

# THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF SOUTH ASIAN RELIGION

## Instructor

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## Institution

Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey

## Course level and type

200-level; second-year undergraduate; mostly lecture.

## Hours of Instruction

3 hrs/week over a 14 week term:

## Enrollment and year last taught

95 students being taught right now, spring of 1999; about 1/3 of south Asian background – students belonging to most of the south Asian religions being taught are in the class.

## Pedagogical Reflections

I've taught an Anthropology of south Asia course five or six times in the last decade, but have been dissatisfied with the breadth of the material I've felt I've had to cover – there's too much for real integration. So this time around I focused it on historical and ethnographic studies of south Asian religions (I had also noted the students related to religious material in the general course with the most interest). I also tried to design it to get students ready for the diversity of south Asian religious institutions available for visits in New Jersey – in voluntary class trips, we've already visited an impressive, ritually elaborate branch of the Venkateswar temple, in Bridgewater, New Jersey; and we're hoping to visit a mosque with a south Asian congregation, a gurudwara, and another, very different temple (of the Swaminnarayans, from Gujarat). I can't rate student reactions at this point, but I'm learning a lot from teaching this material.

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This course is about south Asian religions (Hinduism, Jainism, Islam, Sikhism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Buddhism) as they have been studied anthropologically and historically – as daily beliefs and practices, and in relation to wider south Asian culture, history and politics. In addition to classroom activities, there will be visits, on weekends, to four diasporic south Asian religious sites in New Jersey – to two Hindu temples, one Sikh gurudwara and to one south Asian mosque (it is hoped that all students can make at least two of these visits; arrangements will be made for those who cannot).

## 1. Orientation

Gonda, Jan. 1987. "Indian Religions: an Overview." From Eliade, Mircea, ed., The Encyclopedia of Religion, New York: MacMillan, volume 7, 168-176.

Singer, Milton. 1972. "Passage to More than India: a Sketch of Changing European and American Images." From Singer, When a Great Tradition Modernizes, New York: Praeger, 11-38.

Narayan, Kirin. 1993. "Refractions of the Field at Home: American Representations of Hindu Holy Men in the 19th and 20th Centuries." Cultural Anthropology 8: 476-509.

Dumont, Louis. 1966. "Introduction." From Dumont, Homo Hierarchicus, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1-20.

## ***2. Two Anthropologists Study South Asian Religion***

Marriott, McKim. 1966. "The Feast of Love." From Milton Singer ed., Krishna: Myths, Rites and Attitudes, Honolulu: East-West Press, 200-212.

Ewing, Katherine. 1994. "Dreams from a Saint: Anthropological Atheism and the Temptation to Believe." American Anthropologist 96:571-583.

## ***3. Textual Hinduism***

Hiltebeitel, Alf. 1987. "Hinduism." From Eliade, Mircea, ed., The Encyclopedia of Religion, New York: MacMillan, 6:336-359.

## ***4. Jains***

Babb, Lawrence A. 1996. "Jain Basics," etc. Absent Lord: Ascetics and Kings in a Jain Ritual Culture. Berkeley: University of California Press, 5-11, 44-53, 56-63, 174-195.

Laidlaw, James. 1995. "Ahimsa," etc.; "Family Enterprise and Religious Community," etc. Riches and Renunciation: Religion, Economy and Society among the Jains. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 153-172, 349-363.

## ***5. Popular and Folk Hinduism***

Fuller, C. J. 1992. "Gods and Goddesses"; "Worship," from The Camphor Flame: Popular Hinduism and Society in India. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 29-82.

Gold, Ann. 1988. "Introduction: Multiple Settings"; "Sweeping the Road Ahead: the Hindu Darshan Bus Tour", from Fruitful Journeys: the Ways of Rajasthani Pilgrims. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1-58, 262-298.

## ***6. Hindu Reform, Gurus and Sects***

Williams, Raymond Brady. 1984. "Social Change and Religious Reform," "The Human Face of God," from A New Face of Hinduism: the Swaminarayan Religion. London: Cambridge University Press 1-24, 58-85.

Babb, Lawrence A. 1986. "Sathya Sai Baba's Miracles"; "The Reenchantment of the World." From Redemptive Encounters: Three Modern Styles of the Hindu Tradition, Berkeley: University of California Press, 159-201.

## ***7. Post-Colonial and Subaltern Hinduism***

Mani, Lata. 1987. "Contentious Traditions: the Debate on Sati in Colonial India." Cultural Critique 7: 119-156.

Von Stientencron, Heinrich. 1995. "Religious Configurations in Pre-Muslim India and the Modern Concept of Hinduism," from Dalmia, Vasudha and von Stientencron, Representing Hinduism: the Construction of Religious Traditions and National Identity, New Delhi: Sage, 51-52, 70-81 [incomplete].

Dube, Saurabh. 1998. "Introduction"; "A Contested Past: the Myths of Satnampanth." From Untouchable Pasts: Religion, Identity, and Power among a Central Indian Community, 1780-1950, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1-23, 115-143.

## **8. Contemporary Hindutva**

Jaffrelot, Christophe. 1993. The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India, New York: Columbia, 1-33.

Hansen, Thomas Blom. 1996. "Recuperating Masculinity: Hindu Nationalism, Violence, and the Exorcism of the Muslim 'Other.'" Critique of Anthropology 16:137-172.

## **9. Islam**

Metcalf, Barbara D. 1995. "Too Little and Too Much: Reflections on Muslims in the History of India." Journal of Asian Studies 54:952-967 [incomplete].

Gardner, Katy. 1995. "Talukpur: An Introduction," "The Sacred Dsh," from Global Migrants, Local Lives: Travel and Transformation in Rural Bengal, Oxford: Clarendon, 21-34, 229-268.

Ewing, Katherine Pratt, 1997, "Everyday Arguments," from Arguing Sainthood: Modernity, Psychoanalysis, and Islam, Durham: Duke, 93-127.

## **10. Sikhs**

McLeod, W. H. 1976. "The Evolution of the Sikh Community," from McLeod, The Evolution of the Sikh Community, Oxford: Clarendon, 1-19.

Oberoi, Harjot S. 1988. "From Ritual to Counter-Ritual: Rethinking the Hindu-Sikh Question, 1884-1915. From O'Connell, J. et. al, editors, Sikh History of Religion in the Twentieth Century, Toronto, 136-158.

## **11. Parsis**

Luhrmann, T. M. 1996. "In the Beginning," from The Good Parsi: the Fate of a Colonial Elite in a Postcolonial Society, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 62-95.

## **12. Christians**

Williams, Raymond B. 1996. "Christian Stories about India." From Christian Pluralism in the United States: the Indian Immigrant Experience. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 47-91.

## **13. A Diasporic Miscellany**

Adams, Vincanne. 1996. "Buddhist Sherpas as Others." From Tigers of the Snow and Other Virtual Sherpas, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 121-170.

Qureshi, Regula Burckhardt. 1996. "Transcending Space: Recitation and Community among South Asian Muslims in Canada." From Making Muslim Space in North America and Europe, Barbara Metcalf ed., Berkeley: University of California Press, 46-64.

Dusenbery, Verne A. 1988. "Punjabi Sikhs and Gora Sikhs: Conflicting Assertions of Sikh Identity in North America." >From Sikh History and Religion in the Twentieth Century, O'Connell, Joseph et. al, eds., Toronto, 334-355.

Williams, Raymond Brady. 1988. "Swaminarayan Hinduism: an Ethnic Religion." From Religions of Immigrants from India and Pakistan, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 152-185.

Waghorne, Joanne P. Forthcoming. "The Hindu Gods in a Split-Level World: the Sri Siva-Vishnu Temple in Suburban Washington, D. C." From Gods of the City, Robert Orsi, ed., Indiana University Press, 1-17.