

HINDUISM

REL / SAS 185 Fall 2013
TuTh 11:00AM - 12:20PM
Hall of Languages 114

Instructor: Ann Grodzins Gold office: HL 507 voice mail: x-5717; dept.: x-3861
email: aggold@syr.edu office hrs.: Th 12:30-1:30 or by appointment

T.A.s: Daniel Moseson office: HL 514
email: djmoseso@syr.edu office hrs.: Tu 12:45-1:45
Daniel Cheifer office: HL 514
email: dpcheifer@gmail.com office hrs.: M 12:00-1:00

Aims, scope, methods

This course introduces Hindu traditions and practices. Our strategy is to move between cosmological, theological and philosophical understandings, and the ways these motivate ordinary and extraordinary human lives. We see these understandings expressed through myth and moral teachings, storytelling and poetry, ritual and devotion. Thus our syllabus materials include some classic texts and teachings of ancient Indian civilization and more recent poetry, tales and ethnographic descriptions. Throughout the course we remain interested in contemporary Indian society where Hinduism's many streams of thought have ongoing significance.

Textbooks

The following four books, all of which are small and slim, contain required readings and are available for purchase at the University bookstore. They have also been placed on 2-hour reserve in Bird library.

Johari, Harish *The Monkeys and the Mango Tree: Teaching Stories of the Saints and Sadhus of India*. Inner Traditions.

Knott, Kim. *Hinduism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press (2nd edition, 2000).

Miller, Barbara Stoller, transl. *The Bhagavad Gita: Krishna's Counsel in Time of War*. Bantam.

Prime, Ranchor, *Ramayana: A Tale of Gods and Demons*. Mandala Classics.

Other required readings, listed below, will be made available through Blackboard under "content" in the folder "Required Readings PDFs" on the merged course site titled REL/SAS.185.Merged.FALL13.Hinduism (16080.1141c)

Bahadur, "Divali" and Marriott, "Holi" in *The Life of Hinduism*, edited by J.S. Hawley and V. Narayanan, 91-112. University of California Press.

Das, Gurcharan. "Arjuna's Despair": "There are no victors in war" from *The Difficulty of Being Good: On the Subtle Art of Dharma*, 88-116; also pp. xvi-xxviii (central story, cast of characters, genealogical table). Penguin.

Dempsey, Corinne. "The Science of the Miraculous at an Upstate New York Temple" in *Miracle as Modern Conundrum in South Asian Religious Traditions*, edited by Corinne Dempsey and Selva Raj, 119-138. State University of New York Press.

Gold, A.G. "Death at a Ripe Old Age" and "the Ganges Pilgrimage from Rajasthan" from *Fruitful Journeys*, 79-99 and 202-213. University of California Press.

Gold, A.G. "Practical Hinduism" in *Britannica online*

Gold, A.G. "Showing Miracles in Rajasthan" in *Miracle as Modern Conundrum*, 85-103.

Grewal, Royina. *The Book of Ganesha*, 1-98. Penguin Global.

Hawley, J.S. and M. Juergensmeyer, Selections from *Songs of the Saints of India*. Oxford University Press

Kabir, Selections from Dharwadker, Vinay, transl. *Kabir: The Weaver's Songs* and Hess and Singh, transl. *The Bijak of Kabir*.

Olivelle, Patrick, transl. *Upanisads*. Oxford University Press. (*Brihadaranyaka Upanisad*, Chapter 3, pp. 34-52 + notes; *Chandogya Upanisad*, Chapter 6, pp. 148-156 + notes; *Mundaka Upanisad*, pp. 266-277 + notes).

Ramanujan, A.K., transl. Selections from *Speaking of Siva*.

Please make a habit of bringing with you to class any given day's syllabus readings.

Success / Requirements

First and above all: **KEEP UP WITH THE READINGS! EVERYTHING THAT FOLLOWS DEPENDS ON THIS.** Some weeks the readings are very light; others not so light. Please keep in mind that this balances out over the semester.

Second, and almost equally important: **Be prepared sometimes to feel confused.** As is the case when studying any religion, outsiders may see Hinduism as filled with beauty, but also with things they find difficult to understand; to insiders, these same things may be evidently how the world makes sense. Because the academic study of a religion is very different from participation in a religion, the course may raise different kinds of complicated questions for both insiders and outsiders.

Gargi, possibly Hinduism's earliest female philosopher, probes deeply into the nature of reality. Yajnavalkya admonishes her, "Don't ask too many questions, Gargi, or your head will shatter apart!" In this course, asking questions -- of the instructor, the readings, one another, and oneself -- is encouraged as part of the learning process; a shattered head is a necessary risk, as Gargi knows. Just remember that all answers are bound to be imperfect.

Course requirements intentionally provide a variety of tasks, tapping different kinds of skills. *Participation* reflects responsibility and thoughtfulness. *Response papers* -- although handed in and graded -- allow you to write informally what you are thinking about the readings, almost as if you were talking. *Essays* help you to focus on specific subjects in greater depth and to practice polished writing skills. With *quizzes* both students and instructor keep tabs on how well specific, limited items of information which are essential to grasp broader course material have been assimilated. All your work is normally based *only* on required readings, lectures, discussions, and media presentations.

I. Prepared participation (see note that follows)

faithful attendance		
5 informal 1-2 page response papers (@ 5 points)	25%	
contributions, including at least one prearranged turn at raising discussion questions	15%	
		total 40%

II. Essays

Topic 1 (3-4 pages)	20%	
Topic 2 (5-6 pages)	25%	
		total 45%

III. Quizzes

3 vocabulary and concept quizzes (@ 5 points)	15%	total 15%
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**Extra credit potential*

5 points max

Opportunities may arise during the semester to write responses (worth two points) to outside events -- lectures, concerts or religious functions -- that enhance your knowledge of Hinduism, or your understanding of Indian culture. These will be announced as they come along. Coordinating a discussion group is rewarded with one point.

More about participation

This is a lecture / discussion class. Although certain days are designated *discussion* (and you should arrive with your thoughts well in order), the 80-minute time-slot allows ample opportunity for questions and comments every meeting.

There are seven dedicated discussion days; on five of these (numbered 1 - 5), we will have student groups leading discussion. Part of your participation requirement is to take at least one turn to prepare questions and bring these to class on one of these days, when you will help to lead class discussion on the assigned materials. There will be advance self-enrollment groups on Blackboard to organize this. Discussion leaders do not summarize or present the readings, but rather they formulate questions and strategies to **open discussion**. You are welcome to be creative (role-playing, reading aloud, debate, focus groups, storytelling, or anything you can think of *except Jeopardy and similar games that require nothing but bits of information*) to do this. Coordinators must get the group together at least once before their day and make sure every person in the group knows what to do. I expect you to keep discussions going for at least 60 of the 80 minute class period.

While 25 participation points are based on written response papers, 15 points are assessed solely on the basis of presence and preparation. Everyone starts with 12 out of 15 (B+). This is maintained through coming to class regularly, and a responsible performance on your discussion leader turn. Better than good attendance, excellence in discussion contributions, or other evident efforts can raise this grade; negligence such as a no-show on your discussion leader turn day will lower it.

Beginning Thursday, 9/5, our TAs will do their best to keep an accurate written record of student attendance. Each class member is allowed 2 "no fault" unexcused absences. For each additional absence your participation points will drop by 2. It is your responsibility to sign the sheet!

Note: The only excused absences are documented medical and family emergencies; religious holidays by prearrangement (see p. 7 for important additional information); and -- for participants in athletic programs -- prearranged, documented events.

Important advice: Students missing class for any reason are themselves responsible for finding out what they missed, turning in their work, and obtaining assignments. Contact instructor or TA by email and always or check Blackboard. **After 8/29, all "hand-outs" will be paperless and available as Blackboard "assignments."**

Quizzes **cannot** be rescheduled; plan to be in class when they are administered. **Late work is bad for you and bad for us.** Any written work that is one class late will lose a full letter grade (one point off response papers; 3 points off essays). **Absolutely no** response papers will be accepted beyond one class late. *No matter what your accumulated points, you cannot pass this course without completing the required assignments.* (Check out "[I am worried about my grade](#)" and avoid similar embarrassing predicaments!) *In recognition of the general difficulty and complexity of college life, each student will be issued an electronic chit (an English word originating in India) worth 3 points. This may be used for a passing grade in place of either **one** quiz or **one** response paper. At the end of the semester an unused chit counts for 3 extra credit points.*

<u>Week/Date</u>	<u>Topic/Readings</u>
	<i>approaching the study of Hinduism</i>
1	Tu 8/27 introductory session
	Th 8/29 overviews, historical and conceptual <u>Read:</u> Knott, Preface and Ch. 1 • hand-out for RP 1 •
2	Tu 9/3 Vedic ritual and its legacies <u>Read:</u> Knott, Ch. 2 videos: selections from <i>Altar of Fire</i> and <i>Tulsidas and the Fire of the Vedas</i>
	Th 9/5 issues of insider/outsider and scholar/devotee <i>self-introductions combined with discussion</i> <u>Read:</u> hand-out material; Knott, Preface and Ch. 1 •• RP 1 due ••
	<i>Fr 9/6, 8 pm; highly recommended event: Pt. Bholanath Mishra, concert of North Indian Classical Vocal Performance, Setnor Auditorium; admission is free</i>
	<i>ultimate reality and the self; the aims of moral duty (dharma) and liberation (moksha)</i>
3	Tu 9/10 the end of the Vedas: Upanisadic thought <u>Read:</u> Knott, Ch. 3; <i>Upanisads</i> (3 selections) access via Blackboard course documents • discussion leader self-enrollment groups ready to form on Blackboard • • hand-out for RP 2 available on Blackboard •
	Th 9/12 <i>Varnashrama dharma</i> (morality according to caste and life stage) and the four human aims <u>Read:</u> Knott, Chs. 4-5, & review pp.16-20; Johari, Saint and Scorpion, 57-58
4	Tu 9/17 life, the universe and everything <i>student-led discussion 1</i> <u>Read:</u> review week 3 readings + Johari, The Butter in the Milk, 29-30 •• RP 2 due •• <i>lila the play of the gods</i>
	Th 9/19 Introducing deities and their worship video: Puja (15 minutes) <u>Read:</u> Grewal, 19-35 access via Blackboard course documents
5	Tu 9/24 •• Quiz # 1 distributed at 11 am: 15 minutes •• Ganesha, and the mythology of Shiva <u>Read:</u> Grewal, 35-54; Johari, Shiva and the Demon, 121-124 video: Elephant God (19 minutes)
	Th 9/26 The Devi as mother, consort and warrior <u>Read:</u> Grewal, 57-98 • topics for essay 1 available on Blackboard •

- 6 Tu 10/1 Vishnu and his avatars; introducing *Ramayana*
Read: Prime, Introduction, viii-xviii & 1-16; review Knott, 38-43
- Th 10/3 Ram's divine story: adventures, lessons, battles and morals
Read: Prime, 18-62
- 7 Tu 10/8 Ram's divine being: religious, social and performative lives of a text;
darshan and durdarshan
video clips from TV *Ramayana* and animated *Ramayana* (about 40 minutes)
Read: Prime, finish
- Th 10/10 Mythic characters and human lives
student-led discussion 2
•• essay 1 due in class ••
- the Bhagavad Gita's teachings*
- 8 Tu 10/15 Krishna and the *Gita*
Read: Das, "Central Story" **access via Blackboard course documents**; *Bhagavad Gita*, Introduction pp. 1-13; text, pp. 21-61
• hand-out for RP 3 available on Blackboard •
- Th 10/17 *Gita* in the *Mahabharata*
Read: *Bhagavad Gita*, pp. 62-87
- 9 Tu 10/22 *Gita*: meanings, messages, uses
Read: *Bhagavad Gita*, pp. 89-141; Das, "Arjuna's Despair" **access via Blackboard course reserves**
- Th 10/24 *What should Arjuna do?*
Read: review *Gita*, Das, and Knott, 32-37
student-led discussion 3
•• RP 3 due ••
- bhakti and sannyasa: devotion and renunciation in the lives of saints and ordinary people*
- 10 Tu 10/29 •• Quiz # 2 distributed at 11 am: 15 minutes ••
Devotion to the Lord with and without qualities
Read: Ramanujan, transl. **access via Blackboard course reserves**
• hand out for RP 4 available on Blackboard •
- Th 10/31 Songs of the saints
Read: Hawley and Juergensmeyer; Kabir **access via Blackboard course reserves**
DVDs: Music in the Ashram (15 minutes); Kabir in America, selections
- 11 Tu 11/5 *Sannyasa* -- renunciation and its meanings; stories about holy persons
Read: Johari, Sweeper, 19-24; Merchant, 33-38; Shankara, 41-43; Dhapli Baba, 61-63; Guru & King, 69-73; Difficult Job, 79-84, Merchant who would not, 87-90; Wish-fulfilling cow, 101-107; Narada and the Crazy Saint, 127-132

- Th 11/7 languages of devotion and expressions of resistance to class and gender hierarchies
Read: Ramanujan; Hawley and Juergensmeyer; Kabir (selections) *access via Blackboard course reserves*; Knott, Ch. 7
 •• RP 4 due ••
student-led discussion 4
- elements of practice: rituals, festivals, miracles, pilgrimages*
- 12 Tu 11/12 Introduction to Hinduism in practice; life cycles and life cycle rituals
Read: Gold, "Practical Hinduism" *access via Blackboard course documents*
 • hand-out for RP 5 available on Blackboard •
- Th 11/14 special places: shrines, temples and miracles
Read: Gold, "Showing Miracles"; Dempsey, "Science of the Miraculous" *access via Blackboard course documents*
- 13 Tu 11/19 •• Quiz # 3 distributed at 11 am: 15 minutes ••
 special times: calendrical festivals
Read: Bahadur, Marriott *access via Blackboard course documents*
- Th 11/21 death and pilgrimage
DVD: The Last Rites of the Honourable Mr. Rai (47 minutes)
instructor attending Anthropology meetings in Chicago; TAs will show film and lead a discussion of film and readings
Read: Gold, "Death . . ." *access via Blackboard course documents*
- 14 *THANKSGIVING BREAK! ALL WEEK LONG*
- 15 Tu 12/3 Living religion: Hinduism in practice
student-led discussion 5
 •• RP 5 due ••
 • topics for essay 2 available on Blackboard•
- Th 12/5 Virtual Hinduism
every student should visit one or more of some suggested web sites and come to class prepared to talk about what they learned
 concluding comments + evaluations + food

Th 12/12 at 5 pm take-home essay 2 is due electronically

Learning Outcomes

In keeping with University-wide concerns to assess learning outcomes in undergraduate courses, the religion department advises all students of the following goals. You will learn:

- to understand better what we mean by "religion" and to think more critically about the subject;
- to become more aware of a diversity of perspectives within the study of religion;
- to know and understand better diverse manifestations of religion within human cultures and societies, and be able to describe and interpret them.

Your grades in this course, based on written and classroom performance, will reflect your achievement of these goals, at the broadest level.

***IMPORTANT NOTICES REGARDING FAITH TRADITION OBSERVANCES,
DISABILITY, INTEGRITY AND COURTESY: PLEASE READ CAREFULLY***

faith tradition observances SU's religious observances policy recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holy days according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes. For fall and spring semesters, an online notification process is available through MySlice/Student Services/Enrollment/My Religious Observances from the first day of class until the end of the second week of class. If you need to miss Hinduism class during the fall semester due to a faith tradition observance, ***please make sure to take care of filing your notification(s) immediately.*** See: http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp_ben/religious_observance.htm

disability Students who are in need of disability-related academic accommodations must register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), 804 University Avenue, Room 309, 315-443-4498. Students with authorized disability-related accommodations should provide a current Accommodation Authorization Letter from ODS to the instructor and review those accommodations with the instructor. Accommodations, such as exam administration, are not provided retroactively; therefore, planning for accommodations as early as possible is necessary. For further information, see <http://disabilityservices.syr.edu>

academic integrity The Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the Policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. The policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments as well as the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verifications of participation in class activities. Serious sanctions can result from academic dishonesty of any sort. Students in REL/SAS 185 found violating academic integrity in any aspect of their class work will receive the grade F for that assignment. Students have a right to appeal. Please see <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu/>

academic courtesy All students are expected to follow simple rules of academic courtesy to fellow students and instructors. Please arrive on time to avoid disrupting the class. Once class begins, you must refrain from personal conversations. You must put away all non-course reading materials (e.g. newspapers). Turn off and put away all cell phones and MP3 players. Refrain from using computers for any non-course related activities. Please avoid premature preparations to leave class; your instructor will let you know when class is over. You may be asked to leave the class for the day if you do not follow these rules.