



History of Hindu Religious Traditions

ANS 340 / ANT 324L

HIS 364G / RS 321

Spring 2016

MW 2:30-4PM

PAR 1

Dr. Amy Hyne-Sutherland



How is religion shaped by culture? In what ways does the religion of everyday life—what is practiced “on the ground”—differ from what is described in classical texts? With such questions as our guide, this course explores a number of historical developments, texts, beliefs, and practices that have come to be identified as “Hinduism.” Our exploration is divided into three parts. Part 1 introduces the Hindu pantheon through Sanskrit literature in translation, as well as the contemporary lived practice of Hindus at the individual level, at the level of family, and in the public sphere. Part 2 introduces the sacred texts of Hinduism in their historical context. Part 3 explores various aspects of Hinduism and Modernity through an examination of popular culture and media, nationalism, and contemporary political and social conflicts.

Required Texts:

Coursepack available at Paradigm Copies

Doniger, Wendy, trans. *Hindu Myths*. New York: Penguin Books, 1981.

Hawley, John Stratton and Mark Juergensmeyer. *Songs of the Saints of India*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Huyler, Stephen. *Meeting God: Elements of Hindu Devotion*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999.

Miller, Barbara Stoler, trans. *The Bhagavad Gita*. New York: Bantam Books, 1986.

Course Requirements:

Attendance, Participation, and Preparation: 15%

Film Review: 5%

Shared Sacred Space Group Project: 5%

Two Current Event Responses: 15%

Three Quizzes: 45%

Final Paper: 15%

Attendance and Participation: Active, prepared participation is expected of all students every class. Students should come to class having read the assigned reading for the day and should be prepared to contribute to the discussion. Attendance will be taken every day. Students are allowed a maximum of **TWO (2)** absences without penalty. Additional absences are permitted in case of medical emergency or other extreme circumstance, and must be accompanied by official documentation.

Film Review: We will watch *Dashavatar* in class. Write a one page single-spaced typed response/review that evaluates the information presented in this film in comparison with what you learn in class and in the course readings. What new information did you learn? What surprised you? How did the presentation of the film affect your understanding of the material presented in class and in the readings? How did it differ? Who is the intended audience and how does it impact the material presented? **This is due on Monday, Feb. 20.**

Shared Sacred Space Project: Together with a group, you will give a class presentation on a shared sacred space in South Asia and **select a reading for the class on your particular space** (this can be an academic article, news feature, short story, etc.). You can choose how you would like to present the information and what kinds of media you would like to use. You can make a film, for example, or you can write a narrative. You can also use posters, drama, PowerPoints, etc. Creativity counts! Each group member will be asked to fill out a short peer-review to ensure participation by all group members. I will assign the groups and spaces. These will be presented during **WEEK 8.**

Two topics/current event responses: You are required to submit two topics/current event responses (500 words each). Draw connections between what you are learning in class with what you experience out in the world. Throughout the semester, spend some time tuning-in to websites, news outlets, public radio, youtube videos, etc. that report on issues relevant to Hinduism (see list below for suggestions). Select an issue, event, or topic about which you can find two different sources, reflect critically on the sources, and provide some reflections. Why did you select these articles? How do they resonate with class discussions or what you have learned in the readings? Who is the intended audience and how is the content adapted for that audience? Can you compare the content to your previous knowledge or experiences? If so, what can you learn from this comparison? The format is up to you. Have fun with this!

Possible outlets:

BBC News India (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world/asia/india/>)

The American Bazaar (<http://www.americanbazaaronline.com/>)

Asian News International (<http://www.aniin.com/>)

The Hindu (<http://www.thehindu.com/>)

The Statesman (<http://www.thestatesman.net/>)

The Global Indian (<http://www.theglobalindian.co.nz/>)
Hindunet (<http://www.hindunet.org>)

Three Quizzes: There will be three quizzes over the course of the semester. These will be taken in the last 30 mins of class, before which we will continue with lecture/discussion for that weeks' topic. These will cover important terms and major ideas addressed in the readings and lectures from the previous weeks. These quizzes are not cumulative.

Essay: You are required to submit one 6-7 page (typed, 12 pt. font, double spaced) essay on one of the poet saints covered in Hawley and Juergensmeyer's *Songs of the Saints of India*. This essay will require you to summarize, analyze, and synthesize course content with respect to the selected *sant*. In this essay you should relate this figure to course themes, lectures, and readings. You may choose to do outside research for this paper, but it is not required. Your essay must (1) include a clear thesis statement; (2) analyze at least one of the poems by the saint you select; (3) show how this poem illumines and/or critiques a particular trend, philosophy, or practice found in historical or contemporary Hindu society; (4) properly cite at least two course readings or lectures (in addition to the saint selection). A hard copy and a digital copy (via Canvas) must be submitted before **Friday, April 28 at 5PM**.

Technology: Cell phones must be switched off or put in silent mode. If you text or email in class, you will be marked as absent. **Laptops/iPads/tablets are not permitted in class.** If you take notes on the readings on your laptop, please print them out before you come to class.

Site Visits / Extra Credit Opportunities: I will alert you to special events, lectures, and opportunities to visit religious institutions for extra credit.

Academic Accommodations: I encourage all students to discuss their educational needs with me. Any student eligible for and requesting academic accommodations due to a disability should provide a *Letter of Academic Accommodations* from Disability Services within the first two to three weeks of classes or as soon as the need for accommodations is identified.

Mental Health Resources: Mental health concerns such as anxiety, stress, and depression are very common among college students. If you are struggling with any of these or other mental health concerns, you are not alone! I encourage you to seek help and to encourage others who need help to do so. I am always a resource for you. I am not a licensed counselor. However, I can help you locate appropriate resources and offer general support.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 – On Studying Religion

Wed, Jan. 18 – Course Introductions

Week 2 - “On Wearing Good Lenses”

Mon, Jan 23 – Studying South Asia

Read: Clothey, “On Wearing Good Lenses” (Coursepack)

Huyler, *Meeting God*, pp. 10-42.

Wed, Jan 25 – What is Hinduism?

Read: Flood, “Points of Departure” (Coursepack)

Tweed & Prothero, eds. “Swami Vivekananda” (Coursepack)

Part 1: The Hindu Pantheon and Devotion in South Asia

Week 3 – *Bhakti* and Elements of Worship

Mon, Jan 30 – Forms of contemporary *bhakti*: offerings, shrines, and temples

Read: Huyler, *Meeting God*, pp. 46-63; 116-154.

Wed, Feb 1 – Exemplars of *Bhakti: Sants*, Part 1 (Ravidas)

Read: Hawley, *Songs of the Saints of India*, pp. 3-32.

Week 4 – Viṣṇu: The Preserver

Mon, Feb 6 – Viṣṇu

Read: Doniger, *Hindu Myths*, pp. 175-181; 213-231.

In class: *Daśāvatāra*. Directed by Bhavik. Anushvi Productions, 2008.

Wed, Feb 8 – Exemplars of *Bhakti: Sants*, Part 2 (Surdas)

Read: Hawley, *Songs of the Saints of India*, pp. 91-116.

Week 5 – Śiva: The Destroyer / *iṣṭadevatā* and *kuladevatā*

Mon, Feb 13 – Personal and Family Gods

Read: Huyler, *Meeting God*, pp. 64-89

Doniger, *Hindu Myths* (“Pine Forest Sages”), pp. 141-149; 154-159; 249-251.

Wed, Feb 15 – Śaiva Asceticism / **QUIZ 1**

Read: Huyler, *Meeting God*, pp. 233-250

Cutler, “Tamil Game Songs to Śiva” (Coursepack)

Week 6 – Devi: The Goddess / *grāmadevatā*

Mon, Feb 20 – Village Gods

Read: Huyler, *Meeting God*, pp. 90-113; 176-204.

Doniger, *Hindu Myths*, pp. 238-249.

FILM REVIEW DUE IN CLASS

Wed, Feb 22 – The Goddess, Healing, and Possession

Read: Huyler, *Meeting God*, pp. 208-231.

Stewart, “Encountering the Smallpox Goddess” (Coursepack)

Week 7 – Hindu Tantra

Mon, Feb 27 – Tantra in Practice

Read: White, “Tantra in Practice: Mapping a Tradition” (Coursepack)

McDaniel, “Interviews with a Tantric Kālī Priest” (Coursepack)

CURRENT EVENT 1 DUE IN CLASS

Wed, Mar 1 – Emic and Etic Perspectives

Read: Lorenzen, “A Parody of the Kāpālikas in the *Mattavilāsa*”
(Coursepack)

In Class: Representations of Aughars/Aghoris

Week 8 – Shared Sacred Spaces in India

Mon, Mar 6 – Shared Sacred Space Presentations

Read: TBD by group

Wed, Mar 8 – Shared Sacred Space Presentations

Read: TBD by group

Mar 13 - 18: SPRING BREAK

Part 2: Hinduism(s) in Sacred Texts

Week 9 – Performing Action, Seeking Knowledge: Vedas and Upaniṣads

Mon, Mar 20 – The Vedas

Read: **WATCH AT HOME** *Altar of Fire* (Full Documentary, 1 hr.)

Wed, Mar 22 – The Upaniṣads

Read: Brereton, Joel. “The Upaniṣads,” In *Approaches to the Asian Classics* (Course Reader)

Week 10 – Competing Dharmas

Mon, Mar 27 – Renunciation Debates

Read: Olivelle, “Ascetic Withdrawal or Social Engagement” (Coursepack)

Wed, Mar 29 – Householder Dharma / **QUIZ 2**

Read: Olivelle, *Law Code of Manu*, Selections (Coursepack)

Week 11 – Sources of/on Dharma: *The Bhagavadgītā*

Mon, Apr 3

Read: Miller, *The Bhagavad-Gita*, pp. 1-69.

Wed, Apr 5

Read: Miller, *The Bhagavad-Gita*, pp. 71-109.

Week 12 – Sources of/on Dharma: *The Rāmāyaṇa*

Mon, Apr 10 – Many Rāmāyaṇas

Read: Ramanujan, A.K. “Three Hundred *Rāmāyaṇas*: Five Examples and Three Thoughts on Translation,” (Course Reader)

Wed, Apr 12 – Exemplars of *Bhakti*: *Sants*, Part 3 (Tulsidas)

Read: Hawley, *Songs of the Saints*, pp. 143-161.

CURRENT EVENT 2 DUE IN CLASS

Part 3: Globalism and Modernity

Week 13 – Hinduism, Modernity, and Competing Ideologies

Mon, Apr 17 – Competing Ideologies

Read: Flood, “Hinduism and the modern world” (Coursepack)

IN CLASS FILM: *In the Name of God* (“**Ram Ke Nam**”)

Wed, Apr 19 – Political Hinduism

Read: Ram-Prasad, C. “Contemporary Political Hinduism” (Coursepack)

Week 14 – Who Speaks for Hinduism?

Mon, Apr 24 – Who Speaks for Hinduism?

Read: Excerpts of Doniger / Kripal controversies (on Canvas)

Narayanan, Vasudha. “Defamation and Diaspora Hindus: Notes on Internet Discussions” (<https://religion.barnard.edu/engagement-diaspora-hindus>)

Wed, Apr 26 – California Textbook Controversy

Read: Excerpts from the California Textbook Controversy (on Canvas)

FINAL PAPER DUE FRIDAY, APRIL 28 BY 5PM (HARD COPY TO MY OFFICE)

Week 15 – Snapshots of Hinduism in American Popular Culture

Mon, May 1 – Kumaré

Read: Tweed, “Hindu Crossings: Gurus and Disciples” (Coursepack)
IN CLASS FILM: Kumaré

Wed, May 3 – Commodification of Indian Culture

Sandhu, Sabeen. “Instant Karma: The Commercialization of Asian Indian Culture” (Course Pack)

QUIZ 3