

RELIGION, POLITICS AND CONFLICT IN SOUTH ASIA

RL363

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DESCRIPTION

An introduction to the relationship of religion, politics, and conflict in modern South Asia

RPCSA AND THE LIBERAL ARTS

The liberal arts tradition, as I understand it, is premised on the assumption that a true education requires more than the mere mastery of trade-specific data, but also the cultivation of a variety of valuable **cognitive** and **social** abilities. Among the **cognitive** skills a teacher in the liberal arts tradition assays to nurture are the capacity to think and learn independently, and to critically assess one's own presuppositions, perspectives, and biases, as well as those of others (including teachers and the authors of course texts). In addition, the liberal arts tradition seeks to foster academic facility in formulating, evaluating, and expressing arguments, as well as in seeking, classifying, and organizing information. The liberal arts tradition, however, is not merely about cognitive skills, but also entails the development of certain **social** qualities, the most noble among them being respect, an empathetic imagination, and counter-conventional thinking (i.e., the ability to envisage how, in the words of a Buddhist text, it "might be otherwise"). This course will focus less on the mastery of specific information than on the development of the skills necessary to interpret and analyze the role, whether positive and negative, that religion plays and has played in various global conflicts. Though the course focuses on South Asia, students will gain the ability to apply these skills more broadly, and frequent discussions will highlight the similarities and differences of Asian and American contexts. Students will therefore be expected not only to empathetically grasp the sentiments, beliefs, and social factors which contribute to religious conflict (and their resolution), but will also be expected to come to a critical understanding of the interplay of religion, politics, and conflict in their own context.

PURPOSE

If all goes well, upon completing this course you should be better equipped than before to:

- Understand the unique set of socio-religious realities that have contributed to conflict in South Asia;
- Analyze the various ways in which religion informs political structures, national identities, and social conflict in Asia and beyond;
- Interpret the role of religion in contemporary socio-religious conflicts;
- Reflect, drawing upon the aforementioned skills, on the relationship of religion, politics, and conflict in your own socio-cultural context.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Gerald Larson, *India's Agony over Religion*
Ainslie Embree, *Utopias in Conflict*
Joan Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence*
Stanley Tambiah, *Leveling Crowds*
Sushil Mittal and Gene Thursbay, *Religions of South Asia*
John C. B. Webster, *Dalit Christians: A History*

**Unless otherwise noted, all assigned texts not listed above are available on Blackboard or photocopy reserve.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADE

The following five components will comprise the grade for this course:

- **Participation (20%):** Students will be expected to attend the class regularly, to ask informed questions, and to respect each other, the professor, and guest lecturers. Students will also participate in periodic discussions. If these discussions are to be successful, students will need to have carefully read the assigned texts. A large portion of the participation grade will be determined by the extent to which the student's participation in these discussions demonstrates his or her engagement with and understanding of the assigned texts. Students can increase their participation grade by visiting their professor in his office for informal conversation or help with/conversation about the course. **Attendance policy:** *I do not take attendance in class, but I do expect regular attendance. If you are absent frequently enough that I (and others) notice, your participation grade will suffer (unless those absences are caused by hospitalization or some other traumatic personal or family event). Mild illnesses and/or fatigue in general do not constitute an excusable reason for absence, so you should do what you can to avoid them.*
- **Partition Novel Paper (20%):** Electronically, and by class time on February 13th, students will turn in a four- to five-page paper on one of the Partition-oriented novels listed below. The papers should be concise, and should include a true thesis statement that makes an argument about the following question: What is the central statement the author of the novel is making about the relationship of religion, politics, and conflict in South Asia? Novels: Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India* (or *Ice-Candy Man*), or Bhisham Sahni's *Tamas* (students who have read any of these novels in other courses should choose a different one).
- **Research Paper Topic and Resource List (20%):** Electronically, and by class time on February 27th, students will turn in a short paragraph outlining the topic they have chosen for their research paper (see below). In the same document, students should include a thorough list of resources they plan to consult. (Listing a source does not commit the student to reading all of it. For example, a student may list a book from which they plan only to consult a chapter or two.) The list should be composed primarily of scholarly (not journalistic—though news reports can be used to tell the story of the conflict), published (*not internet*)

books and articles. Students should briefly (in two to three sentences each) annotate the five sources they think will be most useful in their research. Students may also wish to include a preliminary thesis statement if they would like feedback on it (but this is optional). A grade will be assigned to the resource list based on the amount of preliminary research it demonstrates and the relevance of the resources identified. An acceptable list would include roughly ten solid resources. An exceptional list would include more than twenty. Students are expected to do research on JSTOR and other Butler databases, on the ATLA Religion Indexes One database (at Christian Theological Seminary's library down the street), and to order books and articles through interlibrary loan.

- **Research Paper Draft/Presentation (20%):** Students will sign up to discuss their research projects with other students and the professor in class on 3/20, 3/27, 4/17, or 4/24. One week before the date they choose, students will electronically submit a rough draft of their research paper to be distributed to the rest of the class. Students need not prepare a statement for the class, but should rather simply be prepared to have their worked critiqued (positively or negatively) by other students and the professor.
- **Final Research Paper (20%):** Students will write a research paper (twelve to fifteen pages), on religion, politics, and conflict in some Asian country other than India (the Middle East, for our purposes, is *not* part of Asia). The final version is due electronically by May 1st. The topic is open-ended and creative topics are encouraged. However, students should be certain to choose a topic focused enough to be adequately covered in such a short paper. For example, students should not attempt a paper which deals generally with “religion, politics, and conflict in Sri Lanka,” though they may wish to write a paper on “Tamil-Sinhala Conflict in Contemporary Sri Lanka.” Papers may deal either with a contemporary conflict or an historical one. Though the paper should not be explicitly comparative, students may draw upon the South Asian material (particularly that which is more theoretical) to help explain and illuminate the conflict they have chosen. Obviously, introductory pages of the paper will need to give some contextual background and history, but students should devote as much of their papers as possible to making a creative *argument* about the topic. There must therefore be a clearly-stated, argumentative thesis which forces the student to go beyond mere overview of the chosen topic.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Paper Submission:

All papers should be submitted as a Microsoft Word (.doc) or, for Mac users, a Rich Text Format (.rtf) document attached to an e-mail to the instructor. *Please do not turn in hard copies.*

Lateness Policy

Extensions will generally be granted without question to those who request them *before the assignment is due*. (No extensions will be given, however, beyond the last day of class.) Extensions will not be granted, however, if requested after the due date. Late assignments will be assessed a penalty of two points per day.

E-mail Policy

All students are expected to check their Butler e-mail account daily (when school is in session) for class updates and reminders.

Rough Drafts:

The professor will read and comment on complete rough drafts of student papers, provided they are submitted at least one week in advance of their due date.

Student Disability Accommodation

It is the policy and practice of Butler University to make reasonable accommodations for students with properly documented disabilities. Written notification from Student Disability Services is required. If you are eligible to receive an accommodation and would like to request it for this course, please discuss it with me and allow one week advance notice. Otherwise, it is not guaranteed that the accommodation can be received on a timely basis. If you have questions about Student Disability Services, you may wish to contact Michele Atterson, JH 136, ext. 9308

Academic Integrity:

Students will be expected to adhere to the standards of academic integrity as outlined in the Butler University Student Handbook, as well as to the highest standards of honesty, good faith and fair dealing. Students discovered violating those standards will **fail the course**, and may face additional sanctions which could include expulsion from the University. Violations include (but are not limited to) cheating, collaborating improperly on assignments assigned individually, and plagiarizing (turning in another person's work as one's own, copying text from any source, *including the internet*, books, articles, or magazines, without acknowledgement, etc.). Students should consult Butler's statement on academic integrity, posted on the course's Blackboard site under "Course Documents," for more detailed information on the University's expectations and policies. The library provides a tutorial on plagiarism for those needing more instruction: www.butler.edu/library/instruction/tutorial/index.html.

Statement on Disruptive Classroom Behavior:

The classroom is a special environment in which students and faculty come together to promote learning and growth. It is essential to this learning environment that respect for the rights of others seeking to learn, respect for the professionalism of the instructor, and the general goals of academic freedom are maintained. Differences of viewpoint or concerns should be expressed in terms which students and faculty may learn to reason with clarity and compassion, to share of themselves without losing their identities, and to develop an understanding of the community in which they live. Student conduct which disrupts the learning process shall not be tolerated and may lead to disciplinary action (Butler University Rules of Conduct #2) and/or removal from class. Some specific examples include talking during lecture or the use of cellular phones, pagers, etc.

SCHEDULE

January

T 16 – Introduction to the Course

- Larson, Intro (pgs. 1-37)

R 18 – Hinduism

- Mittal and Thursby, Chapter 1 (Hindu Dharm), pgs. 15-84

T 23 – Islam

- Mittal and Thursby, Chapter 8, pgs. 201-245

R 25 – Islamic Rule/Sikhs

- Larson, first part of Chapter 3, pgs. 102-119
- Mittal and Thursby, Chapter 4, pgs. 131-148

T 30 – Colonial Rule

- Larson, second part of Chapter 3, pgs. 119-141
- Mittal and Thursby, Chapter 7, pgs. 185-198

February

R 1 – Gandhi's *Satyagraha*

- Bondurant, Chapter 1, pgs. 15-35

T 6 – *Satyagraha* in Action

- Bondurant, Chapter 3, pgs. 36-104

R 8 – *Satyagraha* and Hinduism

- Bondurant, Chapter 4, pgs. 105-145

T 13 – Partition

- Larson, excerpt from Chapter 5, pgs. 182-191
- Read Wikipedia article on the "Partition of India" at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Partition_of_India
- **Partition novel paper due**

R 15 – Religion, Nationalism, and Tolerance

- Embree, Chapters 1 and 2, pgs. 1-37

T 20 – Indian Secularism

- Larson, first part of Chapter 5, pgs. 178-226

T 22 – Indian Secularism, continued

- Larson, Chapters 3 and 4, pg. 39-74

T 27 – Operation Blue Star and its Aftermath

- Tambiah, Chapter 4, pgs. 101-162
- **Research paper resource list Due**

March

R 1 – Shah Bano

- Larson, first part of Chapter 5, pgs. 75-100

T 6 – Ayodhya

- Larson, second part of Chapter 5, pgs. 101-111
- Tambiah, Chapter 9, pgs. 244-265

R 8 – Sangh Parivar Politics

- Madhu Kishwar, “Religion at the Service of Nationalism: An Analysis of Sangh Parivar Politics,” pgs. 248-278 in Kishwar, *Religion at the Service of Nationalism* (Oxford: New Delhi, 2001—on Blackboard under Course Documents).

T 13 SPRING BREAK

R 15 SPRING BREAK

T 20 Student Presentations 1

R 22 – Kashmir

- Larson, excerpt from Chapter 5, pgs. 244-256
- Read Wikipedia article, “Kashmir Conflict” at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kashmir_conflict

T 27 – Student Presentations 2

R 29 – Dalits and Dalit Christianity

- Webster, Preface and Chapter 1, pgs. ix-32

April

T 3 – Mass Conversion Movements

- Webster, Chapter 2, pgs. 33-76, 30-40, 49-70

R 5 – Politics of Number

- Webster, Chapter 3, pgs. 77-129

T 10 – Ambedkar’s Dalits

- Coward, “Gandhi, Ambedkar, and Untouchability,” pgs. 41-66 in Coward, ed., *Indian Critiques of Gandhi* (New York: SUNY Press, 2003)

R 12 – Compensatory Discrimination

- Webster, first part of Chapter 4, pgs. 130-170

T 17 – Student Presentations 3

R 19 – Anti-Conversion Movements: Shuddhi

- Kenneth Jones, “Politicized Hinduism: The Ideology and Program of the Hindu Mahasabha,” in *Religion in Modern India*, ed. Robert Baird (Delhi: Manohar, 1981), pgs. 447-480 (on Blackboard under Course Documents)
- J.E. Llewellyn, *The Arya Samaj as a Fundamentalist Movement*, pgs. 99-103 (on Blackboard under Course Documents)

T 24 – Student Research Projects, 4

R 26 – Anti-Conversion Movements: The Niyogi Report

- Chad Bauman, *The Political Roots of Anti-Christian Sentiment* (On Blackboard under Course Documents).

May 1st: Final draft of research paper due