

## HINDUISM

Religion 185 Spring 2009  
TTh 2:00 pm - 3:20 pm HL 214

Instructor: Ann Grodzins Gold office: HL 507 voice mail: x-5717; dept.: x-3861  
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### Aims, scope, methods

This course introduces Hindu traditions and practices. Our strategy is to move between cosmological, theological and philosophical understandings, and the ways these motivate ordinary and extraordinary human lives. We see these understandings expressed through myth and moral teachings, storytelling and poetry, ritual and devotion. Thus our syllabus materials include some classic texts and teachings of ancient Indian civilization and more recent poetry, tales and ethnographic descriptions. Throughout the course we remain interested in contemporary Indian society where Hinduism's many streams of thought have ongoing significance.

### Textbooks

The following six books, most of which are small and slim, contain required readings and are available for purchase at both the University and Orange bookstores. They have also been placed on two-hour reserve in Bird library.

Dharwadker, Vinay, transl. *Kabir: The Weaver's Songs*. Penguin Classics.

Grewal, Royina. *The Book of Ganesha*. Penguin Global.

Johari, Harish *The Monkeys and the Mango Tree: Teaching Stories of the Saints and Sadhus of India*. Inner Traditions.

Knott, Kim. *Hinduism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press (2nd edition, 2000).

Miller, Barbara Stoller, transl. *The Bhagavad Gita: Krishna's Counsel in Time of War*. Bantam.

Narayan, R.K. *The Ramayana: A Shortened Modern Prose Version of the Indian Epic*. Penguin Classics.

Other required readings, listed below, should be available through Blackboard on the **merged** course site: [REL/SAS.185.MERGED.SPRING09.HINDUISM \(40915.1092C\)](#)

Gold, "Practical Hinduism" from [Britannica online](#) [electronic resource]

Gold, "Death at a Ripe Old Age" from *Fruitful Journeys*

Bahadur, "Divali" and Marriott, "Holi" from *The Life of Hinduism*

Olivelle, Patrick, transl. 1996. *Upanisads*. Oxford University Press. (*Brihadaranyaka Upanisad*, Chapter 3, pp. 34-52 + notes; *Chandogya Upanisad*, Chapter 6, pp. 148-156 + notes; *Mundaka Upanisad*, pp. 266-277 + notes)

*None of these items are bulky or heavy: please make a habit of bringing with you to class any given day's syllabus readings*

## *Success / Requirements*

First and above all: **KEEP UP WITH THE READINGS! EVERYTHING THAT FOLLOWS DEPENDS ON THIS.** Some weeks the readings are very light; others not so light. Please keep in mind that this balances out over the semester.

Second, and almost equally important: **Be prepared sometimes to feel confused.** As is the case when studying any religion, outsiders may see Hinduism as filled with beauty, but also with things they find difficult to understand; to insiders, these same things may be evidently how the world makes sense. Because the academic study of a religion is very different from participation in a religion, the course may raise different kinds of complicated questions for both insiders and outsiders.

Gargi, possibly Hinduism's earliest female philosopher, probes deeply into the nature of reality. Yajnavalkya admonishes her, "Don't ask too many questions, Gargi, or your head will shatter apart!" In this course, asking questions -- of the instructor, the readings, one another, and oneself -- is encouraged as part of the learning process; a shattered head is a necessary risk, as Gargi knows. Just remember that all answers are bound to be imperfect.

Course requirements intentionally provide a variety of tasks, tapping different kinds of skills. Participation reflects responsibility and thoughtfulness. *Response papers* -- although handed in and graded -- allow you to write informally what you are thinking about the readings, almost as if you were talking. *Essays* help you to focus on specific subjects in greater depth and to practice polished writing skills. With *quizzes* both students and instructor keep tabs on how well specific, limited items of information which are essential to grasp broader course material have been assimilated. All your work is normally based *only* on required readings, lectures, discussions, and media presentations.

### **I. Prepared participation (see note that follows)**

faithful attendance		
5 informal 1-2 page response papers (@ 5 points)	25%	
contributions, including at least one prearranged turn at raising discussion questions	15%	
		total 40%

### **II. Essays**

Topic 1 (3-4 pages)	20%	
Topic 2 (5-6 pages)	25%	
		total 45%

### **III. Quizzes**

2 vocabulary and fact quizzes (1 @ 7 points, 1 @ 8 points)	15%	total 15%
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### *\*Extra credit potential*

*5 % max*

Opportunities may arise during the semester to write responses to outside events -- lectures, concerts or religious functions -- that enhance your knowledge of Hinduism, or your understanding of Indian culture. These will be announced as they come along. I expect to organize an optional field trip to one of the Hindu Temples in Syracuse. Coordinating discussion groups is rewarded with one point.

### *More about participation*

This is a lecture / discussion class. Although certain days are designated *discussion* (and you should arrive with your thoughts well in order), the 80-minute time-slot allows ample opportunity for questions and comments every meeting.

There are seven dedicated discussion days; on five of these (numbered 2 - 6), we will have student groups leading discussion. Part of your participation requirement is to take at least one turn to prepare questions and bring these to class on one of these days, when you will help to lead class discussion on the assigned materials. There will be advance sign-up sheets for this. Your responsibility is not to summarize or present the readings, but rather to **open discussion**. You are welcome to use creative strategies (role-playing, reading aloud, debate, focus groups, storytelling, or anything you can think of) to do this. Depending on enrollment, each discussion session should have between 8 - 10 students acting as discussion leaders; each group requires one volunteer to coordinate tasks. Larger groups may choose to divide topics and split in two.

While 25% of participation is based on written response papers, 15% is assessed on the basis of presence and preparation. Everyone starts with 12 out of 15 points (B+). This is maintained through coming to class regularly, and a responsible performance on your discussion leader turn. Better than good attendance, excellence in discussion contributions, or other evident efforts can raise this grade; negligence such as a no-show on your discussion leader turn day will lower it.

Beginning Tuesday, January 20, we will do our best to keep an accurate written record of student attendance. Each class member is allowed 2 "no fault" unexcused absences. For each additional absence your participation points will drop by 2. It is your responsibility to sign the sheet!

Note: The only excused absences are documented medical and family emergencies; religious holidays by prearrangement; and -- for participants in athletic programs -- prearranged events.

Important advice: Students missing class for any reason are themselves responsible for finding out what they missed, turning in their work, and obtaining assignments. Contact instructor or TA by email, or check with the Department of Religion secretary in 501 HL.

**Late work is bad for you and bad for us.** Any written work that is one class late will lose a full letter grade (one point off on the 5-point response papers; 3 points off on the essays). **Absolutely no** response papers will be accepted beyond one class late. *No matter what your accumulated points, you cannot pass this course without completing the required assignments.*

<u>Week/Date</u>	<u>Topic/Readings</u>
	<i>approaching the study of Hinduism</i>
1	Tu 1/13      introductory session
	Th 1/15      overviews, historical and conceptual <u>Read:</u> Knott, Preface and Ch. 1 • hand-out for RP 1 •
2	Tu 1/20      Vedic ritual and its legacies <u>Read:</u> Knott, Ch. 2 <b>videos:</b> selections from <i>Altar of Fire</i> and <i>Tulsidas and the Fire of the Vedas</i>
	Th 1/22      issues of insider/outsider and scholar/devotee <i>discussion 1</i> <u>Read:</u> hand-out material; review Knott •• RP 1 due •• <u>sign up</u> for discussion leader, sessions 2-3-4

*ultimate reality and the self; the aims of moral duty (dharma) and liberation (moksha)*

- 3 Tu 1/27 the end of the Vedas: Upanisadic thought  
Read: Knott, Ch. 3; *Upanisads* (3 selections) **access via Blackboard course documents**  
• hand-out for RP 2 •
- Th 1/29 *Varnashrama dharma* (morality according to caste and life stage)  
and the four human aims  
Read: Knott, Chs. 4-5, & review pp.16-20; Johari, *Saint and Scorpion*, 57-58
- 4 Tu 2/3 life, the universe and everything  
*discussion 2 (student-led)*  
Read: same as previous week + Johari, *The Butter in the Milk*, 29-30  
•• RP 2 due ••  
*lila the play of the gods*
- Th 2/5 Introducing deities and their worship; Ganesha, and the mythology of Shiva  
Read: Grewal, 1-54; Johari, *Shiva and the Demon*, 121-124  
**video:** Puja (15 minutes)  
• topics for essay 1 distributed •
- 5 Tu 2/10 The Devi as mother, consort and warrior  
Read: Grewal, 57-98 (101-146 optional)  
**video:** Elephant God (19 minutes)
- Th 2/12 Vishnu and his avatars; introducing *Ramayana*  
Read: Narayan, Introduction & 1-61; review Knott, 38-43
- 6 Tu 2/17 Ram's divine story: adventures, lessons, battles and morals  
Read: Narayan, 62-105  
**video** clips from animated *Ramayana* (about 30 minutes)
- Th 2/19 Ram's divine being: religious, social and performative lives of a text;  
darshan and durdarshan  
**video** clips from the TV *Ramayana* (about 30 minutes)  
Read: Narayan, finish
- 7 Tu 2/24 Mythic characters and human lives  
*discussion 3 (student-led)*  
•• essay 1 due in class ••  
*the Bhagavad Gita's teachings*
- Th 2/26 Krishna and the *Gita*  
Read: *Bhagavad Gita*, Introduction pp. 1-13; text, pp. 21-61  
• hand-out for RP 3 •
- 8 Tu 3/3 *Gita* in the *Mahabharata*  
Read: *Bhagavad Gita*, pp. 62-87  
•• Quiz # 1: 15 minutes ••  
• sign up for discussion leader, sessions 5-6 •

- Th 3/5            *Gita*: meanings, messages, uses  
Read: *Bhagavad Gita*, pp. 89-141  
**video** clip from the TV *Mahabharata* (about 20 minutes)
- 9            **SPRING BREAK** *Happy Holi*
- 10          Tu 3/17            the Yogas of Knowledge, Action, Devotion  
Read: review *Gita* + Knott, 32-37  
*discussion 4 (student-led)*  
•• RP 3 due ••
- bhakti and sannyasa: devotion and renunciation in the lives of saints and ordinary people*
- Th 3/19            devotion to the Lord with and without qualities  
Read: Dharwadker, intro, 1-25 + poems, 101-130  
• hand out for RP 4 •
- 11          Tu 3/24            Kabir: the languages of devotion  
Read: Dharwadker, intro 58-95 + poems, 133-153  
**guests in classroom!**
- Tuesday March 24 at 7 pm in Stolkin Auditorium, Physics Building*  
***Kabir Singers Live in Concert at SU: do everything humanly possible to attend!***
- Th 3/26            *bhakti* as resistance to class and gender hierarchies  
Read: Dharwadker, poems, 157-208 + Knott, Ch. 7
- 12          Tu 3/31            *sannyasa* -- renunciation and its meanings; stories about holy persons  
Read: Johari, Sweeper, 19-24; Merchant, 33-38; Shankara, 41-43; Dhapli Baba, 61-63; Guru & King, 69-73; Difficult Job, 79-84, Merchant who would not, 87-90; Wish-fulfilling cow, 101-107; Narada and the Crazy Saint, 127-132
- Th 4/2            Kabir says: "Listen!": religious teachings transmitted through song and story  
•• RP 4 due ••  
*discussion 5 (student-led)*
- rituals, festivals, pilgrimage: special times and special places*
- 13          Tu 4/7            life cycles, life cycle rituals, pilgrimage and sacred sites  
Read: Gold, "Practical"; Gold, "Death . . ." **access via Blackboard course documents**  
• hand-out for RP 5 •
- Th 4/9            festivals in time and space; Holi in Kishan Garhi and Ghatiyali  
Read: Bahadur, Marriott **access via Blackboard course documents**
- 14          Tu 4/14            Holi in Varanasi  
**video**: Holi Hey (54 minutes)  
•• Quiz #2 (15 minutes) ••
- Th 4/16            Living religion: Hinduism in practice  
*discussion 6 (student-led)*  
•• RP 5 due ••
- 15          Tu 4/21            **MAYFEST NO CLASSES**

- Th 4/23      Some modern Hinduisms: "Neo" "Virtual" "Diaspora" . . . .  
                  Read: Knott, Ch. 6, 8 & 9  
                  *discussion 7* (begins at 2:30) Living Hinduism on the world wide web  
                  ***every student should visit one or more of the suggested web sites and come to class  
                  prepared to tell about what they learned***  
                  • topics distributed for essay 2•
- 16      Tu 4/28      concluding comments + evaluations + food + your questions on essay 2

There is no final exam for REL / SAS 185. On the date of our class's scheduled final exam, your **essay 2** is due at noon in 501 Hall of Languages.

### ***Learning Outcomes***

*In keeping with University-wide concerns to assess learning outcomes in undergraduate courses, the religion department advises all students of the following goals. You will learn:*

- to understand better what we mean by "religion" and to think more critically about the subject;*
- to become more aware of a diversity of perspectives within the study of religion;*
- to know and understand better diverse manifestations of religion within human cultures and societies, and be able to describe and interpret them.*

*Your grades in this course, based on written and classroom performance, will reflect your achievement of these goals, at the broadest level.*

#### ***IMPORTANT NOTICES REGARDING DISABILITY, INTEGRITY AND COURTESY: PLEASE READ CAREFULLY***

*disability* Students who are in need of disability-related academic accommodations must register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), 804 University Avenue, Room 309, 315-443-4498. Students with authorized disability-related accommodations should provide a current Accommodation Authorization Letter from ODS to the instructor and review those accommodations with the instructor. Accommodations, such as exam administration, are not provided retroactively; therefore, planning for accommodations as early as possible is necessary. For further information, see the Office of Disability Services website, <http://disabilityservices.syr.edu>

*academic integrity* The Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the Policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. The policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments as well as the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verifications of participation in class activities. Serious sanctions can result from academic dishonesty of any sort. For more information and the complete policy, see <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu/> Students in REL/SAS 185 found violating academic integrity in any aspect of their class work will receive the grade F for that assignment. Students have a right to appeal.

*academic courtesy* All students are expected to follow simple rules of academic courtesy to fellow students and instructors. Please come to class on time to avoid disrupting the class. Once class begins, you must refrain from personal conversations. You must put away all non-course reading materials (e.g. newspapers). Turn off and put away all cell phones and MP3 players. Refrain from using computers for any non-course related activities. Please avoid premature preparations to leave class; your instructor will let you know when class is over. Eating is not allowed during class. You may be asked to leave the class for the day if you do not follow these rules.