

RGP 3280/6280 HF (Fall 2009)
Themes in Hindu Spirituality
(Cross-listed to the Theology Department)

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Class: Thursday, 2-4.
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or by appointment.

Course Description

This course explores the nature of religious experience in various Hindu traditions, within the context of an overview of relevant beliefs and practices.

Course Objectives

Students will be able to describe significant beliefs and practices associated with Hindu Spirituality. They will be able to analyze and contextualize these phenomena in terms of various historical, social, and philosophical issues, both within the tradition and in relation to certain features of Christianity. See course syllabus, pp. 4-6, for specific themes, beliefs, and practices.

Required Books

For all students: Hillary Rodrigues, *Introducing Hinduism* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

Reserve Reading: Some required reading selections, listed on the course syllabus, pp. 5-6, will be available on Reserve in the Regis College Library. See the Reserve Reading list on p. 6 of the course outline.

Grading

A numerical mark will be given for each course requirement. Following the final examination, a letter grade will be assigned on the following number and letter grade scheme:

A+	= 100-90	B	= 76-73
A	= 89-85	B-	= 72-70
A-	= 84-80	FZ	= 69-0
B+	= 79-77		

Graded Assignments

For Basic Degree Students:

- 25% One 15 minute Class presentation (see details below). The presentation cannot be on your essay topic.
- 65% One Essay: about 9-10 pages or so (about 2500 words). Due **December 10**.
- 1) Possible essay themes: class system; spiritual liberation; reincarnation; scripture in Hinduism; one of the major sacred texts; one of the Hindu schools; a major Hindu Deity; a major historical figure; a major Hindu practice; a topic not listed but approved by me.
 - 2) Requires three textual sources minimum from the Reserve Reading list.
 - 3) See essay formatting requirements, pp. 3-4 below.
- 10% Class Participation: attendance, evidence that you are keeping up with the readings, class discussion, etc.

Graded Assignments

For Advanced Degree Students:

- 25% One 15 minute Class Presentations (see details below). The presentation cannot be on your essay topic.
- 65% One Essay: about 13-14 pages or so (about 3300 words). Due **December 10**.
The topic is to be developed in discussion with me.
- 10% Class Participation: attendance, evidence that you are keeping up with the readings, class discussion; one separate seminar meeting which will be scheduled sometime in November, to discuss Michael Stoeber, “*Tantra and Śāktism in the Spirituality of Aurobindo Ghose*”, forthcoming in *Studies in Religion* (class handout). Note also the extra reading for AD students, marked on pp. 4-6 of the syllabus.

Class Presentations

1. Presentation topics are to be chosen from the various topics listed in the course syllabus:

Socio-Moral Contexts and Classic Texts: *karma* (action and its effects); *samsāra* (rebirth);

dharma (religious duty); *varṇa* (class); *āśrama* (life-stage); *Dharma Śāstras* (law books);

Status of women;

Popular Practices: pilgrimage, sacred spaces, religious festivals, temple worship, ritual practice;

Epics: either *Mahābhārata* (esp. *Bhagavat Gītā*) or *Rāmāyaṇa*;

Other sacred texts (e.g. *Puranas*);

Major Hindu Schools;

Hindu art;

Modern Movements (e.g. Brahma Samāj, Ārya Samāj, Mahatmo Gandhi, Ramakrishna; Ramaṇa Mahārṣhi; Muktānanda; Theosophy);

Hinduism in relation to other traditions.

If students have other topics that they feel very passionate about, we can discuss these possibilities. **Students need to bring their topic choice (and one alternate) to the second class, September 24.**

2. The dates of presentations will be approximate to the topic date listed in the course syllabus and confirmed the second week of class. They should be about 1500 words (not longer than 7 typed pages), (plus a few discussion questions/issues listed on a separate page). It should take you no longer than 15 minutes to read (at about two minutes per page). They should include reference to at least three sources, with some reference to the course textbook, Hillary Rodrigues, *Introducing Hinduism*.
3. Carefully and clearly outline the main features of the topic. Reflect creatively and critically on its significance.
4. Each presentation must conclude with questions and issues appropriate for class discussion, and either the student or I will chair the discussion following the presentation. Each presentation should run to up to an hour in length.
5. You are to bring copies of the presentation for all of the students. Papers will be handed in for evaluation immediately following the class. Evaluative criteria are:
 - accuracy and comprehensiveness (of the treatment of the subject matter);
 - substance (rigor and depth of development);
 - conciseness and clarity;
 - creative/critical analysis (in relation to previous course or other material, problems or issues);
 - significance of the issues raised for class discussion.

Essay Format and Marking Criteria

1. The essays should show significant thought and effort. They should be well-developed and polished.
2. Format: papers must be **double spaced**, have a **title page**, **page numbers**, and appropriate **margin spacing**. **Footnotes** are necessary if you quote passages or are dependent for your ideas on another writer. Neglect of appropriate notation will result in a significant reduction of your grade, possibly even an "F".
- 3) Academic Honesty: Documentation for footnotes is necessary, when quoting writers or referring to secondary sources. All material which you quote directly should be noted, as well as any judgments, arguments, and data that you draw from other sources.
 - i. Plagiarism will result in a grade of "F" for the course, and the notification of the Dean of your

College.

ii. In order to deter plagiarism, I might require an oral defense of papers. Failure to attend the defense will result in an “F” on the paper.

iii. Failure to document properly the sources of your research will involve a significant reduction in your grade, possibly even an “F”. This includes the failure to cite the appropriate books or page numbers of books from which you have quoted.

iv. If the paper makes any major use of work done in another course, submit the work along with the paper. If there is not a significant amount of new work, the grade may be reduced. See me if you have any questions on this.

4) Marking Criteria

i. Clarity of the paper, in grammatical detail and expression, and in the overall structure. Be sure your paper is drawn together coherently; a strong introduction stating what you will do and how you will do it, and conclusion summarizing what you have done, are essential in this regard.

ii. Substance of the paper, whether it is significant or superficial, rigorous or sloppy. You must take an appropriate objective and scholarly approach, and show some significant understanding of the material and relevant issues.

iii. Accuracy of the paper, where it involves an exposition or explanation of information from books or lecture notes.

iv. Scope of the paper: that is, be sure to develop the significant relevant issues and implications that arise from the problems, issues or themes of the material in question.

v. Conciseness of the paper, in contrast with being wordy or overly elaborate or needlessly repetitive.

vi. Originality of the paper: the analysis should show some critical reflection on the theme or question, whether it is your own or a synthesis of ideas connected to another course-reading or of ideas developed in class discussion. You must show some critical and creative development on your part.

Tentative Syllabus REVISED 2009

(Some adjustments might still be made to the syllabus depending upon student presentations and class interest; and I hope at some point to show one or two videos; and I might add other readings and/or handouts for certain sections.)

September 17.

Introduction: geographical, cultural, religious diversity of India; general historical overview.

September 24.

Geographical, cultural, religious diversity of India; general historical overview (continued).

Introduction to the Vedic texts

Readings: Rodrigues, *Hinduism*, pp. 1-44;

AD Students only: Dasgupta, Hindu Mysticism, Lecture 1, pp. 3-30. (R.R.)

October 1.

The Vedic texts, deities and practices: *Samhitās*, *Brāhmaṇas*, *Āraṇyakas*, and *Upaniṣads*

Readings: Rodrigues, pp. 24-44; 105-114.

Doniger, Textual Sources (class handout).

AD Students only: Dasgupta, Hindu Mysticism, Lecture 2, pp. 33-60. (R.R.)

October 8.

Socio-Moral Contexts and Classic Texts: *karma* (action and its effects); *samsāra* (rebirth); *dharma* (religious duty); *varṇa* (class); *āśrama* (life-stage); *Dharma Śāstras* (law books); the status of women;

Readings: Rodrigues, *Hinduism*, pp. 45-104; Stevenson, *Children Who Remember Past Lives*, (class handout); Doniger, Textual Sources, 116-125 (R.R.).

October 15. presentation: Nisheeta Menon, Mahabharata

The Epics: *Mahābhārata* (esp. *Bhagavat Gītā*) and *Rāmāyaṇa*.

Readings: Rodrigues, *Hinduism*, 136-171;

October 22. presentation: Suan Yen Foo, Puranas

Oct 29 reading week, no class.

November 5. presentation: Bernard Alphonsus, Shiva

Purānas (devotional texts); and bhakti (devotional) movements: of Śiva, Viṣṇu, Śākti; and Tantric beliefs and practice.

Readings: Rodrigues, *Hinduism*, 154-221

AD Students only: Kinsley, Tantric Visions of the Divine Feminine, “Kali: The Black Goddess”, 67-91 (R.R.); Mookerjee, Kundalini, 9-58 (R.R.)

November 12. presentation: Sarah Watts, Hindu Art

November 19. presentation: Enloe Wilson, Temple Worship

Popular Practices: pilgrimage, sacred spaces, religious festivals, temple worship, ritual practice.

Readings: Rodrigues, *Hinduism*, 257-272.

November 26. presentation Manoj Zacharia, Sankara/Paniakkar

Major Hindu schools and spiritual philosophy, with special focus on Vedanta (Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita, Dvaita).

Readings: Rodrigues, *Hinduism*, 115-135; 249-256.

December 3 . presentation: Teo Ugaban, Arya Samaj**December 10. presentation: Glenn McCullough, Theosophy**

Modern movements (e.g. Brahma Samāj, Ārya Samāj) and Contemporary Gurus: (e.g. Aurobindo Ghose, Mahatma Gandhi, Ramakrishna; Ramaṇa Mahāṣṭhi; Muktaṇanda; Abhishiktānanda).

Readings: Rodrigues, *Hinduism*, 273-340.

Klostermaier, *Survey* 447-460 (R.R.).

AD Students only: Abhishiktananda, *Guru and Disciple*, vii-16 (R.R.); Andrew Fort, *Jivanmukti*, 134-149 (R.R.).

Reserve Reading in the Regis College Library:

Abhishiktananda, *Guru & Disciple* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1990).

A. L. Basham, *The Wonder that was India* (Grove Press, 1959).

Francis Clooney, *Divine Mother; Blessed Mother: Hindu Goddesses and the Virgin Mary* (Oxford University Press, 2005).

Surendra Nath Dasgupta, *Hindu Mysticism* (Asian Humanities Press, 1983) (F. Ungar Pub Co., 1929/1959/1971).

Wendy Doniger, tr. and ed., *Textual Sources for the Study of Hinduism* (University of Chicago Press, 1990).

Georg Feuerstein, *Tantra: The Path of Ecstasy* (Shambhala, 1998).

Andrew Fort, *Jivanmukti in Transformation* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY, 1993).

David Kinsley, *Hinduism*, 2nd ed. (Prentice Hall, 1993).

David Kinsley, *Hindu Goddesses* (Univ. of California Press, 1988).

David Kinsley, *Tantric Visions of the Divine Feminine* (Univ. of California Press, 1997).

Klaus K. Klostermaier, *A Survey of Hinduism* (SUNY Press, 1994).

Julius Lipner, *Hindus: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (Routledge, 1994).

Ajit Mookerjee, *Kundalini: The Arousal of the Inner Energy* (Destiny Books, 1982, 1986).