nanaBaÅitramåvtara≥Ram
incarnates in countless ways
ramaynstkoiqåpara≥≥and there are tens
of millions of Ramayans.
(tulsidas,ramcaritmans1.33.6)

(Indian Literature in Translation, fall 2000, 39:136/32:177)
1:05 - 2:20 T/Th. 468 Phillips Hall, 3 sh

Instructor: Philip Lutgendorf
Office: 667 Phillips Hall, tel.: 335-2157
Office hours: Mon. 1:00-3:00 (or by appointment)
e-mail: philip-lutgendorf@uiowa.edu

Note: Students with disabilities that may affect their participation in this
course are encouraged to see the instructor privately to discuss their needs.
He will make every effort to accommodate them.

Required texts for purchase (IMU Bookstore, Textbook Dept.):
Robert P. Goldman (ed. and trans.), The Ramayana of Valmiki, Vol. 1, Balakanda
Paula Richman (ed.), Many Ramayanas
Paula Richman (ed.), Questioning Ramayanas (on order; expected in Sept.)

Required texts on reserve at Main Library Reserve, main floor:
“Ramayana as Literature, Performance, Ideology” (photocopied course anthology in 2 parts, hereafter referred to as “Anthology”))
**Course Requirements**

**Reading assignments** should be completed by the Tuesday meeting of the week for which they are assigned (except the first week). “Recommended” readings are optional (and not expected) for undergraduates, but strongly recommended for graduate students.

**Writing Assignments** are of two kinds: a weekly "reaction paper," and a final research paper. The "reaction paper" (to be handed in at the Thursday session of each week beginning with week 3, through week 13) is to consist of 1-2 typed pages of reactions to the week's reading(s). They are meant primarily to help you formulate thoughts about the readings to bring up in class, but they should be written in full sentences—not fragmentary notes. They may include comments on the style or content of the readings, questions about cultural concepts or vocabulary, opinions and mini "reviews," etc. You have considerable freedom in what approach to take, but you should aim for a serious and thoughtful piece. In weeks for which multiple readings are assigned, you may focus on several to focus on in your reaction paper.

A **research paper** is due at the end of week 15 (Nov. 30). It should consist (for undergraduates) of 5-10 pages of original analysis (15-20 pages for graduate students), with references to assigned readings or other sources to support your arguments. Papers may be based on the list of topics provided with this syllabus, or on another topic of interest to you that is approved by the instructor. Please feel free to discuss paper topics with the instructor at any time during the semester. Written assignments will represent approximately 50% of the course grade (25% for reaction papers, 25% for research paper).

(An undergraduate wishing to take the course for “Honors” credit may do so by fulfilling graduate requirements.)

**Exam** The final examination is scheduled for Monday, Dec. 11th at 2:15 PM. It will be a two-hour exam consisting of short-answer and mini-essay questions, and will be worth approximately 30% of the course grade.

**Attendance, Participation, and Oral Presentations** Regular attendance, except in the case of excused absence, is a basic requirement of this course. Frequent absence will result in a significantly lowered final grade, irrespective of other course criteria. Class sessions will combine lecture and discussion, and students are expected to be prepared to participate in discussion of assigned readings. In addition, each student will be required to give **one oral presentation** during the semester. An oral presentation should last at least 10 minutes and should be based on one or more of the readings for that week. A sign-up sheet will be passed around early in the semester for this purpose. Attendance, participation, and the oral presentation collectively will be worth approximately 20% of the course grade.
### Weekly Schedule

#### Week 1
**Introduction**
Aug. 22, 24

Reading: **Anthology, Selection 1**
V. Raghavan, "The Ramayana," (prose synopsis of Valmiki *Ramayana*), pp. 150-212

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#### Week 2
**Overview of Ramayana Tradition**
Aug. 29, 31

Reading: **Anthology, Selection 1, cont.**


**Recommended:** Goldman, *Ramayana, Vol. 1*, pp. 3-29, 41-81.

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#### Week 3
**Getting into Balakanda**
Sept. 5, 7


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#### Week 4
**Making sense of Balakanda**
Sept. 12, 14


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#### Week 5
**Intrigue and exile: Ayodhyakanda**
Sept. 19, 21

Reading: **Anthology, Selection 2**


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#### Week 6
**Bharata and Rama**
Sept. 26, 28

Reading: **Anthology, Selection 2, cont.**

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**Week 7**

“Sexual harassment” in the forest  Oct. 3, 5

Reading: **Anthology, Selection 3**
The Shurpanakha episode in Valmiki (3.16-17) and Tulsidas (3.17.1-18)
Sheldon Pollock, “Rakshasas and Others”


**Recommended:** Richman, *Questioning Ramayanas:* Goldman, “Ravana’s Kitchen”

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**Week 8**

Of monkeys and men  Oct. 10, 12

Reading: **Anthology, Selection 4**
*Kishkindha kanda* from *Adhyatma Ramayana,*
Slaying of Vali from Valmiki (4.14-24) and Tulsidas (4.7.1-4.10)

Richman, *Questioning Ramayanas:* Freeman, “Thereupon Hangs a Tail”

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**Week 9**

The adventures of Hanuman  Oct. 17, 19

Reading: **Anthology, Selection 5**
*Sundar kand* from Tulsidas's *Ramcaritmanas,*
Lutgendorf, "Monkey in the Middle,"
Alter, "Hanuman: Shakti, Bhakti, and Brahmacharya,"


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**Week 10**

Wrapping up the story: Happily ever after…?  Oct. 24, 26

Reading: **Anthology, Selection 6**
Sita's fire ordeal (Valmiki 6.117-121; Tulsidas 3.23-3.24, 6.107.1-109);
Sita's second banishment (Valmiki 7.42-52);
Sita's return (Valmiki 7.91-98);
Rama's departure from earth (Valmiki 7.103-111)
Nabaneeta Sen, “Lady Sings the Blues: When Women Retell the Ramayana”
Thomas Coburn, “Sita Fights While Ram Swoons”


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**Week 11**

**Performing the Ramayana: Ramlila**
Oct. 31, Nov. 2

**Reading:** *Anthology, Selection 7*
Richard Schechner, “Ramlila of Ramnagar, an Introduction”

**Recommended:** Richman, *Questioning Ramayanas*: Richman, “The Ramlila Migrates to Southall.”

**special events:** Nov. 2, slide lecture in class by Richard Schechner

**Thurs. Nov. 2, Dinner for class and Prof. Schechner, 911 Iowa Ave. 7:00 PM**

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**Week 12**

**Performing the Ramayana: Devotion, Pilgrimage, Video**
Nov. 7, 9


**Anthology, Selection 8**
Peter van der Veer, "Ayodhya: Time and Place"
Lutgendorf, “All in the (Raghu) Family”

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**Week 13**

**More alternative readings and dissenting voices**
Nov. 14, 16

Richman, “E. V. Ramasami’s Reading of the Ramayana,” pp. 175-201;

Richman, *Questioning Ramayanas*: Lutgendorf, “Dining Out at Lake Pampa”;
Narayanan, “The Tamil Ramayana and its Muslim Interpreters.”

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**Thanksgiving Recess (no class on Nov. 21)**

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**Week 14**

Performing the Ramayana: Nationalism and Politics  
Reading:  
*Anthology, Selection 9*  
Richard Davis, "The Iconography of Rama's Chariot,"  
Philip Lutgendorf, "Interpreting Ramraj,"  
Madhu Kishwar, "In Defense of Our Dharma."  

**Recommended:** Sarvepalli Gopal (editor) *Anatomy of a Confrontation: The Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhumi Issue*.  

Nov. 28: screening of Anand Patwardhan's documentary film, *Ram ke nam* ("In the Name of God")  

**Recommended feature film:** HEY! RAM (Kamal Haasan, 2000, Hindi with English subtitles). Screening on Nov. 27 at 7:00 in 221 Chemistry Building

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**Week 15**

Concluding thoughts  
Some possible topics for research papers

In addition to these, many other topics are possible. Please meet with the instructor to discuss your interests. He will be happy to help you develop a paper topic and will suggest additional sources, if appropriate.

1. Select a single episode from the *Ramayana* and compare its treatment in two or more literary versions of the story; e.g., Valmiki, Tulsidas, Kamban, *Adhyatma ramayana*, etc. What similarities and differences do you find? What do the different storytellers choose to highlight or ignore? What attitudes and interpretations do they reveal?

2. Select a single character or pair of characters and compare her/his/their portrayal in two or more literary versions of the story. What do the different storytellers choose to highlight or ignore? What attitudes and interpretations do they reveal? Do the portrayals show change across time and geographical regions?

3. The *Ramayana* story has sometimes been called a *dharma shastra*—a "textbook on dharma." What does it teach about this central concept in Hindu culture? What is the nature of dharma as revealed in the *Ramayana*? Do characters (or storytellers) ever disagree about its nature?

4. Modern academic scholarship largely maintains that Rama "grew" through the centuries as a religious figure, changing from an essentially human hero to a god. Traditional Indian scholarship has never favored such an idea, arguing instead that Rama's divinity was understood and expressed in different ways by different tellers. Which position do you find more persuasive? Defend it with specific examples from *Ramayana* texts.

5. Select one or more of the following labels and use it as the basis for an analysis of the *Ramayana*. You may argue that the epic either is or is not (or both is and is not) what the label implies (be sure to define the label carefully):

   - liberal/progressive
   - conservative/repressive
   - devotional
   - patriarchal
   - feminist
   - historical
   - mythological
   - realistic
   - fatalistic

6. Three important categories of forest-dwelling beings whom Rama encounters are sages, rakshasas ("demons"), and monkeys. Select one or more of these "species" and describe its characteristics in detail, using specific examples from *Ramayana* texts. Are all the members of a single category alike? What qualities do they seem to share, or what individual differences do they display? Are "good" and "bad" characters found in each category?

7. "The *Ramayana* presents a 'black and white' picture of the world, in which good and evil are clearly defined, and there is little moral ambiguity." Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Defend your point of view with specific examples drawn from at least two *Ramayana* texts.
8. How are central themes of the Ramayana reinterpreted through popular performance? Examine this question by focusing on one of the realms of "cultural performance" studied in the course: devotional traditions; pilgrimage; storytelling and folk plays; television; socio-political movements and Hindu nationalism.
Additional Resources on Reserve

The library catalogue contains hundreds of titles related to many aspects of the *Ramayana* tradition. Many of these works may be useful as resources for additional research outside the course readings, though some are of poor quality (if in doubt, consult instructor). The following texts are highly recommended as possible aids in researching paper topics. Since more than one student may wish to use them, they are being placed on reserve in the Main Library, at the Reserve Desk (south end of main floor):


W. D. P. Hill (translator), *The Holy Lake of the Acts of Rama* (a modern translation of the *Ramcaritmanas* of Tulsidas), PK2095.T8 R313


Swami Tapasyananda (translator), *Adhyatma Ramayana* (a complete Indian-English translation of this influential devotional-philosophical retelling), BL1140.4.B7342 A3413 1985