

**WIVES, LOVERS, MOTHERS, QUEENS:  
GODDESSES IN WORLD RELIGIONS AND CULTURES**

ANS 340/ANT 324L/R S 373/WGS 340

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**Spring 2016**

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**AIM AND SCOPE OF COURSE**

“Goddesses never die. They slip in and out of the world’s cities, in and out of our dreams, century after century, answering to different names, dressed differently, perhaps even disguised, perhaps idle and unemployed, their official altars abandoned, their temples feared or simply forgotten...”.

--Phyllis Chesler  
*Women and Madness*

This course will provide a historical and cross-cultural overview of the relationship between feminine and religious cultural expressions through comparative examinations and analyses of various goddess figures in world religions. We will begin our study in Asia; specifically in India, where goddess worship is a vital part of contemporary Hinduism in all parts of the subcontinent. From the goddesses of the Hindu tradition (Kālī and Lakṣmī, for example), we will move on to female figures in the Buddhist *Mahāyāna* pantheon (such as Kuan-Yin, popular in China, Korea, and Japan), and then on to some of the goddesses of western antiquity (Inanna, Isis, Athena, and Aphrodite), including a brief consideration of Mary in her various goddess aspects. We will end the course with a close study of “neo-pagan” goddess worship in America. Issues relating to gender, sexuality, power, and violence (domestic and political) will be emphasized as themes throughout the course.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- 1. Regular attendance.** Please do not miss class! It's as simple as that. I have an extremely strict attendance policy. You are allowed three unexcused absences over the course of the semester. After that, I will require written documentation of any absence, be it due to illness, a death in the family, car accidents, and so on. For each unexcused absence after your allowed number, I will deduct half a grade-point from your final grade. Attendance is not a "part of your grade" *per se*, but if you skip class repeatedly, it will hurt you in the long run.
- 2. Classroom comportment.** First of all, all of my courses are "unplugged," so to speak. Please TURN OFF your cell phones and power off and close your laptops and tablets before I begin to lecture. If your cell phone rings during class, or if you are caught text-messaging, I will ask you to leave the room and you will be counted absent. Though these devices have made our lives much more convenient, I will not tolerate phone calls or other sorts of messages from your parents, significant others, or friends during class time. I also do not condone the use of laptops for in-class note-taking. Please buy a spiral notebook – I am sure that you all remember how to use a pen. If you feel that you MUST USE a laptop to take notes, you will be monitored to make sure that you are actually taking notes and not surfing the web or reading your e-mail. Also please note that I will not tolerate any sort of plagiarism or other sorts of cheating in my class. I am an expert at tracking down plagiarists, and if I catch anyone indulging in academic dishonesty, I will ask that you withdraw from the class, and I will prosecute you. If you have any questions about the use of sources, please ask me.
- 3. Accommodations for Students with Documented Disabilities.** Students who require special accommodations must get a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Office of the Dean of Students. This letter should be presented to the instructor at the beginning of the semester so that appropriate accommodations can be made at that time.
- 4. Religious Holidays.** If you find that you must miss a class due to the observance of a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the work you have missed provided that you give me at least one week's notice prior to your absence.
- 5. Readings.** The main readings will be assigned from the texts listed below. All of your textbooks will be placed on reserve at the Perry-Castañeda Library. Your textbooks are available for purchase at the University Co-op Bookstore, but if you are on a budget, feel free to patronize Amazon or other on-line sources. You'll be able to find many of your textbooks on line at a great price.

### Required books:

Kinsley, David. *The Goddesses' Mirror: Visions of the Divine from East and West*.

Pintchman, Tracy. *The Rise of the Goddess in the Hindu Tradition*.

Hawley, John Stratton, ed. *Satī, the Blessing and the Curse: The Burning of Wives in India*.

Cabezón, Jose Ignacio, ed. *Buddhism, Sexuality, and Gender*.

Shaw, Miranda. *Passionate Enlightenment: Women in Tantric Buddhism*.

**Recommended book:**

Warner, Marina. *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary*.

4. **Quizzes.** There will be four in-class quizzes at regularly-spaced intervals throughout the semester.
5. **Paper.** You will be required to write one 7-10-page paper on the topic of your choice as long as it is within the scope of class content, though I will provide you with a list of topic “possibilities” in the sixth week of the semester. Although I encourage you to stay within the bounds of the topics list, you may choose your own topic as long as you clear it with me first. The paper will be due in class on the last day we meet (*i.e.*, **Thursday, May 5th**).

## **GRADES**

Your topics paper is very important, as it is worth 60% of your final grade. Your quizzes are each worth 10% of your final grade. Please note that grades are entirely and absolutely non-negotiable – I will not tolerate any whining about grades. I do NOT give extra credit. I do NOT issue incompletes, unless you are desperately ill and can provide me with a doctor’s note.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

### **WEEK 1:**

January 19th: Orientation and introduction to the course.

January 21st: “An Overview and Introduction to the Idea of Feminine Divinity in the Hindu Tradition.” Read Kinsley, pp. ix-xix and Pintchman, pp. 1-18.

### **WEEK 2:**

January 26th: “The Vedic Female Demiurge: Goddess or Concept?” Read Pintchman, pp. 19-59.

January 28th: FILM: “Wedding of the Goddess, Part I” and discussion.

**WEEK 3:**

February 2nd: “Matter, Illusion, Power: The Philosophical Feminine in Early Hindu Thought.” Read Pintchman, pp. 61-115.

February 4th: “The Role of Goddesses in Classical Hindu Cosmogonies.” Read Pintchman, pp. 117-143.

**WEEK 4:**

February 9th: **QUIZ I (over Pintchman, pp. 1-143).** “The Goddess as Wife and Consort in Classical Hinduism.” Read Pintchman, pp. 144-184.

February 11th: “Durgā, Warrior Goddess and Cosmic Queen.” Read Kinsley, pp. 3-24.

**WEEK 5:**

February 16th: “Lakṣmī, Goddess of Abundance and Good Luck.” Read Kinsley, pp. 53-70.

February 18th: FILM: “Wedding of the Goddess, Part II” and discussion.

**WEEK 6:**

February 23rd: “Sītā, the Ideal Wife.” Read Kinsley, pp. 91-110.

February 25th: **QUIZ II (over Durgā, Lakṣmī, and Sītā).** FILM: “Devī,” Part I. PAPER TOPICS WILL BE DISTRIBUTED.

**WEEK 7:**

March 1st: FILM: “Devī,” Part II and discussion.

March 3rd: “The Iconographies of *Satī*.” Read Hawley, pp. 3-53.

**WEEK 8:**

March 8th: “The *Satī* Tradition in Rajasthan.” Read Hawley, pp. 79-99.

March 10th: “The Implications and Symbols of the Roop Kanwar Case.” Read Hawley, pp. 101-172.

**WEEK 9: NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK.**

### **WEEK 10:**

March 22nd: "Gender Issues and Early Buddhist History." Read Cabezón, pp. 3-29 and Shaw, pp. 3-34.

March 24th: "Gender-switching and the Mystery of Kuan-Yin, a *Mahāyāna Bodhisattva*." Read Kinsley, pp. 25-51 and Cabezón, pp. 159-192.

### **WEEK 11:**

March 29th: FILM: "Father, Son, and Holy War: Trial by Fire" and discussion.

March 31st: FILM: "Father, Son, and Holy War: Hero Pharmacy" and discussion.

### **WEEK 12:**

April 5th: "Women in Tantric Theory and Circles." Read Shaw, pp. 35-100.

April 7th: "Women in Tantric History and Relationships: Intimacy and Enlightenment." Read Shaw, pp. 101-178.

### **WEEK 13:**

April 12th: **QUIZ III (on Shaw)**. "Goddesses of Western Antiquity I: Inanna and Isis." Read Kinsley, pp. 113-138 and pp. 165-183.

April 14th: "Goddesses of Western Antiquity II: Athena and Aphrodite." Read Kinsley, pp. 139-164 and pp. 185-214.

### **WEEK 14:**

April 19th: "A Mary Miscellany, Part I." Read Kinsley, pp. 215-235.

April 21st: "A Mary Miscellany, Part II." Read Kinsley, pp. 235-260.

### **WEEK 15:**

April 26th: **QUIZ IV (over Kinsley, pp. 113-138, 165-183, and 215-260)**. "Paganism, Neo-paganism, Pagan Worldview, and the Wiccan Revival." No readings for today.

April 28th: "Neo-paganism, Feminism, and Men's Movements in America." No readings for today.

### **WEEK 16:**

May 3rd: Guest lecture by Midnight of "Ancient Mysteries."

May 6th: "Appropriating the Past and Constructing the Future." No readings for today.  
**TOPICS PAPERS DUE IN CLASS. NO EXCEPTIONS.**