

## SYLLABUS

### Religion 223: Religions of India—Hinduism and Buddhism

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Fall, 2009  
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#### Course Content

In this course we will examine the beliefs, values, and practices of South Asian Hinduism and Buddhism. We will explore selected foundational texts in the traditions, including *The Bhagavad-Gita* and *The Dhammapada*. Attention will be paid to village Hinduism which shapes the religious lives of most Hindus. Lastly, we will study the influence of religion on the life and thought of Mahatma Gandhi who led India in its struggle for independence.

#### Learning; Goals and Objectives

This course is designed so that students will (1) develop an understanding of the methods and perspectives proper to the academic study of religion; (2) develop an informed appreciation for the beliefs, values, and practices of South Asian Hinduism and Buddhism; (3) increase their ability to analyze and interpret culturally unfamiliar texts; (4) become more aware of their own cultural and personal assumptions, beliefs, and biases; (5) develop skills to think critically about their own and others' worldviews; (6) develop an appreciation for writing as a way to clarify for themselves the content of the course and to communicate their understanding to others.

#### Format: Lecture/Discussion

Students should come to class prepared to discuss the assigned readings and any problems they might have had understanding them. Writing-to-learn assignments, whether outside or inside class, are intended to help students grasp the material and re-present it in their own words. Participation in discussions is expected.

#### Evaluation

1. Writing-to-learn assignments. Frequent but short writing-to-learn assignments will encourage students to be actively engaged with the material and prepared for in-class discussions. These assignments will be written either at home or in class at the beginning of the period. They will be graded "S" or "U." A missed assignment is automatically given a "U" and cannot be made up except in unusual circumstances. If 80% or more of the *graded* assignments receive an "S," a student's final grade will be raised one level (e.g., C to C+). If 50% or fewer of graded assignments are graded "S", the final grade will be reduced by one level (C to C-). Otherwise, it will not change (51% to 79%).

2. Essay exams. Three non-cumulative essay exams (including the final) will enable the student to demonstrate his or her grasp of the material under consideration. Analytic as well as synthetic skills will be evaluated.

3. Participation. There is no separate grade for participation. However, the instructor reserves the right to reward participation of a consistent and high quality where deemed

appropriate, e.g., when a final grade average is borderline. Participation is not the same as attendance. Occupying a seat is a necessary but not sufficient condition for actively participating in discussions, raising questions, etc.

Cell Phones, etc. Off! Off! Off! Violations will result in your being asked to leave the class and then meet with the instructor to discuss classroom courtesies.

4. Plagiarism. Plagiarism on a writing assignment will result in a loss of one full grade level (e.g. C to D) for the course and notification of one's faculty advisor. A second occurrence will result in failure for the course. Plagiarism on an essay exam will result in an automatic "F" for the course and notification of the Associate Academic Dean. Consult the "Academic Honesty Policy" in the Student Handbook for fuller details.

Required Texts and Website

<http://sanatan.intnet.mu/upanishads/Upanishads.htm> (Upanishad selections)  
 Easwaran, Eknath, trans. *The Bhagavad-Gita*. Tomales, CA: Nilgiri Press, 1985  
 Easwaran, Eknath, trans. *The Dhammapada*. Tomales, CA: Nilgiri Press, 1986  
 Fuller, C.J. *The Camphor Flame*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992  
 Gandhi, Mahatma. *All Men Are Brothers*. New York: Continuum Publishers, 1992  
 Torwesten, Hans *Vedanta*. New York: Grove Press, 1992.

**COURSE OUTLINE**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Reading Assignment</u>
August 31	Introduction to the Course	

**I. HINDUISM: FOUNDATIONAL TEXTS**

**(Note: Readings from the Upanishad website are on a separate sheet)**

A. *Shruti*: (Heard, Revealed) The *Vedas*

	1. Hymns and Sacrifice	
September 02	Vedic Hymns and Ritual Sacrifice "Rig Veda"	Torwesten, 17-32 Handouts
September 07	Labor Day. No Class.	
	2. Philosophy and Mysticism	
September 09	"Brahman and Atman <i>The Upanishads</i>	Torwesten, pp. 32-55 <a href="http://sanatan.intnet.mu/upanishads/Upanishads.htm">http://sanatan.intnet.mu/upanishads/Upanishads.htm</a>
September 14	Avidya and Moksha <i>The Upanishads</i>	Torwesten, pp. 55-73 <a href="http://sanatan.intnet.mu/upanishads/Upanishads.htm">http://sanatan.intnet.mu/upanishads/Upanishads.htm</a>
September 16	Karma, Dharma and Samsara	

B. *Smriti* (Remembered Texts): *The Bhagavad-Gita*

September 21	<b>The Gita: Why Arjuna's Dilemma?</b> The Gita in Context  <i>The Bhagavad-Gita</i>	Easwaran, xi-xxxi Torwesten, 75-88 Chs 1 & 2
September 23	<b>The Way of Selfless Action</b> "The Message of the Bhagavad-Gita" <i>The Bhagavad-Gita</i>	Torwesten, 88-101 Chs. 3-5; 16
September 28	<b>The Way of Knowledge (Sankya Yoga) I</b> Yoga Psychology <i>The Bhagavad-Gita</i>	Easwaran, "Preface", xxxi-xlix Chs. 6-8;
September 30	<b>Sankhya and Yoga II</b> <i>The Bhagavad-Gita</i>	Chs. 13-15; 17
October 05	<b>The Way of Loving Devotion</b> "The Message of the Bh-Gita" <i>The Bhagavad-Gita</i>	Torwesten, 101-114 Chs. 9-12; 18
October 07	<b>EXAM #1</b>	
October 12	<b>Fall Recess. No Class.</b>	
<b>II. VILLAGE/PURANIC HINDUISM</b>		
October 14	Popular Hinduism and Indian Society	Fuller, 1
October 19	Gods and Goddesses; Video: India: Land of 33 Million Gods	Fuller, 2
October 21	Puja (Worship) and Sacrifice	Fuller, 3&4 (pages)
October 26	Devotionalism, Goddesses, and Women	Fuller, 8
October 28	Pilgrimage and Festivals Video: Holi	Fuller, 9
November 02	Misfortune	Fuller, 10

## EXAM #2 Take Home

### III. BUDDHISM

November 04	Introduction to Buddhism Buddha: Life and Basic Teachings I Read: <i>The Dhammapada</i> , Video: In the Footsteps of the Buddha	"Introduction" pp. 7-46
	A. Theravada Buddhism: Ethics, Meditation/Contemplation, Wisdom	
November 09	Buddha: Life and Basic Teachings II Read: <i>The Dhammapada</i> ,	"Introduction" pp. 46-72
November 11	<i>Dhammapada</i>	Chapters 1-8
November 18	<i>Dhammapada</i>	Chapters 9-17
November 20	<i>Dhammapada</i>	Chapters 18-26
	B. Mahayana Buddhism	
November 23	Compassion, Wisdom and Non-dualism	Online
November 25	Thanksgiving Break. No Class.	

### IV. MAHATMA GANDHI

November 30	Gandhi on Religion & Truth Video: Gandhi	All Men Are Brothers (ii)
December 02.	Non-Violence	All Men Are Brothers (iii.,iv.,v)
December 07	Peace, Democracy and Poverty	All Men Are Brothers (vi.,vii.,viii)
December 09	Education, Women	All Men Are Brothers (x.,xi.,xiii)
December 16	FINAL EXAM (SCHEDULED)	

Note: This syllabus is subject to change, but changes will be discussed with students.