

**Religions of India REL 223**  
**Instructor: Dr. Jennifer Eichman**

Main Street Campus, Comenius Hall, 201  
TR 10:20 AM-11:30 AM

**Course Description:**

This course is intended as an introduction to the serious and sustained study of Asian religious traditions. Many of these traditions have played a fundamental role in over two millennia of Asian history. Buddhism continued to spread throughout Asia, moving both north and south. Today Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, and Buddhists can be found worldwide. The course will provide students with a general introduction to the practices and ideas of Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Jainism. However, in the current global age these religions can be found, literally, "in the neighborhood." Some of the texts we will read even discuss Hindu and Jain traditions in Pennsylvania! Hence this course will touch briefly on contemporary global religious movements.

Throughout this course we will ask a number of questions relevant to understanding how religious traditions come to define themselves. We will also look at definitions of religion that have been proffered by Western scholars, questioning their usefulness for understanding these traditions. In so doing, we will entertain such questions as: What role does religion play in people's lives? What is the relationship between doctrine and practice? What sorts of communal practices foster religious feeling? Can religion be separated from its cultural context? What is the relationship between tradition and modernity? Who has the authority to set the parameters of a religious practice?

**Books for purchase:**

1. Carl Olson. *The Many Colors of Hinduism: A Thematic-Historical Introduction* 2007  
New Brunswick, N.J. : Rutgers University Press, c2007 ISBN: 0813540682 (pbk.)
2. Barbara Stoler Miller, trans., *The Bhagavad-Gita: Krishna's Counsel in Time of War*.  
1st Bantam trade pbk. ed.
3. R. K. Narayan, *The Ramayana: A Shortened Modern Prose Version of the Indian Epic*.  
New York : Penguin Books, 2006.
4. Sikhism: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions) [Paperback]  
Eleanor Nesbitt Oxford ; New York : Oxford University Press, 2005. Also has an  
ebrary version.
5. Jeffery D. Long. *Jainism: An Introduction* (I.B. Taurus Introductions to Religion)

6. Ruppert Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism*.

All other readings are in ***Reserves or under course readings on Blackboard***.

**Requirements:**

1. Weekly attendance and participation (10%)
2. Discussion Board Responses (20%) (based on 10 posts)
2. **Religious Site Visit** Short, 5-7 page paper based on fieldwork.

**Due March 15<sup>th</sup>** (20%)

2. Midterm in-class exam. (20%)
3. Final Take-home Essay (30%)

***Additional Notes:*** Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Mr. Joe Kempfer, Assistant Director of Learning Services for Disability Support, 1307 Main Street (extension 1510). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the office of Learning Services.

Students are advised to review the Academic Honesty Policy (available in the Student Handbook posted on the Moravian College Website) and are required to follow the guidelines therein.

Our syllabus and various course documents will be posted in Blackboard, and updated periodically with any changes we find we need to make as we progress throughout the semester. You also may find your grades posted on the Blackboard gradebook. Please consult this throughout the semester to view and monitor your progress.

**1. January 18-20 Week One Introduction to the Course, The Buddha**

Life of the Buddha:

**Primary texts:** "A Sketch of the Buddha's Life," Readings from the Pali Canon edited by John T. Bullitt  
<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/ptf/buddha.html>

**Secondary source:** Gethin, *Foundations of Buddhism*, 1-34.

**2. January 25-27 Week Two The Teachings and Doctrine**

**January 25<sup>th</sup>**

**Primary texts:** "First Sermon," "Fire Sermon" "Discourse on Loving-Kindness,"  
In the same document under course readings

"The Shorter Instructions to Malunkya," under course readings

“Good and Bad Karma,” “How to Obtain Wealth, Beauty, and Social Position,” “The Devoted Wife,” “The Mind Less Permanent than the Body” (Warren, *Buddhism in Translation*, various selections)

**Secondary source:** Gethin, *Foundations of Buddhism*, 35-58.

### **January 27th**

#### **Primary texts: Explaining No-Self**

“Questions of Milinda,” “Questions Which Tend Not to Edification,” (Stryk, 89-124,)

**Secondary source:** Gethin, 59-84, 133-162

### **3. February 1-3 Week Three Meditation**

**Primary texts:** “Dhaniya Sutta” “Foundations of Mindfulness”  
Advice to Sigala” – (in the Rahula Bhavan document)

#### **Secondary sources:**

“Meditation or Mental Culture” (from Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, excerpts);  
Maquet, “Bhāvanā in Contemporary Sri Lanka”;  
Gethin, 163-201.

### **4. February 8-10 Week Four The Sangha Monastic and Lay Practitioners**

#### **February 8**

**Primary texts: Strong** “Rites of Passage,” “Regulation of the Sangha,” pp. 73-85,  
Advice to Sigala,” in Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, excerpts;  
Bhikkhu Khantipalo, “Lay Buddhist Practice,” under course readings

**Secondary sources:** Gethin, 85-111;

#### February 10

##### **Buddhist Women:**

Utpalavarna p.109-113,  
The Mother of Kana p. 113-17,  
Sirima p. 150-155,  
The Weaver's Daughter 170-75,  
Visakha's Questions p. 184-86,  
The Nun Uttara, p. 155-56  
The Nun Rupananda, p. 157-161

(Ranjini Obeyesekere, *Portraits of Buddhist Women*)

#### **Secondary Sources:**

Strong, “The Acceptance of Women into the Order,” pp. 63-68.

Sponberg, "Attitudes toward Women and the Feminine in Early Buddhism."\*

## **5. February 15-17 Week Five Contemporary Theravada**

### **Secondary texts:**

Barnes, "Buddhist Women and the Nuns' Order in Asia"\*

"Learning to Be Novices: Monastic Education and the Construction of Vocation," pp. 63-83.

"Temple Building as Social Service: Family, Community, and Emotion," pp. 84-106.

In Jeffrey Samuels. *Attracting the Heart*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2010.

"The Popular Tradition," pp. 1-70

In Donald Swearer. *The Buddhist World of Southeast Asia*. New York: Suny Press, 2010.

## **6. February 22-24 Week Six Buddhism in India Today**

February 22: Queen, "Dr. Ambedkar and the Hermeneutics of Buddhist Liberation"

February 24: Midterm Exam

## **7. March 1-3 Week Seven Introduction to Hinduism**

"The Journey to Mother India,"

"Tongues of Fire of the Vedic Sacrificial Cult,"

"The Swan, World Renunciation, and Upanisads,"

*The Many Colors of Hinduism: A Thematic-Historical Introduction*

## **Spring Break!! Enjoy, Relax, Come back refreshed!**

## **8. March 15-17 Week Eight Visnu and Krishna**

"The Sensual Nature of Hinduism,"

Embodiment of Visnu on Earth,"

Divine Play, Madness, Eroticism, and Krishna"

*The Many Colors of Hinduism: A Thematic-Historical Introduction*

## **9. March 22-24 Week Nine Bhagavad-Gita**

Barbara Miller, trans., *The Bhagavad-gita*, p. 21-81.

Reading: Barbara Miller, tr., *The Bhagavad-gita*, p. 82-154.

### **10. March 29-31 Week Ten: Indian Epic *The Ramayana***

R. K. Narayan, *The Ramayana: A Shortened Modern Prose Version of the Indian Epic*

“Righteous Rama, Untouchables, and Sants,” *The Many Colors of Hinduism: A Thematic-Historical Introduction*, pp. 187-217.

### **11. April 5-7 Week Eleven**

“Dance of the Ascetic Deity Siva”

“Desire Transformed: Tantra and Saktism,”

“The World of the Goddess: Village Hinduism,”

“Reformers, Missionaries, and Gurus in Modern Hinduism,”

### **12. April 12-14 Week Twelve Sikhism: An Introduction**

Video: *The New Puritans: the Sikhs of Yuba City*

Eleanor Nesbitt. *Sikhism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. 1-144.

Kamala Elizabeth Nayar. “The Making of Sikh space: the role of the Gurdwara.” *Asian Religions in British Columbia*. edited by Larry DeVries, Don Baker, and Dan Overmyer. Vancouver : UBC Press, c2010.

### **13. April 19-21 Week Thirteen: Jainism: An Introduction**

Jeffery D. Long. *Jainism: An Introduction*. (I.B. Taurus Introductions to Religion)

First class: Chapters 1, 2, 3 what is Jainism, Mahavira, Jain History pp. 1-83

Second class: 4, 5, 6, 7 Jain Path, Jain Doctrine, Jain Doctrines, Jain Vision and Future 83-144 (60 pages)

### **14. April 26-28 Wrapping up:**

“Ethics and the Ascetic Ideal,” pp. 27-41.

In Anne Vallely. *Guardians of the Transcendent: An Ethnography of the Jain Ascetic Community*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002.

**Final Examinations May 2-7**

**Take-home Exam due this week.**