RELIBIOUS 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
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)

Week 2a
W. James, "Mysticism" in The Varieties of Religious Experience 292ff.

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
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
Nahman of Bratslav, *The Tales*, introduction and selections

Week 12b-13b
Sri Ramakrishna, *Sources of Indian Tradition*, 62-71

Swami Vivekananda, *Sources of Indian Tradition* 72-82

WEEK 14

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

Return