

Winter 2010

RSOC 85 Hinduism
TR 9:55 AM - 11:40 AM

Kenna Hall 214

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Office Hours: Fri. 9-11:45 AM or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course, which fulfills the RTC 2 requirement for the core curriculum, will survey the history of the development and of Hinduism in South Asia and in diaspora in North America. We will explore in depth distinctively Hindu spiritual practices, such as yoga and puja, and the beliefs concerning the nature of the self and the nature of the divine that underlie them. The course will employ, and students will be expected to gain a basic level of mastery in, several methodological approaches. These approaches include the theological; we will seek to understand key Hindu teachings and practices as understood by Hindus themselves. We will do so through critical engagement with a wide variety of primary source texts, ranging from Vedic hymns, the key theological texts such as the *Upanishads* and *Bhagavad Gita*. We will also utilize religious historical methodologies, in order to heighten our understanding of how Hindu traditions have changed through time. Here our sources will involve an historical introduction to the religion, a collection of essays on contemporary female gurus in India and North America, and a biography of one of the 20th century's greatest figures, Mahatma Gandhi. Lastly, we will also employ the art historical approach as we explore the central importance of religious art and iconography in Hindu religious practice. Our understanding of both the religious history and theology of Hinduism will be enhanced by viewing several short documentaries that focus on the contemporary practice of Hinduism.

COURSE GOALS

1. Students will gain a basic appreciation of Hinduism, with understanding of both its history and key teachings and practices, as well as the art-historical dimensions of the tradition.
2. Students will be expected to gain the ability to apply multiple methodological approaches to the study of Hinduism.
3. Students will gain an appreciation for the contemporary practice of Hinduism in the modern world.

DEPARTMENT GOALS

1. Students will master a coherent body of material in order to broaden and deepen the "database" that students use to think about religions, religious issues, and all the possible interdisciplinary connections.
2. Students will master a discrete body of material in its own terms, to draw on this new knowledge in addressing issues framed by other disciplines, and to be alert to the way knowledge is organized and appropriated.

The Religious Studies departmental learning goals are embedded in the course goals.

CORE CURRICULUM LEARNING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

This course fulfills Santa Clara's Core Requirement Religion, Theology, and Culture 2.

Core Learning Goals: Habits of Mind and Heart: Complexity, Critical Thinking, Religious Reflection

Core Learning Objectives:

1. Be able to analyze complex and diverse religious phenomena (such as architecture and art, music, ritual, scriptures, theological systems, and other cultural expressions of religious belief.).
2. Be able to integrate and compare several different disciplinary approaches to a coherent set of religious phenomena.
3. Be able to clarify and express beliefs in light of their critical inquiry into the religious dimensions of human existence.

ASSESSMENT & GRADING:

Midterm Exam (30%)

The midterm exam will evaluate, via short identifications and essay questions, the degree to which students have mastered the history and central theological concepts of the Hindu religion. *This will assess course goal #1 and core learning objective #1.*

Short Reflection Papers (60%)

Over the course of the quarter students will be asked to write a series of three short papers (750-1000 words) that will ask them to reflect upon Hinduism from multiple disciplinary perspectives.

Short Reflection Paper #1: Theological Reflection (20%)

The first paper will ask students to focus on a single issue from a single disciplinary perspective. *This will assess course goal #1 and core learning objective #1.*

Short Reflection Paper #2: Methodological Reflection (20%)

The second short paper will ask students to analyze a single religious phenomenon (such as a devotional song or icon) from multiple disciplinary perspectives. *This will assess course goal #2 and core learning objectives #1 & 2.*

Short Reflection Paper #3: Contemporary Hinduism (20%)

The third paper will focus on the experience of contemporary Hindus, with a focus on communities centering around female gurus in India and abroad. *This will assess course goal #3 and core learning objective #1 & 3.*

Class Participation (10%)

Participation in class discussions and active engagement with the course readings are requirements of this class. This class will have structured discussions, in which students will be required to prepare in advance reflections on course readings, discuss them in small groups, and present the keys points of their discussions to the class. These discussions are intended the students' knowledge of the traditions studies, their ability to reflect upon them critically, and their ability to work and learn collaboratively. Participation will both be directly measured by the instructor, and indirectly measured by the students' progress in the other assignments. *This will indirectly support, but not directly assess, all of the course goals and core learning objectives.*

Students will be asked to assess the course via mid-quarter and end-quarter narrative evaluations.

Students will receive regular feedback on their work from their instructor to help them improve their understanding and analytic skills. Students will also receive peer feedback for the group projects.

POLICIES

Attendance

Regular attendance is required. If you must miss a class, you should inform the instructor in advance when possible, and you are responsible for making up missed work. Unexcused absences will significantly lower your class participation grade, and thus your final grade.

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. 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 receive academic accommodations for a disability, students must contact Disability Resources located in Benson 216. The phone number is 408-554-4109 or inquiries can be emailed to Robin Cole, Administrative Associate, rcole@scu.edu. Students must register with Disabilities Resources and provide documentation of a disability to Disabilities Resources prior to receiving academic 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 has granted an extension in advance (i.e., at least one day prior to the due date). I will accept all written submissions in either paper “hardcopy” format or as MSWord document email attachments. 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

93.6–100	A	87.0–89.9	B+	77.0–79.9	C+	67.0–69.9	D+
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90.0–93.5 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)

IH Gavin Flood, *An Introduction to Hinduism* (Cambridge UP 1996)

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)

K. 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. 1/5 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. 1/7 **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.

•**IH 5-35**

Tues. 1/12 **Vedic Hinduism**

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

•**IH 35-50**

Thurs. 1/14 **Discussion: The R̥g 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. 1/19 **Ideal Visions of Society & Early Hindu Mystical Philosophy**

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. We will then turn to the key theological scriptures of early Hinduism, the *Upaniṣads*.

•**IH 51-93**

Thurs. 1/21 **Discussion: 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.

•HS 41-202

Suggested Topics for Paper #1: Theological Reflection” distributed

2. Classical Hinduism

- Tues. 1/26 **Samkhya and Yoga**
We will explore two influential Hindu schools of thought and practice regarding the possibility of attaining *mokṣa*, liberation from cyclic existence.
•IH 94-102, 224-236
- Thurs. 1/28 **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.)
Paper #1 Due
- Tues. 2/2 **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.
•IH 103-127
- Thurs. 2/4 **Discussion: The Bhagavad Gīta**
We will read and discuss in small groups chapters from this major work of religious literature.
•HS 205-292
- Tues. 2/9 **The Path of Devotion**
We will explore the rise of the *bhakti* devotional movement in medieval India.
•IH 236-249
•SSI 3-7
- Thurs. 2/11 **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.
• SSI 9-173
- Tues. 2/16 **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. We will conclude with a review of key terms and concepts for the midterm.
•IH 148-173
Midterm Review
- Thurs. 2/18 **Midterm** (in class)

3. Contemporary Hinduism

- Tues. 2/23 **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.
 •IH 198-223
 •Diana Eck, *Darśan*, 3-75 (skim)
Suggested Topics for Paper #2: “Methodological Reflection” distributed
- 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.
 •IH 174-197
Discussion: *The Graceful Guru*
 •GG 3-36, selected chapters
- Tues 3/2 **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)
Paper #2 Due
- Thurs. 3/4 **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.
Suggested Topics for Paper #3: “Contemporary Hinduism” distributed
- Tues. 3/9 **Discussion: Gandhi**
 We will discuss, in small groups, Louis Fischer’s autobiography of Mahātma Gandhi.
 • Louis Fischer, *Gandhi*
Final Paper due by 4 PM Tuesday 3/16