

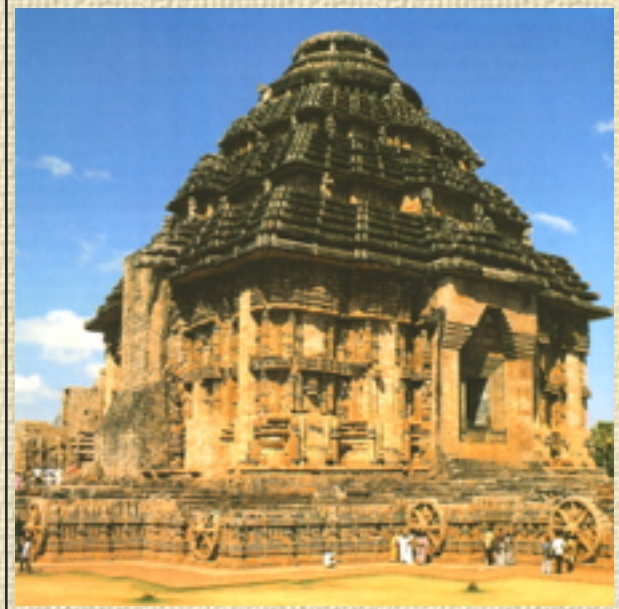
Religion 340: The Hindu Temple

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Washington and Lee University



Temple sites: [Dakshinamnaya Sri Sringeri Sarada Peetham](#) [Mahishamardini Temple, Kadiyali, Udupi](#) [Sri Siva Vishnu Temple, Maryland](#)

Depictions of Hindu worship: [Meeting God: Elements of Hindu Devotion](#) [Ganesh Festival](#) [Ramayana Comic Books](#)

Other Sites of Interest: [Devi: The Great Goddess \(Smithsonian website\)](#)

Topics:

An exploration of temples in Hinduism, their forms and place in the lives of Hindus. The course will have three broad points of focus: (1) the form and symbolism of the temple as sacred space, and meaning of its iconography; (2) modes and occasions of worship, including the functions of priests, possession and faith-healing, religious theater, votive ordeals (firewalking, hook-swinging), and the controversial *devadasis* (temple dancers "married" to the deity); and (3) the temple's place in its city and region, including legends of its foundation, patterns of patronage, association with local kings and castes, and its role in religious education and in politics. Examples will include major temple complexes (Puri, Chidambaram, Madurai) as well as several smaller temples from diverse regions.

Course Format and Requirements:

Class time will be divided between lecture and structured discussion, and will include slides and films. 1. In order to make discussion productive, each student is required to deliver to the teacher (by electronic mail or on paper), at least a half hour before class, a brief set of (a) key ideas discussed in the assigned readings for the day, along with (b) two or three questions or problems the readings raise in the student's mind. These ideas and questions need not be presented in a very formal manner, but they should show some prior reflection, and should go beyond a mere enumeration of details (cumulatively 10% of grade; participation in class discussion can raise the final grade substantially; absence may lower it). Any student may be asked to lead off discussion by offering these thoughts to the class. 2. All students will also make **two 10-minute presentations** to the class that offer not merely an organized synopsis of, but a concrete argument about, a topic drawn from the assigned readings (15% of grade each). 3. Finally, students will write **one paper** (ca. 2000 words, 1st draft: 20% of grade, final draft: 40% of grade). 4. The class will make a **Sunday- evening visit to the [Shantiniketan Temple in Roanoke](#)**; attendance there is required.

Texts:

The following books are available for purchase:

Richard Blurton, *Hindu Art*

C. J. Fuller, *The Camphor Flame*

William P. Harman, *The Sacred Marriage of a Hindu Goddess*
Course Anthology (readings marked with an asterisk)

Schedule of Classes:

Week I: How Hindu Worship Works: Greeting God's Bodies

Tu: Blurton, introduction and chs. 1, 3-5 (Background reading on Hindu gods).

Film: "Hinduism: Elephant God"

Th: C. G. Fuller, *The Camphor Flame*, chs. 2-3.

* Mrs. Sinclair [Margaret] Stevenson, "Shiva Worship" and "Vishnu Worship," in

The Rites of the Twice-Born (chs. XIV and XV) (London: Oxford University Press, 1920), pp. 368-417.

Week II: God's Houses: Classical and Popular Forms

Tu: Blurton, chs. 2.

* John M. Stanley, "The Capitulation of Mani," ch. 10 in *Criminal Gods and Demon Devotees* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), pp. 271-298.

Film: "Loving Krishna"

Th: Blurton, ch. 6.

* George Michell, *The Hindu Temple*, pp. 49-85.

Optional reading: Richard Eaton, "[Temple Desecration in Pre-Modern India](#)" and "[Temple Desecration and Indo-Muslim States](#)" in *Frontline*, 17(25) and 17(26), 2000.

Special Visitor: Dr. William Klingelhofer, Director of International Education, W&L: "Form and Function of the Temple"

Week III: Receiving Divine Favors: Possession, Healing, and Vow Making at the Temple

Tu: Fuller, ch. 10.

* David M. Knipe, "Night of the Growing Dead: A Cult of Virabhadra in Coastal Andhra," ch. 5 in *Criminal Gods and Demon Devotees* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), pp. 123-156.

* Kathleen M. Erndl, "Seranvali: The Mother Who Possesses," in *Devi: Goddesses of India*, ed. J. S. Hawley and D. M. Wulff (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1996), pp. 173-194.

Film: "An Indian Pilgrimage: Ramdevra"

Th: * Alf Hildebeitel, "Timiti, the Firewalk," ch. 14 in *The Cult of Draupadi*, vol. 2: On Hindu Ritual and the Goddess (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 439-475.

* Geoffrey A. Oddie, *Popular Religion, Elites and Reform: Hook-Swinging and Its Prohibition in Colonial India, 1880-1894* (Delhi: Manohar, 1995), pp. 1-41.

Film: "Lady of Ginge: South Indian Draupadi Festivals"



Week IV: Pilgrimage and the Temple-History (Sthala-Purana, Mahatmya)

Tu: Fuller, ch. 9.

* Karve, Irawati, "On the Road: A Maharashtrian Pilgrimage," in Eleanor Zelliot and Maxine Berntsen, eds., *The Experience of Hinduism: Essays on Religion in Maharashtra* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1988 [essay orig. pub. 1955]), pp. 142-173.

* Cynthia Ann Humes, "Vindhyavasini: Local Goddess Yet Great Goddess," in *Devi: Goddesses of India*, ed. J. S. Hawley and D. M. Wulff (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1996), pp. 49-76.

Th: * Paul Younger, *The Home of Dancing Sivan*, Introduction and Chs. 5-6.

Special Visitor: Alexis Bernstein '01: "God-King and Human King in the Royal Temple"

Week V: Case Study I — The Marriage of Minakshi and Sundareshvara at Madurai

Tu: Harman, Chs. 2-4 and Appendix A

Film: "Wedding of the Goddess"

Special Visitor: Shani Lee '01: "Sacred Marriages at Chidambaram and Madurai"

Th: Harman, Chs. 5-6.

Film: "Given to Dance" (to introduce next week's case study)

Week VI: Case Study II — Jagannath, God of Puri, and His Dancing Girls

Tu: * Frédérique Apffel Marglin, *Wives of the God-King: The Rituals of the Devadasis of Puri* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985), Introduction and chs. 1-3 (pp. 1-113).

Special Visitor: Dr. Cynthia Atherton, Professor of Asian Art History, Middlebury College: "The Aesthetics of Devotion to Krishna at Brindavan"

Th: * Marglin, chs. 4-6, and Conclusion (pp. 117-184, 282-303).

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