

Religions of India REL 223
Main Street Campus, Comenius Hall, 114
Thursday 6:30-9:30 pm

Instructor: Professor Eichman

Office: 201 Comenius

Office Hours: Th 3:45-5:00

Course Description:

This course is intended as a general introduction to the practices and ideas of Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Jainism. Today Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, and Buddhists are found worldwide. In an age of globalization these religions can be found, literally, "in the neighborhood." Some of the texts we will read will discuss Hindu and Jain traditions in Pennsylvania! Hence this course will span medieval to modern periods and 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 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?

Course Objectives:

1. Students will come to appreciate an area of the world and religious traditions that are unfamiliar to them.
2. Students will learn how to analyze primary sources in translation and to read a variety of literary genres.
3. Students will cultivate the ability to synthesize material and ideas across religious traditions and time periods.
4. Students will have some exposure to interviewing techniques and field research.

Books for purchase:

1. Carl Olson. *The Many Colors of Hinduism: A Thematic-Historical Introduction* 2007 New Brunswick, N.J. : Rutgers University Press, c2007.
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. Eleanor Nesbitt. *Sikhism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford ; New York : Oxford University Press, 2005.

5. Jeffery D. Long. *Jainism: An Introduction*
6. Rupert 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 November 17th (20%)
2. Midterm in-class exam. (20%)
3. Final Take-home Essay (30%)

Absence policy: Students are expected to be in class, with the only allowed excuses for 1) serious illness; 2) religious observance; 3) family emergency. In the case of any absence, contact me *in advance* of the class, and plan to have a note explaining why you have to miss. Please be on time. You may bring a beverage, but I prefer that you not eat during class time.

Students with Disabilities: 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.

Academic Honesty: Students are advised to review the Moravian College Academic Honesty Policy. You will be held to the standards outlined therein. Cheaters will receive zero credit.

Our syllabus and various course documents will be posted on Blackboard and updated periodically. Your grades will be posted in the Blackboard gradebook. Please consult this throughout the semester to monitor your progress.

1. Week One August 30th Introduction to the course

Life of the Buddha:

“A Sketch of the Buddha's Life,” Readings from the Pali Canon. Ed. by John T. Bullitt
<http://www.accesstoinight.org/ptf/buddha.html>

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

2. Week Two September 8th The Teachings and Doctrine

Primary texts: “First Sermon,” “Discourse on Loving-Kindness,” [BB]

“The Shorter Instructions to Malunkya,” [BB]

“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)[BB]

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

Primary texts: Explaining No-Self

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

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

3. Week Three September 15th Meditation

Primary texts: “Dhaniya Sutta” “Foundations of Mindfulness” Advice to Sigala” – (in the Rahula Bhavana document) [BB]
Lay Buddhist Practice pp. 1-6 [BB]

Secondary sources:

“Meditation or Mental Culture” (from Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, excerpts) [BB]

Maquet, “Bhāvanā in Contemporary Sri Lanka” [BB]

Gethin, 163-201.

4. Week Four September 22nd The Sangha: Monastic and Lay Practitioners

Primary texts: Strong “Rites of Passage,” “Regulation of the Sangha,” pp. 73-85, Strong, “The Acceptance of Women into the Order,” pp. 63-68. [BB]

Secondary sources: Gethin, 85-111;

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*) [BB]

Secondary Sources:

Barnes, "Buddhist Women and the Nuns' Order in Asia"* [BB]

5. Week Five September 29th Contemporary Theravadin Monks

"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. [BB]

6. Week Six October 6th Introduction to Hinduism

Midterm Exam

Introduction to Hinduism

"The Journey to Mother India,"

The Many Colors of Hinduism: A Thematic-Historical Introduction

7. Week Seven October 13th Vedas and the Upanishads

"Tongues of Fire of the Vedic Sacrificial Cult,"

"The Swan, World Renunciation, and Upanisads,"

The Many Colors of Hinduism: A Thematic-Historical Introduction

"Selections from the Rig Veda" pp. 13-27. [BB]

8. Week Eight October 20th Visnu and Krishna

"The Sensual Nature of Hinduism,"

"Embodiment of Visnu on Earth,"

The Many Colors of Hinduism: A Thematic-Historical Introduction

Selections from the Puranas, pp. 156-165. [BB]

9. Week Nine October 27th: Bhagavad-Gita

Barbara Miller, trans., *The Bhagavad-gita*,

10. Week Ten November 3rd: Indian Epic *The Ramayana*

Barbara Miller, trans., *The Bhagavad-gita*,

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

11. Week Eleven November 10th: Indian Epic *The Ramayana*

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

12. Week Twelve November 17th: 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.

13. Week Thirteen: November 24

Happy Thanksgiving!

14. Week Fourteen December 1st Last Class: Jainism: An Introduction

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

15. Week Fifteen: No Class -- Classes end on December 6th

Final Take-home Exam due at noon on the 15th of December