

Prof. Joseph Molleur
Prall House 101
Jmolleur@cornellcollege.edu
Office Phone: 895-4237

REL. 324: The Hindu Vision

Aim of the Course

The main focus of the course will be the attempt to understand the central components of the Hindu worldview, by a careful reading of some of the tradition's classic texts. This will include a study of such things as creation myths, the vedic gods and goddesses, karma, reincarnation, ways of liberation, the relation of the individual Self to the universal Self, divine descent, dharma, caste, and the place and role of women.

The course will conclude by reading portions of the autobiography of Mohandas K. Gandhi, to give an indication of how the ancient ideas and customs studied earlier in the course have influenced and inspired modern adherents of Hinduism.

Educational Priorities and Outcomes

1. Students will acquire, integrate, and apply knowledge relating to multiple expressions of the Hindu religious tradition.
2. Students will read and analyze challenging texts, speak clearly and listen actively as we discuss those texts, and write essays explaining their understanding and interpretation of those texts.
3. Students will connect with diverse ideas and with people whose experiences differ from their own as we explore how Hinduism has been understood and practiced in India and South Africa over the course of many centuries.
4. Students will respect the ways spiritual well-being may contribute to a balanced life by learning about Hindu practices of meditation and devotion.

This course supports the Educational Priorities and Outcomes of Cornell College with emphases on knowledge, communication, intercultural literacy, and well-being.

Prerequisite

Sophomore standing is prerequisite for this course.

Class Meeting Times

Class meetings will be held on Monday through Friday, from 12:15 to 3:00 PM.

Course Requirements

1. Class Participation (20% of final grade). Regular attendance at class meetings and regular participation in class discussions are expected. Additionally, each student will take a turn at initiating class discussion by identifying, and raising a question about, a passage in the assigned reading that they find particularly interesting. *More than one absence from class will progressively lower this portion of your grade.*
2. Midterm Exam (25%), which will take place on the second Wednesday of the term. The exam will contain short answer and short essay questions.
3. A 5-7 page essay (25%), due on the third Wednesday of the term. *Late essays will not be accepted without*

prior consent of the professor.

4. A Take-Home Final Exam (30%), due by **1:00 PM.** on the fourth Wednesday of the term.

Required Texts

1. Diana L. Eck, *Darshan: Seeing the Divine Image in India.*
2. Wendy Doniger, trans., *The Rig Veda: An Anthology.*
3. Juan Mascaró, trans., *The Upanishads.*
4. Barbara Stoler Miller, trans., *The Bhagavad-Gita: Krishna's Counsel in Time of War.*
5. R. K. Narayan, *The Ramayana.*
6. Mohandas K. Gandhi, *Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth.*

Students with Special Needs

Students who need accommodations for learning disabilities must provide documentation from a professional qualified to diagnose learning disabilities. For more information see cornellcollege.edu/disabilities/documentation/index.shtml. Students requesting services may schedule a meeting with the [disabilities services coordinator](#) as early as possible to discuss their needs and develop an individualized accommodation plan. Ideally, this meeting would take place well before the start of classes. At the beginning of each course, the student must notify the instructor within the first three days of the term of any accommodations needed for the duration of the course.

Academic Honesty

Cornell College expects all members of the Cornell community to act with academic integrity. An important aspect of academic integrity is respecting the work of others. A student is expected to explicitly acknowledge ideas, claims, observations, or data of others, unless generally known. When a piece of work is submitted for credit, a student is asserting that the submission is her or his work unless there is a citation of a specific source. If there is no appropriate acknowledgment of sources, whether intended or not, this may constitute a violation of the College's requirement for honesty in academic work and may be treated as a case of academic dishonesty. The procedures regarding how the College deals with cases of academic dishonesty appear in The Catalogue, under the heading "Academic Honesty."

Course Calendar

Note: The reading assignments listed in this course calendar are to be completed PRIOR to that day's meeting of the class.

WEEK 1

Monday: Getting oriented.

Tuesday: Introducing Hinduism by way of Text, Photography, and Film.
Diana Eck, *Darshan*, 1-75 (also see the pictures on pp. 77-92).
In-class viewing of the film, *Understanding Hindu Traditions*.

Wednesday: *The Rig Veda* on Creation, Sky and Earth, "Realia."
Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, *The Rig Veda*, 11-40, 201-207, 229-243.

Thursday: *The Rig Veda* on Agni, Indra, Varuna, Rudra and Vishnu.
O'Flaherty, 97-110 (110-118 optional), 139-162, 209-227.

Friday: *The Rig Veda* on Goddesses, Women and Incantations.
O'Flaherty, 62-64, 179-181, 199-200, 245-297.

WEEK 2

Monday: Introducing the Upanishads; the Chadogya and Brihad-aranyaka Upanishads.
Juan Mascaró, *The Upanishads*, 7-44, 113-143.

Tuesday: Further Readings from the Upanishads.
Mascaró, 49-112.

Wednesday: MIDTERM EXAM.

Thursday: Beginning *The Bhagavad-Gita*.
(a) Barbara Stoler Miller's Introduction and Glossary.
(b) Miller, Teachings 1-9.

Friday: *The Bhagavad-Gita* Concluded.
Miller, Teachings 10-18.

WEEK 3

Monday: Beginning *The Ramayana*.
R. K. Narayan, *The Ramayana*, Introduction-Chapter 4. (Suggestion: Read further if you have the time.)

Tuesday: *The Ramayana* Concluded.
Narayan, Chapter 5-Epilogue.

Wednesday: ESSAY DUE, AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS.
In-class viewing of portions of the film, *Gandhi*.

Thursday: The Life Story of a Great Soul.
Mohandas Gandhi, *Autobiography*, Introduction; Part I, Chaps. I-XII, XIX-XXI; Part II, Chap. I.

Friday: The Life Story of a Great Soul, Continued.
Gandhi, Part II, Chaps. VI-XVI, XXI-XXVII; Part III, Chap. I.

WEEK 4

Monday: The Life Story of a Great Soul, Concluded.
Gandhi, Part III, Chaps. VII-VIII, XIII, XVIII, XX, XXIII; Part IV, Chaps. V, IX-X, XXV-XXVI, XXX-XXXI, XXXIV, XXXVIII-XXXIX; Part V, Chaps. VII-X, XX-XXI; "Farewell."

Tuesday: No class--work on take-home final.

Wednesday: TAKE-HOME FINAL DUE BY 1:00 PM.

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