

RSOC 85 Hinduism

Winter 2009

TR 11:50AM - 1:35PM

O'Connor 107

Instructor: Dr. David Gray
Office: Kenna Hall 300F
Phone: x4343
email: dgray@scu.edu
Office Hours: Wed., Thurs. 10:00-11:30 AM

This course will explore the development and of Hinduism in South Asia, and will explore the diversity of Hindu experience in India, as well as its dissemination to North America with the Indian diaspora. We will study a range of written sources, beginning with pivotal texts of Vedic literature from the early period of the development of Hinduism, reading works from the *Rig Veda* and *Upanishads*. We will also study sources from the classical period, namely, excerpts from the great epic *Mahabharata* and the *Bhagavad Gita*, a work considered by many to be the “bible” of Hinduism. We will also read songs from the saints of medieval India. In addition to these primary texts, we will also examine key issues in classical Hindu theology, as well as the phenomenon of female gurus teaching in India and North America. We will conclude with a study of one of the 20th century’s greatest figures, Mahatma Gandhi, and will explore the degree to which religion impacted the development of his political thought and action.

COURSE GOALS:

1. Gain a basic understanding of Hinduism, including its history and major teachings & practices.
2. Develop the ability to critically evaluate religious media (scripture, films, etc.)
3. Develop the ability to develop and coherently express an argument in writing.

ASSESSMENT & GRADING:

Midterms (25% each, 50% total)

In order to evaluate students’ understanding of Hinduism, there will be two in class exams, with short identifications and an essay, which will cover the material we cover in class. Study guides will be provided in advance to assist students in the identification of key concepts that they will need to master.

Short Papers (20% each, 40% total)

Students will be expected to further show their understanding of the material, and their mastery of basic methodologies in religious studies (such as religious history and theology) by composing two short papers (3-5 pages in length) that will explore various aspects of Hindu religious experience.

Class Participation (10%)

Students will be expected to regularly attend class, critically read the class texts, and participate in class discussions. Participation in class discussions centering on course readings and the films shown in class will be measured. Absences will be excused if the instructor is notified in advance, and a good reason is given for the absence. Students will also be expected to make up any missed work.

POLICIES:

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism or academic dishonesty in any form (as described in the Student Conduct Code) will result in a failed grade for the project, and possibly for the course. All allegations of academic dishonesty will be reported to the department chair and Office of Student Life. For a full presentation of University policies concerning plagiarism, see:

<http://www.scu.edu/studentlife/resources/academicintegrity/>

In order to avoid the sanctions applied to cases of academic dishonesty, please make sure that you properly cite all sources that you utilize in your writing, including works that are directly quoted or paraphrased, as well as works used as a source of information. This includes both print and online sources. While you are encouraged to work with other students in preparing for class discussions, and are welcome to seek the feedback on your paper drafts from the instructor or your peers, your paper submissions must consist of your own writing, and any direct quotations or paraphrasing from other works must be properly cited.

Disability Accommodations:

To request academic accommodations for a disability, students must contact Disability Resources in the Drahnann Center in Benson, room 214, 408-554-4111, TTY 408-554-5445. Students must provide documentation from Disability Resources prior to receiving accommodations.

ASSIGNMENTS

Papers and group presentations are due in class on the day that they are listed on the syllabus, and exams taken on the day they are given, or they will be considered late. Late work will be penalized unless the instructor granted an extension in advance (i.e., at least 24 hours prior to the due date). I will accept all written submissions in either paper “hardcopy” format or as MSWord document email attachments. All documents should be double-spaced with at least 1” margins, in an easily readable 12 pt font. Emailed papers must be in my inbox by the beginning of class on the day they are due; I will send a confirmation email once I have successfully opened the attachment. **IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO MAKE SURE THAT EMAILED PAPERS ARE RECEIVED BY ME.** If you do not receive a confirmation email within 24 hours please inform me. Emailed papers will be returned with comments via email once they are graded. The class texts are available both at the bookstore and on reserve.

Grading Scale

94.0–100	A	87.0–89.9	B+	77.0–79.9	C+	67.0–69.9	D+
90.0–93.9	A-	83.0–86.9	B	73.0–76.9	C	63.0–66.9	D
		80.0–82.9	B-	70.0–72.9	C-	60.0–62.9	D-

Class Texts (Required: available for purchase and on reserve):

- HPP** Axel Michaels, *Hinduism: Past and Present* (Princeton UP 2003)
- HS** Dominic Goodall, *Hindu Scriptures* (UC Press 1996)
- SSI** John S. Hawley and Mark Juergensmeyer, *Songs of the Saints of India* (Oxford UP 2008)
Diana Eck, *Darshan: Seeing the Divine Image in Indian* (Columbia UP 1998)
- GG** Karen Pechilis, *The Graceful Guru: Hindu Female Gurus in India and the United States* (OUP 2004)
Louis Fischer, *Gandhi: His Life and Message for the World* (Mentor 1982)

COURSE OUTLINE:

Introductions

Tues. 1/6 During the first class we will engage in the usual introductory rituals, and will discuss the significance of India and Hinduism in the past and contemporary time periods.

1. Ancient Hinduism

Thurs. 1/8 **Hinduism: Overview and Prehistoric India**

We will begin our study of Hinduism with an overview of the subject itself. We will attempt to define the religion, and hence the scope of the class. We will begin with an overview of the ancient, prehistoric background to the tradition.

•HPP 3-32

Tues. 1/13 **Vedic Hinduism**

We will explore the Vedic tradition of ancient India, which characterized the “mainstream” of early Hindu belief and practice.

•HPP 33-36, 50-57, 246-252, 296-298

Thurs. 1/15 **Discussion: The Ṛg Veda and Atharva Veda**

We will read and discuss excerpts from the Vedas, one of the world’s oldest bodies of literature, and the foundational early Hindu scripture.

•HS 3-37

Tues. 1/20 **Ideal Visions of Society**

We will examine key Indian ideas regarding the individual and her or his roles in society, as well as the rules and moral obligations that govern social life as envisioned by Hindu thinkers.

•HPP 71-124, 159-200 (skim)

Thurs. 1/22 **Early Hindu Mystical Philosophy: The Upaniṣads**

We will examine the development of the Hindu tradition, as influential religious thinkers turn away from the external practice of ritual, and toward the contemplation of the self and its relation to the divine.

•HPP 259-264

Discussion: The Upaniṣads

•HS 41-202

2. Classical Hinduism

Tues. 1/27 **Samkhya and Yoga**

We will explore two influential Hindu schools of thought and practice regarding the possibility of attaining *mokṣa*, liberation from cyclic existence.

•HPP 36-38, 154-158, 264-272, 315-340

Film: “Origins of Yoga”

Suggested Topics for Paper #1 distributed

- Thurs. 1/29 **Yogīs and Liberation**
 We will watch a documentary on the tradition of yoga as practiced in a traditional Indian context.
 •Paula Fouce, “Origins of Yoga” (2005, 50 min.)
- Tues. 2/3 **The Bhagavad Gīta: Background**
 During this class we will explore one of the most influential Hindu scriptures, the “Song of the Lord,” as well as its impact on the development of Hindu theology.
 •HPP 38-43,58-62, 201-215, 340-344
Paper #1 Due
- Thurs. 2/5 **Discussion: The Bhagavad Gīta**
 We will read and discuss in small groups chapters from this major work of religious literature.
 •HS 205-292
- Tues. 2/10 **Midterm #1** (in class)
- Thurs. 2/12 **The Path of Devotion**
 We will explore the rise of the *bhakti* devotional movement in medieval India.
 •HPP 252-259
 •SSI 3-7
- Tues. 2/17 **Discussion: Songs of the Saints of India**
 We will discuss the lives of the medieval North Indian saints, and the popular devotional songs attributed to them.
 •Hawley and Juergensmeyer, *Songs of the Saints of India*, 9-173
- Thurs. 2/19 **Śaivism and Tantrism**
 We will discuss the history of the Śaiva tradition of Hinduism, as well as one of its major contributions to Hindu practice, the Tantric tradition of ritual and meditation.
 •HPP 215-226
Discussion: Kiraṇa Tantra chs. 1-7
 We will discuss an excerpt from an important medieval Śaiva text
 •HS 341-369
3.
 Tues. 2/24 **Contemporary Hinduism**
Puja: Worship in the Home or Temple
 In order to better understand the significance of Hindu iconography and the use of icons in Hindu worship, we will read and discuss a work exploring these themes in the context of the city of Varanasi, a sacred Hindu pilgrimage center.
 •HPP 226-236, 241-252
 •Diana Eck, *Darśan*, 3-75 (skim)

- Thurs. 2/26 **Authority in Contemporary Hinduism: The Figure of the Guru**
 We will explore one of the central facets of contemporary Hindu practice, the figure of the guru, the enlightened spiritual master who serves as a spiritual guide for the community. We will examine the figure of the guru in the classical and contemporary traditions, and will also explore the status of women in Hinduism.
 •HPP 124-131
Discussion: *The Graceful Guru*
 •GG 3-36, selected chapters
- Tues 3/3 **The Guru Tradition: *Darshan: The Embrace***
 We will watch the film “Darshan: The Embrace,” a documentary focusing on Mata Amritanandamayi Devi, a South Indian guru widely known as ‘Amma” or “Ammachi.”
 • Jan Kounen, “Darshan: The Embrace” (2005 90 minutes)
Suggested final paper topics distributed
- Thurs. 3/5 **Hinduism and Politics**
 We will explore the impact of Hinduism on the development of the contemporary state of India. We will explore the nationalism movement, Gandhi and his *Satyāgraha* movement, and the roles of Hinduism in contemporary Indian society.
- Tues. 3/10 **Discussion: Gandhi**
 We will discuss, in small groups, Louis Fischer’s autobiography of Mahātmā Gandhi.
 • **Louis Fischer, *Gandhi***
- Thurs. 3/12 **Midterm #2 (in class)**
Final paper due Thurs. March 19 by 4 PM

Exam week (optional): If class members are interested, we can arrange a viewing of the 1982 documentary *Gandhi* during our allotted exam time. This would be totally optional, and would not in any way affect the grade for the class.