

SYLLABUS

RELI 200-01

Religions of India and Tibet

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Course: "Religions of India and Tibet"
Level/Type: introductory undergraduate lecture/seminar course
Hours of Instruction: 3 hours/week over 15-week term
Enrollment: 15 students
Last Taught: Fall 2000

Pedagogical Reflections:

The goal of this course is to introduce undergraduate students -- most of whom are in their first or second years of study, and most of whom are not pursuing religious studies as their primary concentration - to the basic historical, conceptual, and ritual dimensions of religious traditions that are central to South and Central Asian cultures (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, Tibet).

Lectures present, and to some extent duplicate, material also found in the Religions of Asia textbook. Individual primary source reading assignments from the Scriptures of the East anthology are kept short, to allow for close reading and discussion. Items from South Asian visual and musical cultures, as well as modern and contemporary films and nonfiction which depict South and Central Asian religious traditions, are introduced, in order to de-hegemonize text to some degree. Whenever possible, elective opportunities to visit neighboring South and Central Asian religious institutions and relevant museum collections are made available. During the fall 2000 semester, several students chose to accompany me on visits to a Hindu temple, a Jain temple, a Tibetan Buddhist center, and a museum collection of Indian and Tibetan religious art.

In general, my students have responded well to textbook and primary source readings, and they are delighted to explore the visual and musical worlds of Indian and Tibetan religious traditions. I am concerned that, by neglecting the scholastic tradition in both Indian and Tibetan Buddhism (not to mention the Jain tradition), I am omitting much that is central to these traditions, but I have found that my students are bewildered and bored by such material.

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Course Description

Religion remains a powerful and perennial force in human cultures. Whether we distance ourselves from

religious institutions or embrace them, we cannot avoid the influence of religious ideas, practices, images, language, and values in our everyday life, work, and play. This is no less true of the peoples and cultures of India and Tibet - yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

In this course, we will study the basic concerns, practices, beliefs, and texts of Indian and Tibetan religions, including Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and Islam. Our goal is to learn to interpret these traditions for ourselves.

Classroom lectures, discussions, videos, several contemporary films, and readings from primary sources will supplement textbook analyses and overviews. Reading assignments will average 75 pages per week. You should expect to spend 4-5 hours preparing for our 3 hours of class time each week.

Successful completion of this course satisfies the University's general education requirement in religious studies or philosophy. There are no prerequisites for enrollment, but previous completion of RELI 101, "Introduction to Religion," is highly recommended.

Course Materials

The following required texts are for sale at the University bookstore:

- John Y. Fenton et al, eds., Religions of Asia (3rd ed.)
- James Fieser and John Powers, ed., Scriptures of the East
- Martha Sherrill, The Buddha from Brooklyn
- RELI 200-01 Reader

Reading assignments will average 75 pages per week. Students should expect to spend 4-5 hours preparing for our 3 hours of class time each week.

ALWAYS BRING THE ASSIGNED TEXTS TO CLASS WITH YOU.

Course Requirements

- Adherence to the Student Rights and Responsibilities Statement found in the current University catalog, which forbids plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty.
- Regular attendance and informed participation in class discussions. No more than five excused absences will be allowed without penalty to your grade. After the fifth absence your final grade will be reduced by 1/3 of a grade for each additional absence, regardless of excuse.
- Regular in-class pop quizzes on key terms introduced in lectures and readings. Quizzes cannot be made up at a later date. Missed quizzes will result in a quiz average with fewer scores, which may impact your final grade negatively.
- Three short (3-5 pages) analytical papers, due on the dates indicated by the course calendar. Paper topics will be circulated at least a week before each paper is due; no reading assignments will be given for weeks during which papers are due. Grades of late papers will be reduced by 1/3 of a grade for each day late. Papers must be typed in clear standard English prose, double-spaced, and free of mechanical errors.

Grading

Class participation.....20% of final grade
Pop quizzes.....20% of final grade

Three analytical papers..... 60% of final grade

If you are a student with a disability, it is your responsibility to inform your instructor and register with the Office of Disability Services at least one week prior to a needed service so that reasonable accommodations can be made.

Course Calendar

Week 1 Studying Asian Religious Traditions

8/22 Introductory session (no preparation required)

8/23 Religions of Asia, introduction

Video: Hinduism - An Introduction (in class)

Week 2 Vedic Religion and Early Hinduism

8/26 Religions of Asia, ch. 1

8/28 Scriptures of the East, pp. 1-17

8/31 Religions of Asia, ch. 2

Week 3 Renunciation and New Religious Movements

9/3 NO CLASSES - LABOR DAY

9/5 Religions of Asia, ch. 3

9/7 Scriptures of the East, pp. 18-25

Week 4 Temple Worship and Personal Devotion

9/10 Religions of Asia, ch. 4

9/12 Scriptures of the East, pp. 26-43

9/14 Scriptures of the East, pp. 44-52

"Rituals at Sri Venkateswara Temple"; "Sri Ganesha Temple, Nashville" (reader)

Music: Burna Das Baul, "Agun Pani" (in class)

Week 5 Indian Religions on Film: Devi (Satyajit Ray, India, 1960; not rated)

9/17 Video: Devi (part one - in class)

9/19 Video: Devi (part two - in class)

9/21 Video: Devi (part three - in class)

PAPER #1 DUE IN CLASS!

Week 6 The Jains

9/24 Religions of Asia, pp. 89-93; Scriptures of the East, pp. 57-60

9/26 Scriptures of the East, pp. 61-65

9/28 Scriptures of the East, pp. 66-70

Music: Ravindra Jain, "Bhaktamar Stotra" (in class)

Week 7 The Rise of Buddhism

10/1 Religions of Asia, ch. 7

10/3 Scriptures of the East, pp. 73-87

10/5 Scriptures of the East, pp. 88-97

Week 8 Buddhism in India

10/8 Religions of Asia, ch. 8

10/10 Scriptures of the East, pp. 98-111

10/12 NO CLASSES - MID-FALL RECESS

Week 9 Islam in South Asia

10/15 Video: The Five Pillars of Islam (in class)

10/17 "Islamic Mysticism in India" (reader)

10/19 M. Mir, "Teachings of Two Punjabi Sufi Poets" (reader)

Music: Rizwan-Muazzam Qawwali (in class)

Week 10 Islam on Film: My Son The Fanatic (Udayan Prasad, UK, 1999; rated R)

10/22 My Son The Fanatic (part one - in class)

10/24 My Son The Fanatic (part two - in class)

10/26 My Son The Fanatic (part three - in class)

PAPER #2 DUE IN CLASS!

Week 11 The Sikhs

10/29 Religions of Asia, pp. 94-99; Scriptures of the East, pp. 127-132

10/31 Scriptures of the East, pp. 133-143

11/2 "Sikh Kirpans in Public Schools" (reader)

Week 12 Buddhism in Tibet

11/5 D. Lopez, "Religions of Tibet in Practice" (reader)

Video: White Lotus (in class)

11/7 Religions of Asia, pp. 148-151; Scriptures of the East, pp. 112-115

11/9 D. Lopez, "Mindfulness of Death" (reader)

Music: Khampagar Monastery Ritual Orchestra (in class)

Week 13 Tibetan Buddhism Today

11/12 K. Lekden, "The Supreme Practitioner" (reader)

11/14 T. Gyatso, "Nobel Peace Prize Lecture" (reader)

11/16 NO CLASS - INSTRUCTOR AWAY (begin reading The Buddha from Brooklyn)

NOVEMBER 19, 21, 23: NO CLASSES - THANKSGIVING RECESS

Week 14 Tibetan Buddhism in America

11/26 The Buddha from Brooklyn, chs. 1-8

11/28 The Buddha from Brooklyn, chs. 9-16

11/30 The Buddha from Brooklyn, chs. 17-22

Week 15 Tibetan Religions on Film: Kundun (Martin Scorsese, USA, 1997; rated PG-13)

12/3 Video: Kundun (part one - in class)

12/5 Video: Kundun (part two - in class)

12/7 Video: Kundun (part three - in class)

PAPER #3 DUE IN CLASS!