

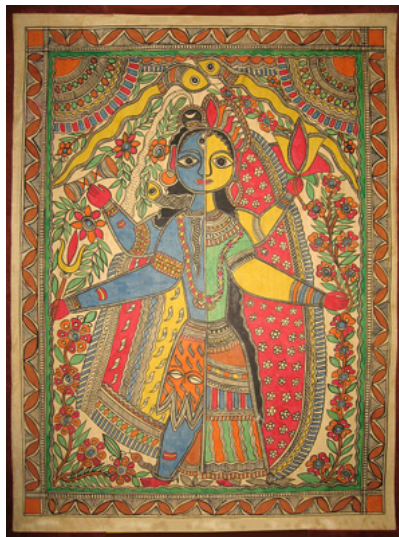
Exploring Hinduism



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Yoga, karma, pandit, guru--common words in American English. Who knows about their origins in Hinduism, a major religious tradition as ancient as any on earth and as postmodern as online temple worship? To learn about this and much more, we'll read from great texts; study rituals in which beliefs are embodied; encounter God as female, male, androgynous; analyze through the lenses of history and politics.

In a short course on a religious tradition that goes back more than 3,000 years and has roughly a billion adherents, we have to be very selective. Should we focus on history? Hinduism today? Concepts? Practices? Primary texts? Controversies? Spiritual depths? Politics? Unity or difference? Our course gives a taste of all these approaches, making the choices visible. Headings like "Primary Texts," "Ritual & Performance," "History / Society / Politics" show an emphasis on different frames in different sections of the course. But in each section, we will also get glimpses of the other frames. Our ability to use these and other categories will be cumulative.



Sources

Diana Eck. *Darśan: Seeing the Divine Image in India*. 3d ed. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998. Course Reader (distributed in class).

§ indicates assignments, to be completed before each class. Full bibliographical info on readings will be provided in Reader table of contents.

Openings

9-27 Ganesh welcomes you to the course

9-29 Bangalore to Livermore: Global Hinduism

§ Read Hawley & Narayanan, 1-16

§ Watch <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YtwI3il-0UE> including comments, and

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ntN4SKhZSZE&feature=related>

§ Surf the web for sites that offer to present Hinduism or some aspects of it to the world. Be ready to present at least one of the websites you discovered to the class, summarizing what you found & telling why you picked this one.

10-4 Lecture: Early formations - the first 2000 years

§ Flood, 23-50. § Patton, 37-51. § poems from the Rig Veda (Doniger, trans.)

Today at noon: Lecture by playwright & performer Gowri Ramanarayan, whose plays include contemporary interpretations of *Mahābhārata* epic and *bhakti* poetry. 208 Encina.

http://ica.stanford.edu/events/south_asia_gowri_ramanarayan_serpent_speak_playing_in_arun_kolatkar_lane

Primary texts (mostly but not all Sanskrit)

10-6 *Upanishads*

§ Passages from early *Upanishads*. § the *Katha Upanishad* (Olivelle, trans. & ed.)

FYI: Peter Heehs, “Yoga” (an 8-page overview of the history), on Coursework.

10-11 *Bhagavad Gītā* : war, duty, self-knowledge

§ Flood, from Ch. 3, “*Dharma*.” § *Gītā*, intro by Patton + Chaps. 1-2

10-13 *Bhagavad Gītā*: the problem of desire, paths to liberation

§ sels. from Chaps. 3-12.

10-18 *Rāmāyaṇa*: *dharma*, ideals, poetry

§ sels. from Valmiki *Rāmāyaṇa*

10-20 (LH away) film: *The Fourth Stage*

§ “The Parade of Ants”; § Olivelle on renunciation vs. social engagement

10-25 Krishna devotion

§ from Bryant, intro + trans., *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (Sanskrit).

§ selections from vernacular poetry (Bengali, Hindi, Tamil)

10-27 *Devī Māhātmya*

§ summary & intro by T. Coburn; § selections from Devadatta Kali translation.

Ritual & performance

11-1 Lecture: Recent Hinduism - the last 1500 years

(Note: Today's readings introduce our segment on ritual and performance, which goes on for the following four meetings; the lecture will cover a big sweep of history, only partially overlapping with the reading.)

§ Eck, pp 3-44.

§ Narayanan, forthcoming book on Hindu Traditions, sels. from ch 15 (life-cycle, marriage).

FYI: Narayanan on festivals, posted on Coursework

11-3 *Pūjā*: worship in home and temple

§ Eck, 44-92; § Huyler, "Approaching God," in *The Life of Hinduism*, 33-41.

§ Exercise: Create or design an "altar" with symbols of devotion. This could be devotion to anything—preferably something meaningful to you, but you could also experiment with something you're not personally devoted to. Enact devotion to this altar three times before this class meeting, and report to us about what you did and learned.

11-8 Chanting the *Devī Māhātmya* as a spiritual practice

Guest presentation by Dr. Sarah Caldwell / Pandita Amba Sathyojatha. Author of many academic publications on goddess traditions in India; practitioner and priest at Sri Mahakaleshwar temple in La Honda, CA. More details at <http://srimahakalmandir.org/about/who-we-are/>

11-10 Performing the *Rāmāyaṇa*

§ Hess, "Ramlila: The Audience Experience"

Note: this week, if there's enough interest in an evening event, we'll organize a dinner and viewing of the fascinating, hilarious, and provocative animated film *Sita Sings the Blues*.

11-15 "What is the difference between a text and a song?"

§ Hess. Excerpts from forthcoming book, *Bodies of Song: Kabir Oral Traditions and Performative Worlds in Northern India*.

History / society / politics

11-17 Colonialism > Hinduism

§ Viswanathan, "Colonialism and the Construction of Hinduism"

§ King, "Colonialism, Hinduism, and the Discourse of Religion"

Thanksgiving break

11-29 *Rāmāyaṇa* and Hindu nationalism

§ Hess, "Marshalling Sacred Texts"; § Kapur, "Deity to Crusader: The Changing Iconography of Ram"

A little farewell music

12-1 Hindu music in the Caribbean

Guest lecture by Prof. Anna Schultz, Dept. of Music

12-6 Surprise + some student presentations

12-8 some student presentations + farewell

Course Requirements

Attendance & participation. Supremely important. Show up, engage, think, imagine, read, discuss, listen. To learn about oral and performative culture, you will sometimes be asked to memorize or enact something.

Keep up with assignments. I will call on people regularly to comment on the reading. Sometimes students will lead discussion. Quizzes could happen.

Contribute to class discussion list: saraswati@lists

Two papers.

1. 5-6 pages, due Oct. 28 at 5 pm. Close reading of text. A choice of topics will be provided in the second week.
2. Paper (8-10 pages) or project, due Dec. 10 at 5 pm. Paper topics will be suggested. You can propose your own topic, but it must be approved by the instructor. By “project” I mean something that has different methods, sources, and product from the usual book-based research paper. It may be ethnographic, artistic, or performative. You can team up with one or more people, in which case there will be a team product, but each person will be graded on the basis of an individual proposal and written final report. Projects must be approved by instructor. Timing:

Nov. 11. Submit electronically your choice among the given research topics, or propose another topic, or propose a project. If you choose from the suggestions provided, tell why you chose that one and what your preliminary thoughts are about it. If you propose a new topic, tell why you chose it and how you intend to go about it. If a project, tell why you want to do it, how you propose to do it, and what the product will be (it might change somewhat as you go along).

Dec. 6 & 8. Class presentations of papers & projects. This isn't required, but it's fun, and many of you will want to. Feedback from class may help you improve your final product

Dec 9, 5 pm: papers & projects due. Send papers as attachments. Deliver other products to Bldg 70.

GRADES:

Attendance and participation: 25%. Online discussion: 10%

Paper 1: 25%. Paper 2: 40%

