)

September 7 Thursday
Hindu Deities

Week 4

Reading for the week: *A Hundred Autumns* ch. 9
And TBA

September 12 Tuesday Hindu Philosophies
Guest Lecture: Laura Aherns and Prathik Murali
Quiz 2 (on the Mahabharata; Bhagavad Gita; Hindu Deities)

September 14 Thursday Yoga
Guest Lecture: Laura Aherns

Week 5

Reading for the week: *A Hundred Autumns* chapters 8 and 10
September 19, Tuesday 19 Devotion Bhakti
Quiz 3 (on Hindu Philosophies and Yoga)

September 21, Thursday: Sacred Landscapes

Week 6

Reading for the week: *A Hundred Autumns* ch. 7
And TBA
Reading for transition to modernity: Oxtoby, pp. 66-69

September 26 Tuesday: Hinduism in Southeast Asia
Quiz 4 on Devotion/ Bhakti

September 28 Thursday: **Watch online video (no class in Anderson)**
Transition to modernity
Watch Bhakti Mamtara
<https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/fbad05faed024c908bca8548c999ad101d>
[Links to an external site.](#)

Week 7

Reading for the week: *A Hundred Autumns* ch. 11, 15, and 16 extracts
October 3 Tuesday: Rites of passage/ weddings
Quiz 5 on Southeast Asia

October 5 Thursday: Hindu festivals

Week 8

Reading for the week *A Hundred Autumns* ch. 11

October 10 Tuesday: Temple Worship

Quiz 6 on Rites of Passage

October 12 Thursday: Performing arts *A Hundred Autumns* ch. 19

Watch the video by Jodi Shaw; Read chapter in Canvas

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

Week 9

Reading for the week:

South Asian Religions Hinduism, Diaspora Section; *Hundred Autumns*, Ch. 12-13 extracts

South Asian Religions Buddhism

October 17 Tuesday: Global Hinduism

Hindu teachers in America, Guest lecture by Joseph Reader

Quiz 7 Festivals and Temple Worship

October 19 Thursday: Buddhism

Documentary link to be announced

Week 10

Reading for the week

South Asian Religions Buddhism and Jainism

No Quiz

October 24 Tuesday Buddhism contd.; Start Jainism

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

Discussion on the video

Oct. 26 Thursday

Jainism Guest lecture by Carol Rodriguez

Week 11

Reading for the week: *South Asian Religions* Sikhism

Reading for this week and next week:

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.

October 31 Tuesday

Quiz 8 Buddhism

Discussion on Sikhism

November 2 Thursday

Islam in India 1: History

For an introduction to Islam, 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>

Week 12

Readings:

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

Quiz 9 Sikhism and Jainism

November 9 Thursday: Islam 3: Islam in Modern India; Partition, pains and political tensions.

Week 13

Readings:

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.

Readings on the Partition: TBA

November 14 Tuesday

Quiz 10 on Islam

November 16 Thursday: Christianity in India 1

Week 14

November 19 Tuesday: Christianity 2 Readings by Selva Raj and Corinne Dempsey tba.
No Quiz

Week 15

November 28

November 21 Thursday: Either Judaism in India

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

November 30 Tuesday: Student presentations, wrap up discussion on religion

Week 16

Dec 5: Review materials.