**REL 300.2 Yoga?**

*MW 5:15 to 6:35 Shaffer Art Building 221D*

Joanne Punzo Waghorne, Professor of Religion (B.A. Religion, Wilson College, MA/Ph.D. History of Religions, South Asian Studies, Divinity School University of Chicago)

**Current interests:** Rise of spiritual movements in contemporary Asia; globalization and urbanization, contemporary theory in the study of religion, contemporary Hinduism.

Office hours: HL 521 (In the central staircase)

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**Teaching Associate:** Daniel Moseson (M.A. in Religion, Syracuse University, 2011; B.A., Religion/ Political Science, Montclair State University, 2009.)

**Interests:** religious communities’ investment in science; scientists’ investment in religion and spirituality, and theory and method in the study of religion.”

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**Description:**
What is yoga? Often those in yogic practices declare that yoga is not associated with “religion” but rather either “spiritual” or totally “secular.” This course will consider contemporary yoga now, in the context of its origins in India paying close attention to the ways the human body and the larger cosmos intertwined. The practice of yoga always concerned the re-formation of both mind and body—and included a broad understanding of health—but in what sense? Here the newer work in cognitive studies, contemplative studies (sometimes called Mindfulness or Wisdom research) will be important.

**Issues:**

1. **Who owns Yoga?**

   Although yoga appears everywhere now in almost every form, questions linger as do sharp critiques. I have seen Yin Yoga based on a melding of Chinese and Indian practices, now books on Christian Yoga appear like the popular *Holy Yoga*. And, many different schools of Indian forms claiming authenticity are everywhere. Recently the American Hindu Foundation launched a Take Back Yoga movement, which attracted the attention of the *New York Times*,

   “The question at the core of the debate—who owns yoga?—has become an enduring topic of chatter in yoga Web forums, Hindu American newspapers and journals catering to the many consumers of what is now a multibillion-dollar yoga industry” (November 27, 2010).

The question of “ownership” moves yoga into economics, religious identity, and politics but also historical research.
2. How do we “study” yoga? — A Difficult Balance

Recently a movement with many facets has emerged called Contemplative Studies/contemplative pedagogy or Mindfulness. Every month I receive a newsletter on Wisdom Research at The University of Chicago with reports like “Mindfulness research - Where are we here and now?” Interestingly most of the excitement seems to be located in psychology, especially clinical and counseling, in education, and medical schools, with much less input and enthusiasm from religious studies departments.

Today many yoga instructors and popular gurus, argue that yoga is rooted in experience not rational learning, yet yoga has a long history within religious texts including the famous Yoga Sūtra of Patañjali. A sūtra (शूत्र, Sanskrit) is defined in the dictionary (Monier-Williams 1899) at the side. What do you notice?

Clearly yoga has a long tradition of study as well as practice. Yet somehow the experiential cannot be divorced from this mode of knowing and learning nor can history and texts and critical thinking be ignored.

3. Is there a “traditional” yoga and how do we understand all of the manifestations in the past and the present?

Recently the Sackler Gallery at the Smithsonian mounted an amazing art collection depicting or related to yoga, YOGA: THE ART OF TRANSFORMATION, October 19, 2013–January 26, 2014. The website affirms the early complexity and diversity of yoga:

“Through masterpieces of Indian sculpture and painting, Yoga: The Art of Transformation explores yoga’s rich diversity and historical transformations, including its philosophies, transformational goals, and importance within multiple religions. The exhibition also examines the varied roles that yogis and yoginis played in society, from sages to spies” (http://www.asia.si.edu/exhibitions/past.asp)

The painting here depicts the great Mughal Emperor Jahangir, a Muslim, conferring with a famous yogi (ca1620). Yoga has already passed into the larger religious world at the time that Boston was settled—and likely much earlier.

Course Policies
Please Read Carefully now!

- Attendance is required at all class sessions. I can allow only 2 unexcused absences total. Please plan your schedule to allow for religious holidays within this allowance. Because this is a MW class, those on sports teams should not be affected. However if you take any class days for sports events (with proper documentation),
then I can allow NO unexcused absences in addition to your sports commitments.

- An excused absence means that you have emailed both the TA and myself and received approval for absences in advance due to special circumstances. Please if you speak to me in class--confirm any conversation with an email. In case of illness, you must talk to afterwards. The policy of the Health services is to provide a note only when the student has been advised to miss classes.

- Common Courtesy: (I should not have to mention these points but sad experience makes this necessary.) The class begins at 5:15. Please be on time; walking in late shows little respect for your fellow student or for me. If you have a tight connection between classes let us know and we can seat you accordingly. All cell phones are to be turned entirely off including text messaging and all I-pods shut down. I have also decided to exclude computers from the class-- new research has shown that taking notes in class by using paper and pen or pencil is the most effective way of learning! AND contemplative studies seem at odd with a constant barrage of digital chatter.

- Academic Integrity: I expect the work you present to be totally your own with all sources, which you have used, fully acknowledged. I will provide full instructions as to citation and form. Both the TA and I are willing to help you if you have any doubts. If we find any evidence of academic dishonesty of any kind, I will report the incident to the Academic Integrity Office. The sanctions will include lowered your grade, or result in failure for the entire course depended on the severity. Please check http://academicintegrity.syr.edu for more information.

- Disability Policy: Any students that need accommodation because of disability should discuss it with the professor during office hours or by appointment and be prepared to provide documentation to the Office of Disability Services (ext. 4498 or 1371)

- Paper Deadlines: There are no extensions on papers.

Requirements:
1. Not simply attendance, but also active reading, listening, and participation in class. This is important as the class is new and we are building a syllabus and a new course together.

2. Because of the materials, requirements will be papers/projects rather than exams, I will occasional give a short quiz on the reading. The major requirements are 4 short papers during the term and a field research project at the end with an oral presentation in groups and individual final papers.

3. On the fieldwork projects: The final project will ask you to work in groups on a contemporary yoga movements in Syracuse or if you have accesses—in any city.

Evaluation:
4 papers @10 points each  40 points
Classroom participation and work
Including quizzes  30 points
Oral presentation of research project  10 points
Final paper  20 points

Required books:
Both books have a Kindle Edition, which is less expensive but have problems (they cannot be copied and are less portable).

Plus readings on Blackboard
Topics
- Who “owns” yoga?
- What is included in yoga?
  - What are the major terms and schools?
- What is the history of yoga within the Hindu tradition?
  - What is the difference between mediation and postural yoga?
- What are Contemplative studies, Wisdom research, and
Mindfulness studies?
  ○ How did this movement start: why and where?
  ○ How has experimental science changed the public perceptions of yoga?
  ○ What is the current state of such research?

History of the introduction of yoga into America
Reemergence of yoga in contemporary Asia
Contemporary yoga movements, global and local

ROLLING SCHEDULE:

Week 01. Aug 25 (What is Yoga?) Aug 27 (Brief history of yoga in early India)

Week 02. Sept 1 (holiday), Sept 3: The History of Yoga and other controversies
Reading:
  Re-read “The History of Yoga” pp. xvii-xliii) Course book
Debate in Open Magazine on the ORIGINS OF YOGA (On BLACKBOARD)
New York Times article on the debate (On BLACKBOARD)

Part One: Getting to the cases—looking an example of contemporary “yoga” movements through biographies/autobiographies of the founders along with academic discussions:

Week 03. Sept 8, 10: Paramahansa Yogananda, The Autobiography of a Yogi, and the Self-Realization Fellowship Reading:
  “Self-Realization Fellowship” pp. 55-79 On BLACKBOARD)
  Sept 10: finish The Autobiography of a Yogi
  Plus videos
    Marc Benioff on the Invisible Hand of Steve Jobs | Disrupt SF 2013 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4rO_Vs4M29k
    (1a) My 1947 encounter with Paramahansa Yogananda
    https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZCDQFgPuDlc

PAPER ONE DUE: SEPTEMBER 15 ON BLACKBOARD BY 4:30 pm (I will provide the topic by Monday Sept 8—the paper is short- 600-900 words (between 2-3 pages 12 point Times Roman).
Week 04. Sept. 15, 17: Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev and Inner-Engineering
Jaggi Vasudev (called Sadhguru) founded ISHA YOGA in 1992 so it is very recent. In the last decades the movement has become global and now has “Ishas” in China. Some of Sadhguru’s programs are designed for business groups and he frequently works with prominent CEOs in India.

Reading on Blackboard: (for Sept 17)
Arundhati Subramaniam, *Sadhguru: More than a Life*, 17-100

Plus Websites, DVD, and instructions for kriya—we can try it! Recently ISHA Yoga changed its rules and developed a simply Kriya for online and then another that is taught only by an official “Teacher.” The more complex and still secret kriyas are Shambhavi Mahamudra and Shakti Chalana Kriya

Isha Kriya Introduction by Sadhguru
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=corag9r97rA

Week 05. Sept. 22, 24: Yoga as Posture Practice (Yoga and Exercise)
This week will return to the more usual form of yoga practiced in the USA and Europe, which emphasizes the asanas or the poses/postures. In India, this is hatha yoga not the meditation-centered yoga of Yogananda or even Jaggi Vasudev. The reading is from Mark Singleton and I will introduce B.K.S. Iyengar, whose *Light on Yoga*, Singleton calls, “the most influential do-it-yourself yoga books of all times” and the context in India that began to emphasize physical strength after Independence and the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi.

Reading: Singleton, *Yoga Body*, chapter 2, “Fakirs, Yogins, Europeans” and chapter 6, “Yoga as Physical Culture I: Strength and Vigor.

INTERLUDE: READING PATANJALI

Week 06. Sept. 29, Oct. 1 (Oct 4 - Yom Kippur /Oct 4 - Eid-ul-Adha

PART TWO: ENTER SCIENCE AND MINDFULNESS, CONTEMPLATIVE STUDIES AND WISDOM RESEARCH

Week 07. Oct 6, 18


Week 09. Oct 20, 22 (Oct 23 – Diwali)

Week 10. Oct 27, 29

Week 11. Nov. 3, 5

Week 12. Nov 10, 12: Field Research week

Week 13. Nov 17, 19: Reemergence of yoga in contemporary Asia (my own fieldwork)
THANKSGIVING Nov. 24-29

Week 14: Dec 1, 3: Oral presentations (30 minutes)

FINAL PAPER DUE: December 8 at 5:00 pm (this is the date scheduled for the course final)