

REL3300, Religions of India

Vasudha Narayanan, Distinguished Professor, Religion 104 Anderson Hall
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office hours: Tuesdays 3:15-4:15 and by appointment (zoom appointments possible)

Class Meeting Time

Tuesday: Periods 7 (1:55 PM - 2:45 PM) Dauer 342
Thursday, Period Periods 7-8 (1:55 PM - 3:50 PM) Ustler 104

Credits: 3 credit hours



This course focusses on the religious traditions and cultural diversity seen in the Indian subcontinent. The lectures and discussions will be built on multi-disciplinary approaches and include several perspectives.

Students at the end of the course will be familiar with:

1. The worldviews, rituals, and beliefs of the religions of India
2. The cross-cultural engagement between the east and the west, focusing on Greek and Indian philosophical ideas, literary underpinnings of New England Transcendentalists, especially Emerson and Thoreau
3. The translation and transmission of key texts like the Bible and “Precepts of Jesus” in Indian languages.
4. Identify the social and cultural factors that come into play in the formation and understanding of a given religion.
5. The role of music and performing arts in the transmission of the religions.

Our approach to the materials will be historical and thematic. We will be studying Indian thought and practice in the context of contemporary cultures in other parts of world, including the Greco-Roman empire (in the first part of the course) and with Europe during the colonial period. Students will learn to identify and to analyze the relevant factors that shape the interaction and the evolution of ideas in the subcontinent. We will discuss texts, sacraments, rituals, and other issues and activities which have been significant for millions of Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, Christians et al..

For Gen Ed Humanities course objectives, see <https://undergrad.ua.ufl.edu/general-education/gen-ed-program/subject-area-objectives/>

I will be supplementing the readings with short journal and magazine articles, videos, and slides. We will raise many questions concerning the texts and *practice* of the religious traditions. Why do the Hindus (especially women) wear a mark on their foreheads? What are the food restrictions and preferences of Indians, based on religious practices? How can we analyze the rituals and festivals in the context of ritual theory in Religious Studies? Is yoga a religion? 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 Indians (from many religious traditions) mean by auspicious times and sacred places? How does the caste system in various religions 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? How do language and religious identities work in India and in the diaspora? How does religious identity influence political and social behavior?

In the third part of the course we will discuss "minority" religions of India. This will include discussions on Jainism, Sikhism, Christianity, 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. The worldviews, rituals, and beliefs of the religions of India
2. The cross-cultural engagement between the east and the west, focusing on Greek and Indian philosophical ideas, literary underpinnings of New England Transcendentalists, especially Emerson and Thoreau
3. The translation and transmission of key texts like the Bible and “Precepts of Jesus” in Indian languages.
4. Recognize the significance of performance in the practice and transmission of Hindu, Christian, Islamic, Sikh, and Jain traditions in India.

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.

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 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 early March. 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 April 1**. 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 April 3rd, 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, due on April 28th. 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, that is, 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.

For all technical problems about uploading the term paper or final exams, please contact the HELP desk and get a ticket number.

Health and Wellness

U Matter, We Care: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit [U Matter, We Care website](#) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.

Counseling and Wellness Center: [Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website](#) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.

Student Health Care Center: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or [visit the Student Health Care Center website](#).

University Police Department: [Visit UF Police Department website](#) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).

UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; [Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website](#).

GatorWell Health Promotion Services: For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, visit the [GatorWell website](#) or call 352-273-4450.

Academic Resources

E-learning technical support: Contact the [UF Computing Help Desk](#) at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.

Career Connections Center: Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.

Library Support: Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

Teaching Center: Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352- 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.

Writing Studio: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.

Student Complaints On-Campus: [Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage for more information.](#)

Grading Breakdown

A minimum grade of C is required for general education credit.

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 Jan 14 and 16.

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

Introduction to the course.

Intro to the Hindu Tradition: Forehead Marks; Indus Valley

Week 2 Jan 21 and 23

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

Ramayana: chapter 4

Tuesday Indus Valley, The Vedas and the Upanishads; Engagement with Greek Thought
Early connections between Greek thought (Plotinus and Socrates) and Indian Philosophers.
Available from Canvas: Selections from McCrindle, J. (1877), *Ancient India as Described by Arrian and Megasthenes*, Calcutta: Thacker, Spink, & Company.

McCrindle, J. (1885), *Ancient India as Described by Ptolemy*, Calcutta: Thacker, Spink, & Company.

Thursday Upanishads contd. Ramayana

Week 3 January 28 and 30

Reading for the week: *A Hundred Autumns* ch. 4 and 5; The Bhagavad Gita
Sections from Thoreau's *Walden*. Emerson's poems including "Hamatreya" and "Brahma."
Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, the New England Transcendentalists have been vastly influential in the Americas. Thoreau's Walden is part of the American canon of classical literature.

Thoreau, Henry David, *Walden* Chapters "The Pond in Winter."

Miller, Barbara Stoler. 1986. "Afterword: Why Did Henry David Thoreau Take the *Bhagavad-Gita* to Walden Pond?" In *The Bhagavad Gita, Krishna's Counsel in Times of War*. Bantam Classics, 147-155.

Tuesday **WATCH VIDEO –no class in person.** Mahabharata and the Bhagavad Gita;

Thursday Thoreau and the Bhagavad Gita; Patton, *Bhagavad Gita*.

Ralph Waldo Emerson and the Puranas.

Quiz 1 (on Indus Valley Civ., The Vedas, and The Upanishads and the Ramayana)

Week 4 Feb 4 and 6

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

Tuesday Hindu Philosophies

Thursday Hindu Philosophies

Quiz 2 (on the Mahabharata; Bhagavad Gita; Hindu Deities)

Week 5 Feb 11-13

Reading for the week: *A Hundred Autumns* chapters 8 and 10

Tuesday Devotion/ Bhakti

Thursday Sacred Landscapes

Quiz 3 (on Hindu Philosophies)

Week 6 Feb 18 and 20

Reading for the week: *A Hundred Autumns* ch. 7

Reading for transition to modernity: Oxtoby, pp. 66-69

Tuesday: Hinduism in Southeast Asia

Thursday: Transition to modernity

Watch Bhakti Mamtara

<https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/fbad05faed024c908bca8548c999ad101d>

[Links to an external site.](#)

Quiz 4 on Devotion/ Bhakti

Week 7 Feb 25 and 27

Reading for the week: *A Hundred Autumns* ch. 11, 15, and 16 extracts

Tuesday: Rites of passage/ weddings

Thursday: Festivals

Quiz 5 on Southeast Asia

Week 8 March 4 and 6

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

Tuesday: Temple Worship

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 March 11 and 13

Reading for the week:

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

South Asian Religions Jainism

Tuesday: Global Hinduism

Thursday: Jainism

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

Quiz 7 Festivals and Temple Worship

March 17-21 Spring Break

Week 10 March 25 and March 27

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.

Tuesday: Sikhism

Thursday: Islam, start discussion

Week 11 April 1 and 3

Reading for the week:

Tuesday and Thursday

Islam in India 1: History

Islam in India 2 Sufi traditions, Dargahs, architecture

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>

Quiz 8 Buddhism

Week 12 April 8 and 10

Readings: Sections from Sources of Indian Tradition (Canvas)

Tuesday: Islam 3: Islam in Modern India; Partition, pains and political tensions

Thursday: Christianity: The Bible and translations; Precepts of Jesus

Quiz 9 Sikhism and Jainism

Week 13 April 15 and 17

Readings:

For Christianity and Judaism, read relevant chapters on Christianity by Thomas Thangaraj, in Karen Pechilis and Selva J. Raj. 2013. *South Asian religions: tradition and today*, 161-188.

Tuesday Christianity in India 2

Thursday Judaism in India

Quiz 10 on Islam

Week 14 April 22

Tuesday: What is Religion? Discussion