

SYLLABUS
R.223 Religions of India: Hinduism and Buddhism
Fall, 2012

Dr. St. John
610 861-1585 (O)
610 691-1797 (H)
medps01@moravian.edu

Office: Comenius 205B
Hrs. T-TR 1:30-2:30
Or, by Appointment

Course Overview and Structure

This course will serve as an interpretive introduction to Indian/South Asian Hinduism and Buddhism. Given the inexhaustible wealth of religious phenomena in India, this course will highlight certain core beliefs regarding Ultimate Reality and its manifold manifestations that shaped these traditions as well as their respective yet interrelated views on the ultimate meaning of human existence. We will also study patterns of ritual and spiritual practices that empower, transform, and guide individuals in their struggles with the sufferings and limitations of life and in their journey towards liberation and fulfillment. As a basis for study and discussion, we will examine several texts that have provided guidance, inspiration and orientation to members of these communities while shaping the basic contours of the religious geography within which the communities journeyed through the centuries. For Hinduism this will include some selections from the cosmic theism of the Vedas while focusing on examples of the philosophical and mystical musings of the *Upanishads*. We will also study the *Bhagavad-Gita*, a work that heralded the emergence of Hinduism per se over two thousand years ago and whose influence continues to be felt today. The wide path of devotion (bhakti) introduced and affirmed in this work gave “scriptural” authority to the amazingly diverse and rich lifeways of popular or village Hinduism which we will explore in *The Camphor Flame*. We will return to ancient India and the *Dhammapada*, “path of the Dharma (truth)”, which captures the essence of the Buddhist way of life in South Asia as no other work has. Lastly, we will look at the life and thought of Mahatma Gandhi, one of the most remarkable twentieth-century political figures who creatively used the spiritual wisdom and practices of India’s rich traditions but also reached for inspiration from the Judaeo-Christian and Islamic traditions. *All Men Are Brothers*.

Course Goals/Learning Outcomes

This course is designed so that students will develop: 1) an understanding of the methods and perspectives proper to an academic study of religion, 2) an understanding of the basic beliefs, values, and practices of Hinduism and Buddhism as presented in this course, 3) imaginative and critical skills needed to “get inside” of a cultural tradition other than the West’s, 4) exegetical and interpretive skills needed to analyze but also to imaginatively encounter the worlds of meaning found in sacred texts, 5) a self-reflective awareness of their own cultural and personal assumptions, beliefs, and biases, and 6) modes of writing that assist both in learning and in demonstrating an understanding of the material.

Evaluation

Writing-to-learn assignments.

Written either prior to class at home or at the beginning of class in the room, these one to two page exercises are intended to improve classroom participation, indicate to the teacher if a student is having problems with the work and help the student to engage with the reading assignments. Papers will be graded either “S” or a “U.” Since one of the goals is to prepare for class discussion, if a student is absent he or she will receive a “U” if a writing assignment was assigned or given in class. Only legitimately excused students will have the opportunity to makeup a missed assignment. At the end of the semester if a student has received an “S” on 80% or more of their graded (S or U) papers, their final average for the essay exams will be raised one notch (ex. B- to B); if between 60 and 79% are “S,” their final grade does not change; if less than 60%, the final grade drops one notch (ex. B- to C+).

Essay Exams: Writing to Demonstrate Understanding.

There will be three take-home essay exams over the course of the semester. They will be non-cumulative and each will account for 1/3 of the final grade. They are NOT opinion papers. They must be based on and cite appropriate textual passages in order to support the writer’s contention. Obviously, levels of comprehension and coherent writing will also be recognized and rewarded. The first requisite is to demonstrate an accurate *understanding* of what the “other” is saying. Having done this, the student may then offer reflections of his or her own.

Attendance and Participation.

Students are expected to attend every class. (Note: if you anticipate that sports or other activities will necessitate absences please look for another class!) Because of the nature of the readings, attendance is very important. But, attendance is NOT the same as participation. At the end of the semester, if a student is on the “borderline” between grades, the instructor reserves the right to take into consideration the level of a student’s participation in classroom discussions.

Plagiarism. Please refer to and familiarize yourself with the policy on academic honesty set forth in the student handbook. **Plagiarism on a writing to learn assignment** will result in a “U” for that particular writing assignment as well as a chat with one’s faculty advisor and possibly the Dean. A second instance of plagiarism will result in a failure for the course, a mark on one’s permanent record, and definitely a chat with the Dean.

Plagiarism on an essay exam will result in a failure for the course.

Electronic Devices. No talking, tweeting, texting, sexting, twirling or twisting. Shut off devices, turn on your mind.

Note: This syllabus is subject to change if conditions dictate. The instructor will talk over any important changes beforehand.

Learning Disability Statement. *Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Elaine Mara, assistant director of learning services for academic and disability support at 1307 Main St or call 610 861-1510. Accommodations cannot be granted without authorization from the Academic Support Center.*

Required Texts

- Easwaran, Eknath, trans. *The Bhagavad-Gita*. New York: Vintage Books, Vintage Spiritual Classics, 1985.
- Easwaran, Eknath, trans. *The Dhammapada*. Tomales, CA: Nilgiri Press, 1986. (Or, 2nd edition, 2007)
- Fowler, Jeaneane. *Hinduism: Beliefs and Practices*. Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 1995.
- Fuller, C.J. *The Camphor Flame*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.
- Gandhi, Mahatma. *All Men Are Brothers*. New York: Continuum Publishers, 1992.

OUTLINE & ASSIGNMENTS

August 28

Introduction to the Course
Indian Religions and Ultimate Questions

I. THE VEDIC WORLD

August 30

A. The Vedas: Deities, Sacrifice, and Priesthood
Ancient India: The Indus Valley Civilization
The Aryan Invasion & Formation of Vedic Worldview
The Brahmanic or Vedic Religion
Read: Fowler, 12 & 13

September 4

Yajna: Sacrificial Celebration and Divine Blessing
From Cosmic *Rita* (Order) to Ultimate Source and Ground
Transition to *The Upanishads* and to Hinduism
Basic Hindu Beliefs
Read: Fowler, Ch. 14 & Ch. 1

B. New Philosophical and Mystical Explorations

September 6, 11, 13 **TEXT: *The Upanishads (Selected Readings)***
(Handouts will be provided. See last page of the syllabus for reading assignments)

II. THE RISE OF HINDUISM

TEXT: *The Bhagavad-Gita*

- September 18 The Gita and the Rise of Classical Hinduism
Read: “Preface,” to *The Bhagavad-Gita*, xxxv-xlix
Arjuna's Dilemma and Khrisna’s Teachings
Read: *The Bhagavad-Gita*, Chs. 1 & 2 (pp.3-16)
- September 20 Social Duty, Karmic Action and Liberation
Read: *The Gita*, Chs. 3-5
Easwaran, “Preface” xxv-xxxix
- September 25 Raja Yoga and Disciplined Mind/Body
Read: Chs. 6&7; Chs. 13-15
Easwaran, “Preface,” xxxi-xxxv
- September 27 Krishna as Lord (Bhagavan) and *bhakti yoga*
Read: 8-12
Take-Home Exam #1

III. VILLAGE/POPULAR HINDUISM

- October 02 Intro. to Popular Hinduism
Video: India Land of 33 Million Gods
Read: Fuller, Ch. 1
- October 04 Rise of Devotionalism (*bhakti*)
Krishna & Radha, Shiva & Parvati
Read: FOWLER, ch. 5,
Fuller, pp. 155-163
- October 9** **No Class—Fall Recess**
- October 11 Puja (Worship) in Homes and Temples
Read: Fuller, Ch. 3;
- October 16 Kali, the “Hot” Goddesses and Sacrifice (Bali)
Read: Fuller, pp. 29-48, 83-92
Video: Temple
- October 18 Saints, Swamis and Devotional Movements
Read: Fuller, pp.163-181
Video: “Four Holy Men”
- October 23 Life-Cycle, Festivals and Pilgrimage
Fowler, Chs.7,10,11; Fowler, pp.204-214
Video: Holi
- October 25 Handling Misfortune
Fuller, Ch. 10
Take Home Exam #2

IV. BUDDHISM IN SOUTH ASIA

October 30 The Buddha and South Asian Buddhism
Read: Easwaran, *The Dhammapada* "Introduction" pp.7-33
Video: "In the Footprints of the Buddha"

November 1 Basic Teachings
Read: Easwaran, pp. 34-46; 58-72

TEXT: *Dhammapada*

November 6 Chs. 1-8
November 8 Chs. 9-14
November 13 Chs. 15-20
November 15 Chs. 20-26

V. MAHATMA GANDHI: RELIGION, NON-VIOLENCE AND POLITICAL CHANGE

TEXT: *All Men are Brothers*, Mahatma Gandhi

November 20 The Life of Mahatma Gandhi
Read: Handouts
Video: Gandhi

November 22 THANKSGIVING

November 27 Religion, Truth and Ethics
Read: Gandhi, pp.51-76
November 29 Ahimsa (Non-Violence)
Read: Gandhi, 77-97
December 04 Self-Discipline, Poverty and Plenty
Read: Gandhi, pp.97-112; 118-125
December 06 India, Democracy and Women
Read: Gandhi, pp.126-137; 146-152

EXAM #3 (TBD)

UPANISHADS: READINGS

September 06

Katha Upanishad

<u>Part</u>	<u>Ch.</u>	<u>Verses</u>	<u>Pp.</u>
One	I	1-9 & 20-29	(1-4)
	II	1-5 & 18-25	(4-8)
	III	3-17	(8-10)
Two	I	1-15	(10-11)
	II	6-16	(12-13)

Taittiriya Upanishad

<u>Part</u>	<u>Chs.</u>	<u>Pp.</u>
Two	I-IX	(208-217)

September 11

Chandogya Upanishad

<u>Part</u>	<u>Chs.</u>	<u>Pp.</u>
Six	I & II	(285-286)
	IX-XIII	(292-294)
Eight	VII-end	(314-320)

Mundaka Upanishad

<u>Part</u>	<u>Ch.</u>	<u>Vv</u>	<u>Pp.</u>
First	I	1-9	(28-29)
	II	7-13	(30-31)
Second	I	1-10	(31-32)
Third	I	1-11	(34-35)
	II		(36-38)

September 13

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad

<u>Part</u>	<u>Ch.</u>	<u>Vv</u>	<u>Pp.</u>
Two	IV	1-14	(128-131)
Three	VIII	1-12	(146-148)
	IX	1	(149)
Four	III	31-38	(167-169)
	IV	1-25	(169-173)
	V	1-7	(174-175)

