



RELIGIOUS STUDIES 412

JOURNEY and ILLUMINATION: JEWISH AND HINDU MYSTICAL EXPRESSIONS

Office Hours and Consultation

For brief consultations, please see me before or after class. I am also available for longer meetings during my office hours. E-mail is the least preferred form of communication and should be used judiciously.

If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may affect your ability to carry out assigned course work, I urge you to contact the Office of Disability Services at 5453. The Coordinator of Disability Services, Erin Salva (salvae@kenyon.edu) will review your concerns and determine, with you, what accommodations are appropriate. After your meeting with Erin Salva, please see me to discuss accommodations and learning needs.

I. Course Description

This seminar offers a comparative approach to the study of mysticism with a focus on Hinduism and Judaism. In the course of our reading and study we will encounter concepts of alienation and longing, night, sleep, dream, dialectics of life and death, meditation and ecstasy, excursion and return, and the mystical landscape of symbol, myth, metaphor, allegory, and phantasmagoria.

II. Requirements and Grading

A. Regular attendance (no more than one unexcused absence will be accepted); timely completion of reading assignments and active participation in seminar discussions. (20%)

B. Writing Assignments All writing is due on the date announced, or, in the case of short response papers, on the day the reading is discussed. Missed due dates on longer pieces will result in grade penalties unless properly excused. I do not consider e-mail requests for extensions. Please plan accordingly. Carefully read and follow my Guidelines, which will be distributed early in the semester, and review the College rules on Academic Honesty (see pp. 24-27 in the Course of Study). Please keep copies of all your writing until it is graded and returned to you.

William Strunk and E.B. White's *The Elements of Style* is recommended reading for all who are interested in polishing their writing.

1. Response essays: Ten 1-2 page, typed essays. (PLEASE SAVE PAPER: single space, print on

both sides of paper if possible; if not, staple or paperclip your pages together.) These essays should be brief and immediate responses to primary texts. They must be turned in at the beginning of class on the day in which we discuss the assigned reading. You may turn these in at your own discretion; however, they must come in at an even pace throughout the semester so that you have an opportunity to reflect in writing on the varieties of literature covered. At least 5 essays must be turned in before spring break. Please note: All response essays must be submitted by the end of the 13th week of the semester. Late response essays will not be accepted. (You may not turn in an essay after the reading has been discussed in class.) (30%)

2. Paper (12 typed, double-spaced pages and bibliography) You should pick your topic by the middle of the semester. Subject and brief bibliography are due at a designated time. An outline (required) and rough draft (optional) are due prior to the deadline for submission of the final paper. You will be given an opportunity to share your research with others in the course. Prepare a brief handout for your fellow classmates. (30%, all components of assignment)

C. Presentation Leadership Along with another student you will be responsible for a particular work or group of works on two occasions. The team must prepare a handout with 3 points about the reading and at least 3 questions for discussion. Each team will first make a brief (no more than 20 minutes) presentation in which the team shares new material which will enhance our discussion of the assigned reading. You will then initiate discussion, using the prepared handout as a departure point. (10% each presentation)

NOTE: Required background reading This course is primarily focused on the mystical aspects of Hinduism and Judaism and is not an introduction to either tradition. Even so, it is a reasonable expectation that you will learn something about both of these religions. Recommended texts on Hinduism and Judaism (Fishbane, *Judaism* and Knipe, *Hinduism*) are available in the bookstore, although there are other similar introductions that you may prefer to use. Alternatively, you may read the relevant articles in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*. The more you know about each tradition, the more you will gain from your study of its mystical strands. Plan to begin your reading about Hinduism immediately. Background reading on Judaism should be completed no later than the beginning of the 7th week of the semester. A list of terms for both traditions will be distributed. There are glossaries at the back of each text.

III. Course Readings

Available in the Bookstore:

Barbara Stoler Miller, trans., *The Bhagavad Gita*

Barbara Stoler Miller, trans., *Love Song of the Dark Lord: Jayadeva's Gitagovinda*

Daniel Chanan Matt, trans. *Zohar: the Book of Enlightenment*

Arnold J. Band, trans., *Nahman of Bratslav: The Tales*

On Course Reserve (Selected articles are outside my office door for borrowing only):

William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*

Steven T. Katz, ed., *Mysticism and Religious Traditions* [MRT]

Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, trans., *The Rig Veda*

Juan Mascaro, trans., *The Upanishads*

Jewish Spirituality, Vols . I and II

Louis Jacobs, ed., *Jewish Mystical Testimonies*

Hindu Spirituality, Vol. II

Stephen Hay, ed., *Sources of Indian Tradition*

IV. Course Outline

WEEKS 1-2: What is mysticism?

Week 1a First class: Speculation on the question

Week 1b (both readings are in the Reference room of the library)

Ninian Smart, "Mysticism, History of" and "Mysticism, Nature of" in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. 6: 620-633

L. Dupre, "Mysticism" in *The Encyclopedia of Religion* 10:245-261; study 245-249 and 258-261 carefully

Week 2a

W. James, "Mysticism" in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* 292ff.

J. E. Smith, "William James's Account of Mysticism" **MRT** 247ff.

Week 2b

Katz, "The 'Conservative' Character of Mystical Experience" **MRT** 3ff.

WEEKS 3- 6: The Foundations of Hindu Mystical Expression

Week 3a

Selections from the Rig Veda

Selections from the Upanishads

TEAM PRESENTATIONS BEGIN

Week 3b-4a

The Bhagavad Gita

Recommended: Harold Kasimow, "A Jewish Encounter with the *Bhagavad Gita*"

Week 4b-5b

The Love Song of the Dark Lord, Jayadeva's Gitagovinda

John B. Carman, "Conceiving 'Bhakti' as Theistic Mysticism" **MRT**, 191ff.

Week 6a

Artistic renditions of *bhakti*

WEEKS 7-10 The Foundation of Jewish Mystical Expressions

Week 6b

Joseph Dan, "The Religious Experience of the *Merkavah*" in *Jewish Spirituality*, Vol. I, 289-306

Study of kabbalistic images

Week 7a-b

The following four texts are all found in Louis Jacobs' *Jewish Mystical Testimonies* in the designated chapters:

Ezekiel 1 (ch. 1: "Ezekiel's Vision of the Heavenly Throne")

Hagigah 14b (ch. 2: "The Four Who Entered the King's Orchard")

Merkavah and *Heikhaloth* (ch. 3: "The Riders of the Chariot and Those Who Enter the Heavenly Halls")

Week 8a

Song of Songs (recommended: HarperCollins Study Bible; otherwise, consult with me about the translation you are using) **Note:** Review Katz's article

Weeks 8b-10b

RESEARCH PAPER DUE: APRIL 2ND

During the last four weeks of the semester students will give 15-20 minute presentations on their research. Prepare a one-page handout to be distributed to others in the seminar.

WEEKS 11-13: Modern Mystical Expressions

Week 11a-12a

"The Typologies of Leadership and the Hasidic Zaddiq" *Jewish Spirituality*, Vol II, ch. 5
Nahman of Bratslav, *The Tales*, introduction and selections

Week 12b-13b

"Sri Ramakrishna: "At Play in his Mother's Mansion" *Hindu Spirtuality*, Vol.II, ch. 14
Sri Ramakrishna, *Sources of Indian Tradition*, 62-71

"The Spirituality of Swami Vivekananda" *Hindu Spirituality*, Vol. II, ch. 15
Swami Vivekananda, *Sources of Indian Tradition* 72-82

WEEK 14

Comparative work on Jewish and Hindu mysticisms; What is mysticism?

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