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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY  
Department of Religious Studies  
Religions of India: Journey to the Real  
REL 3330 / RLG 5331  
Spring 2019

Instructor: Dr. Steven M. Vose  
Office:  
Office Hours:  
Phone (office): 305-348-6728  
Email: [svose@fiu.edu](mailto:svose@fiu.edu)

Class Hours:  
Classroom:  
Graduate Session:  
Grad Classroom:

*'The self that is free from evils, free from old age and death, free from sorrow,  
free from hunger and thirst; the self whose desires and intentions are the same—  
that is the self that you should try to discover.'*  
~Chāndogya Upaniṣad, 8.7.1

**Course Description:**

This course is a survey of the development of religious concepts, practices and traditions in the cultural region known as South Asia. Beginning with a consideration of the Indus Valley Civilization and the formation of Vedic religion, the course traces the development of Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Islam, and Sikhism. The course will compare concepts of the self, salvation, ethics, devotion, ritual practice and visual culture across traditions from the earliest writings and material objects to contemporary times. The course will also explore religious issues facing modern India, beginning with colonialism and Indian "reformers" such as Gandhi, and culminating with an examination of Hindu nationalism and the status of minority groups in India today. The course examines both continuity and change over time and space, demonstrating how contact and debates among peoples and geographic centers have given traditions their current shape, engaging with South Asian diaspora religious centers in South Florida. The graduate session will also examine key readings shaping the study of South Asian religious traditions.

This is a discipline-specific Global Learning course that counts towards the Global Learning graduation requirement.

**Course Objectives:**

1. To introduce students to the principle tenets, literatures and practices of the major religious traditions originating and having a significant presence in South Asia.
2. To give a historical overview of the major developments and changes in religiosity in South Asian traditions, especially concerning changes to ritual practices and the development of renunciatory and devotional styles of religion.
3. To show historical change as a process of dialogue and interaction among traditions.
4. To demonstrate the importance of myth and narrative in religious identity formation.
5. To understand the multiple factors that contribute to interreligious conflict and cooperation.

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

By the end of this course, students will have:

1. Learned the main tenets and practices of the major religious traditions of India.
2. Read primary source scriptures and literatures of Indic religious traditions in translation and engaged in comparative readings within and across traditions.
3. Encountered practitioners of one or more Indic religious traditions in the classroom and at sites in South Florida.
4. Documented a day attempting to practice mindfulness and *ahimsa* (non-harm) in Indic ethical traditions.
5. Made their own re-telling of an Indic epic story to understand the process of contesting and asserting narrative traditions.
6. Engaged with works of modern colonial and post-colonial reformers who draw upon Indic traditions to inspire their arguments for changing society.

### Global Learning Course Outcomes:

By the end of the course, students will:

1. Have become aware of the diversity of religious thought and expression in South Asian traditions in the region and in the diaspora, and have understood the parameters of several important historical and contemporary conflicts; have written a research paper on a topic of their choice that engages an issue or issues involving Indic religious traditions in theological, philosophical, historical and/or contemporary contexts (Global Awareness).
2. Have engaged in dialogue with guest speakers and diaspora practitioners of Indic traditions; practiced following an Indic ethical practice; composed their own devotional poetry to understand various Indic theological modalities to understand the multiple perspectives of faith practitioners and peoples in dialogue and conflict in South Asia and in the diaspora (Global Perspective).
3. Have traveled to religious sites in South Florida, observe ritual practices and hear from religious practitioners and leaders; created their own tellings and critiqued other tellings of an epic story to understand the stakes of interreligious dialogue, conflict and cooperation to be prepared to understand the motivations of South Asian religious peoples (Global Engagement).

### Course Grading and Requirements:

1. Attendance and Participation (10%)
2. Nonviolence Exercise (due Fri., Feb. 17 at 11:59 PM) (GL Persp.) (15%)
3. Ramayana Project (due Fri., April 7 at 11:59 PM) (GL Engage.) (20%)
4. Devotional Poem (due Wed., Apr. 26 at 11:59 PM) (10%)
5. Site Visit reflection (due Fri., Apr. XX at 11:59 PM) (15%)
6. Research Paper, 2,000 words, on topic of student choice (30%)  
(Final Draft Due Fri., Apr. 21 at 11:59 PM) (GL Aware.)

Graduate students' grades will be calculated based on:

1. Attendance and Participation (25%)
2. Discussion Leader (25%)
3. Research Paper, 4,000-5,000 words (Due Apr. 28 at 11:59 PM) (50%)

-Class Attendance and Participation is crucial to a successful class. Your questions will help both you and your classmates to understand the concepts and to develop your research questions. Come to class with the readings completed, bring questions and make connections with other readings. Students must attend all class meetings. One absence will be excused without penalty;

others will only be excused in case of illness, emergency, or school-sanctioned event **with appropriate documentation**. Late entry to class is disruptive to the instructor and to fellow students. Repeated tardiness will result in the reduction of one's grade at instructor discretion. -For the *Nonviolence in Practice Exercise* assignment, students will spend one entire day trying to avoid (or account for) all forms of violence (as defined by the Jain tradition) they may commit, and then create a blog entry to detail the challenges faced throughout the day and to reflect on the experience. Students are encouraged to use videos and photos to supplement text. The assignment is **due on Canvas by Friday, Feb. 17 at 11:59 PM**. Detailed directions are posted on Canvas under the "Nonviolence Project" tab. This assignment will be assessed for the Global Learning Perspectives criteria.

-In the *Ramayana Project*, students will work in groups to make a video telling the story of the Ramayana, then respond with a video re-telling of another group's original, and finally reflect on the re-telling of their own original. The project will take several weeks to be completed. **Groups will be assigned Tuesday, March 7**; the final group project will be **due Tuesday, April 11 at 2:00 PM**. Detailed directions are posted on Canvas under the "Ramayana Project" assignment. This assignment will be assessed for the Global Learning Engagement criteria.

-The *Devotional Poems* assignment will give each student a chance to compose and share their own versions of devotional lyrics in the styles of the poets of India. Poems can be **due on Wednesday, April 26 at 11:59 PM** on Canvas (67% of assignment grade). They will also be **performed during the final exam period, Thursday, April 27, 12:00-2:00 in PCA 150**, in the classical Indian style of the poetic gathering (33% of assignment grade). Detailed directions are posted on Canvas under the "Devotional Poems" assignment.

-The *Site Visit Reflection* is a two- to three-page paper that asks students to narrate their experience and reflect upon their observations at any one of a number of religious sites to which the class will travel over the course of the semester. Since students have their choice of sites to write about, or may write a paper comparing their experiences at two more sites, the paper will be **due at the end of the semester**, posted to the "Site Visit" Assignment in Canvas. However, students are encouraged to. If students are unable to attend any site visits during the semester, they may visit a place of worship to observe services or may make alternate arrangements with the instructor.

-The *Research Paper* is **due on Friday, April 21 at 11:59 PM, posted to Canvas**. Students must write a research paper of at least 2,000 words on a topic of their choice. The paper must be properly referenced using scholarly resources (books, journal articles, etc.). Detailed directions are posted on Canvas under the "Research Paper" assignment. Students must consult with the instructor on their topic in office hours **by Mar. 9**. A site visit project is encouraged. This assignment will be assessed for the Global Learning Awareness criteria.

### **Active Learning Strategies:**

This course will ask students to engage in several lessons that require "active learning." These include having students practice and document their attempts to follow a set of ethical maxims throughout the course of a day, traveling to religious sites of South Asian diaspora communities in South Florida and reflecting upon their observations, creating their own re-tellings of an Indic epic and critiquing their classmates' re-tellings, composing their own poetry to understand different theological modalities, and researching and writing about a topic in Indian religions. The course asks students to engage with dialogues and examples of cooperation and conflict as central to understanding how religions grow, change and develop over time and take on their present shape. This strategy asks students to place religious traditions in their social contexts to

understand how economic, political and social issues affect religious traditions, and in turn how religious thought and action shapes economic, political and social practices.

### Policies:

1. All student work must conform to FIU policies regarding academic honesty. Plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the assignment or course, and may also lead to disciplinary measures.
2. Late papers will lose a full letter grade for each day they are late, and will in no case be accepted after four days beyond the due date. Extensions will only be granted in cases of emergency or school-sanctioned event *with proper documentation*.
3. As students may be encountering religious traditions that are their own, or not their own, in an American university setting for the first time, it is important to foster a classroom atmosphere that allows for open dialogue in a manner respectful of the beliefs of all classmates. Students are asked to reflect on how their questions, statements, and choices in assignments may be perceived by their fellow classmates before speaking and acting. At the same time, students should expect questions and perspectives that may challenge deeply held beliefs and values. Respect for honest questions and for religious and non-religious perspectives will be necessary.

### Grading scale:

A 93-100    A- 90-92    B+ 87-89    B 83-86  
B- 80-82    C+ 77-79    C 73-76    D 69-72    F 0-59

### Required Texts (Also on Course Reserve in Green Library [GL]):

-*The Bhagavad Gita*. Translated by Laurie Patton. Penguin Classics, 2008.  
ISBN: 9780140447903.

-All other readings are on Canvas (C) and are e-books available through the library website.

### Recommended Textbooks:

-Sushil Mittal and Gene Thursby, eds. *Religions of India: An Introduction*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Routledge, 2018. ISBN: 9781108386812.

-Joyce Flueckiger. *Everyday Hinduism*. West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2015. ISBN: 9781405160216.

-Lawrence A. Babb. *Understanding Jainism*. Edinburgh: Dunedin, 2015. ISBN: 9781780460321.

-John Strong. *Buddhism: An Introduction*. London: OneWorld, 2015. ISBN: 9781780745053.

### Schedule of Readings and Class Meetings:

#### *Of Beginnings and Origins*

Week 1 (Jan 10, 12): Course Overview, Indus Valley Civilization

Tuesday: Introductions, Overview of course

Thursday: The Indus Valley Civilization

Read for Thu: Websites: Harappa.com (see directions on C);

Fran Pritchett, Columbia University, website (C).

Graduate Session: Discussion of research interests (no reading)

Week 2 (Jan 17, 19): The Vedas and Vedic Civilization

Tuesday: The Ritual Order of the Universe; video: *Altar of Fire*

Read for Tue: Flood, Ch. 2 “Ancient Origins” (from *An Introduction to Hinduism*) (C)

Thursday: The Vedas and the Vedic World  
Read for Thu: Selections from the *Rig Veda* (C) (See Reading Guide first!)  
Grad. Session: Heesterman, “India and the Inner Conflict of Tradition”;  
Inden, Intro, Chs. 1 and 3, and Conclusion from *Imagining India* (C)

*The Cosmic-Social Order, Renunciation, and the Problem of Action (Karma)*

Week 3 (Jan 24, 26): The New World Order: *Dharma* and Renunciation

Tuesday: The *Upaniṣads* and Renunciation  
Read for Tue: Flood, Ch. 4 “Yoga and Renunciation”;  
B. Stoler Miller, excerpts from the *Yoga Sūtra* of Patañjali (C).  
Thursday: The *Upaniṣads* and Early Vedānta  
Read for Thu: Selections from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, *Chāndogya*, and *Kaṭha Upaniṣads*  
(See Reading Guide first!) (C)  
Grad. Session: Bronkhorst, *Greater Magadha*, Part I (C).

Week 4 (Jan 31, Feb 2): The *Śramaṇa* Traditions; Early Jainism

Tuesday: Who Were the *Śramaṇas*? The Life of Mahāvīra  
Read for Tue: J. Long, Ch. IV “The Jain Path” (from *Jainism: An Introduction*);  
Selections from the *Ācārāṅga*, *Uttaradhyāyana*, and *Śarākṛtāṅga Sūtras*,  
and Mahāvīra’s Conception Story from the *Kaṭha Sūtra* (C).  
Thursday: Karma and Cosmology  
Read for Thu: J. Long, Ch. VI “The Jain Doctrines of ‘celebrity’”;  
“Harikeśa,” and “Jayaghoṣa vs. Vijayaghōṣa” (from *Uttaradhyāyana Sūtra*) (C)  
Grad. Session: Bronkhorst, *Greater Magadha*, Part II, excerpts of Pt. III, Part IV (C).

Week 5 (Feb 7, 9): Jain Doctrine and Ethics

Tuesday: Karma and Ethics  
Read for Tue: “The Story of Yāśodhara?” (C)  
Thursday: Jain Renunciation  
(GUEST LECTURERS: Samanis Rohini Pragma and Satya Pragma)  
Read for Thu: Dalrymple, “The Nun’s Tale” (from *Nine Lives*), 25 pp. (C)  
Grad. Session: Bronkhorst, *Buddhism in the Shadow of Brahmanism*, Part I (C).  
**Paper Topic Due Friday at 11:59 PM (grad students only)**

Week 6 (Feb 14, 16): The Life and Teachings of the Buddha

**Nonviolence and Mindfulness Exercise due Friday, Feb. 17 at 11:59 PM**

Tuesday: The Life of the Buddha; video: *The Life of the Buddha* (BBC)  
Read for Tue: Begin reading the *Dhammapada* (Chapters [vaggas] 1-8) (C).  
Thursday: The Buddha’s *Dhamma*  
Read for Thu: Finish reading the *Dhammapada* (Chapters 14, 20, 22-26) (C).  
Grad. Session: Bronkhorst, *Buddhism in the Shadow of Brahmanism*, Part II (C).

Week 7 (Feb 21, 23): Buddhist Teachings, Monasticism, and Aśoka’s Empire

Tuesday: The Buddhist *Sangha*; Transforming the Sacrifice  
Read for Tue: *Kutadanta Sutta*;  
Buddhaghōṣa, The Five Precepts, and The Recollection of Death (C).  
Thursday: Aśoka’s Buddhist Empire; The Birth of the Great Vehicle  
Read for Thu: The Aśokan Edicts;

Excerpts from the *Heart Sūtra* and *Lotus Sūtra* (C).  
Grad. Session: Bronkhorst, *How the Brahmins Won*, Part I (e-book)

“Classical” Hinduism

Week 8 (Feb 28, Mar 2): The Rise of the Gods: Śiva and Viṣṇu

Tuesday: The Love of Viṣṇu: Vaiṣṇava Devotional Poetry in South India  
(GUEST LECTURERS: Profs. George and Kausalya Hart)

Read for Tue: Selections of early Tamil *bhakti* poetry;  
Flood, Ch. 6 “The Love of Viṣṇu” (C).

Thursday: Śiva: The Erotic Ascetic

Read for Thu: Flood, Ch. 7 “Śaiva and Tantric Religion”;  
Selections from the *Śiva Purāṇa* (C).

Grad. Session: Bronkhorst, *How the Brahmins Won*, Part II (e-book)  
(with Special Guest, Prof. George Hart)

*Dharma and Devotion in the Epics*

Week 9 (Mar 7, 9): The *Rāmāyaṇa*: Ethical Reflection, Princely Conduct and Devotion

Tuesday: The *Rāmāyaṇa*: Dharma and Devotion

**Groups Assigned for Ramayana Project**

Read for Tue: Goldman, Summary of the *Rāmāyaṇa*;  
Flood, Ch. 5 “Narrative Traditions and Early Vaiṣṇavism” (C)

Thursday: The *Rāmāyaṇa* Traditions in India

Read for Thu: Ramanujan, “Three Hundred Ramayanas” (C)

Watch for Thu: Doordharshan *Rāmāyaṇa* (clips); *Sita Sings the Blues* (clips) (C)

Grad. Session: Balcerowicz, *Early Asceticism in India*, Chs. 1-10 (C)

**Annotated Bibliography due Friday at 11:59 PM (grad students only)**

Week 10 (Mar 14, 16): NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK!!! (Work on Ramayana Project)

Week 11 (Mar 21, 23): The *Bhagavad-Gītā*: Dharma Meets Devotion (*Bhakti*)

**Ramayana Group Project Part 1 due Friday, March 24 at 11:59 PM**

Tuesday: The *Bhagavad-Gītā* and the *Mahābhārata*

Read for Tue: *The Bhagavad Gītā*, Discourses 1-8

Thursday: Krishna’s Revelation and the Birth of Devotion

Read for Thu: *The Bhagavad Gītā*, Discourses 9-13, 18

Grad. Session: Balcerowicz, *Early Asceticism in India*, Chs. 11-20 (C)

Week 12 (Mar 28, 30): The Goddess, and Devotional Life: The Hindu Image and Temple

Tuesday: *Devī Śakti*: The Goddess in India

Read for Tue: Flood, Ch. 8 “The Goddess and Śākta Traditions”;  
Selections from the *Devī-Māhātmya (Glory of the Goddess)*;  
Ramprasad Sen, *Grace and Mercy in Her Wild Hair*, selections (C).

Thursday: The Religious Image and Temple in Hinduism

Read for Thu: Excerpts from Eck, *Darśan*;  
Fuller, Ch. 3 “Worship” (from *The Camphor Flame*) (C).

Grad. Session: Readings on Tantra from Wedemeyer, Sanderson, and White (C)

Week 13 (Apr 4, 6): Islam in South Asia

**Ramayana Group Project Part 2 due Tuesday, April 4 at 2:00 PM**

Tuesday: Early Islam in India and the Sufi Orders

Read for Tue: Doniger, "Fusion and Rivalry under the Sultanate" (C)  
Thursday: The Mughal Empire: Cosmopolitan Encounters  
Read for Thu: Selections of Sufi poems from South Asia (C)  
Grad. Session: Eaton, "Approaches to the Study of the Conversion to Islam in India";  
Flood, "Pillars, Palimpsests and Princely Practices";  
Truschke, "Brahmin and Jain Sanskrit Intellectuals at the Mughal Court".  
**Paper Title & Abstract Due Friday at 11:59 PM (grad students only)**

Week 14 (Apr 11, 13): The *Bhakti* Movement and Sikhism

**Ramayana Group Project Part 3 due Tuesday, April 11 at 2:00 PM**

**Ramayana Group Project Peer Evaluations due Friday, April 14 at 11:59 PM**

Tuesday: The *Sagun* Poets

Read for Tue: Surdas and Mirabai from *Songs of the Saints of India* (C)

Thursday: Sikhism and the *Nirgun* Poets

Read for Thu: Guru Nanak and Kabir from *Songs of the Saints of India* (C)

Grad. Session: Hawley, Chapters from *A Storm of Songs* (C)

Week 15 (Apr 18, 20): Gandhi and the Hindu Nation

Tuesday: Gandhi's Non-Violence

Read for Tue: Gandhi, excerpts from *Hind Swaraj* (C)

Thursday: Hindu Nationalism: The Babri Masjid/Rām Janmabhoomi Controversy

Video: *Raam ke Naam* (*In the Name of God*)

Grad. Session: Research Paper Works

**Devotional Poems due Wednesday, April 26 at 11:59 PM on Canvas**

**Devotional Poetry Performance: Thursday, April 27, 12:00-2:00, GL 482 (Exam Period)**

**Site Visit Reflection Papers due Friday, April 28 at 11:59 PM on Canvas**

**Final Research Paper due Friday, April 28 at 11:59 PM on Canvas**

**Graduate Students: Final Draft of Research Paper due Friday, April 28 at 11:59 PM**